

Reading, Romance, and Humanism
in Early Modern England

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ABSTRACT

This thesis takes as its starting point the numerous attacks on romance fiction in early modern England, placing them in the context of European responses to romance, and situating them in relation to humanist pedagogy and readerly techniques. My concern is with the ways in which writers, translators, and publishers of romance engaged with these debates, incorporating aspects of contemporary criticism in an attempt to change the grounds on which their texts were judged and enjoyed. I argue for the variety of romance readerships and for the complexity of the reading experience as constructed in the paratexts of some of the most significant romances of the late sixteenth century. In doing so I draw together the seemingly disparate fields of cultural history, studies of romance fiction, and book history.

My introduction establishes the terms of this discussion; I explore the significance of literacy, humanist pedagogy and historiography, the pervasive rhetoric of pleasure and profit, and the social and material contexts which shaped the romances and their readers. In my first chapter, I discuss John Leland's treatise in defence of the historicity of King Arthur in order to situate humanist and Reformist discourses in larger concerns about fiction, history, and veracity. By reading Leland's texts in the context of John Bale's and Richard Robinson's various appropriations and reshaping of his project, I show how attitudes to exemplarity and narrative pleasure shifted over the period.

Chapter two turns to *Amadis de Gaule* and the *Palmerin* cycles, reading English attacks on the texts against their continental counterparts, and showing how the reception of these texts in translation had already been anticipated and fought over by humanist and religious commentators. In this chapter I introduce the concept of ironic paratexts: authorial or printerly writings that adopted and subverted the terms of their opponents. This notion is also central to my final chapter, in which I discuss Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Sir John Harington's translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* as texts which present themselves to a particular, sophisticated readership constructed as being both aware of good humanist reading practices and of the pleasure available in inverting the strictures of profit and virtue.

NOTE ON TEXTS

Unless otherwise stated, I have in all direct quotations from early modern texts silently expanded contractions and suspensions and incorporated interlinear insertions. I have endeavoured not to modernize 'u/v' and 'i/j' throughout.

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INTRODUCTION

PROFIT, PLEASURE, AND POISON: READING AND ROMANCE IN
EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

i. 'plain and foolish lies': anti-romance sentiment in early modern England

In *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, first printed in English in c.1529, Juan Luis Vives expresses his incredulity at the contemporary vogue for reading chivalric romances. He wonders:

what delight can be in those things that be so plain and foolish lies: One killeth 20 him self alone, another killeth 30 another wounded with a 100 wounds, and left dead, riseth vp againe, and on the next daye made whole and strong, ouercommeth 2 giants: and then goeth away loaden with gold and siluer, and precious stones, mo than a Gally woulde carry awaye. What madnes is it of folkes, to haue pleasure in these bookes.¹

His concern is with the lack of verisimilitude in the fantastic narratives and motifs of such romances, and the pleasure which readers take in reading these texts. Many writers shared Vives' anxieties about the attractions of such apparently unprofitable narratives. From the introduction of printed romances in England in the late fifteenth century, much was written on the need to avoid such material which would be detrimental to the well-being of the individual and the commonwealth. Nonetheless, romances were read by all levels of literate society; their astonishing popularity attests to the fact that, while they came under increasing attack from a number of sources, they became ever more popular with readers and were positioned in the marketplace and defended in ever more ingenious ways.

¹ Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, trans. Richard Hyrde (London: Robert Waldegrave, 1585), p.35.

My thesis takes as its starting point these early modern anti-romance sentiments, and the ways in which they affected the printing and reading of romances. I examine the concerns about romance texts and unguarded reading in humanist pedagogical writing, and show that the producers of romances drew on such discourses to construct readers and modes of reading in their paratexts. Moreover, romance paratexts engage in a complex intertextual debate on the status of fiction as an educational tool, and work to effect a recognition of humanist and Reformist teaching on the uses and abuses of texts, whether seriously or facetiously. In doing so, they display a rich array of responses to these debates which drive the progress of fiction in the sixteenth century.

My introduction sets out the terms of my thesis. I begin by discussing early modern romance, particularly the aspects which caused concern; I then go on to detail the substance of those concerns, and situate my research in relation to recent writing on the nature and reception of romances, humanist reading practices, and paratexts. Following on from this, I discuss the development and uses of literacy in early modern England, setting out the ways in which different levels of literacy were achieved and how they shaped readers' approaches to texts. It is then necessary to outline the humanist educational programme and its insistence on appropriate reading matter and reading practices, leading to a discussion of the tensions between profit and pleasure in the educational programme; finally, I illustrate the contentious position of delight in humanist theories of reading and its implications for the attacks and defences of the romance.

In her recent book, *The English Romance in Time*, Helen Cooper identifies the contagious quality of romance, observing that a motif such as '[t]he

abduction of a child by a bear or other wild animal' is 'a unit within literature that proves so useful, so infectious, that it begins to take on a life of its own'.² Appropriating a term from genetics, Cooper defines the romance motif as 'a "meme", an idea that behaves like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures.'³ Cooper's account of the ways in which romances proliferate and are adapted across time is a positive one, communicating the resilience and sustained popularity of the tales circulated orally, in manuscript, and then in print during the eleventh to seventeenth centuries.

In a highly constructive comment on the mode in the early modern period, Barbara Fuchs observes that romance cannot be quarantined into a generic category; instead, it infects other genres, particularly epic, as an often unwelcome, or at least vexed, strategy of errancy and multiplicity.⁴ Fuchs' account places emphasis on the impossibility of confining romance to a distinct generic definition; in describing the incursion of romance into other genres as 'unwelcome' or 'vexed', she communicates the problematic status of the mode; its ability to 'infect' other genres is clear in this thesis and plays a crucial role in informing early modern attacks on the romance. Since I place some emphasis on the constructed continuities between romance and other forms of writing, it seems appropriate to consider romance as a mode or strategy which is able to be connected to, or transformed into, other forms or genres. Such formulations of romance motifs and their appeal are illuminating in that they communicate the virulence and strength of the mode in early modern England, as well as

² Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.3.

³ Cooper, p.3.

⁴ Barbara Fuchs, *Romance* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.70.

suggesting some of the grounds for anxieties about the inability to contain the proliferation and allure of the texts.

Romances were not only often indistinguishable in form and content from other genres and modes, they were also literally bound together in material form with other modes of writing. The Auchinleck manuscript, dating from shortly after 1330, contained sixteen romances including *Bevis of Hamtoun* and *Guy of Warwick* alongside historiographical texts and saints' lives. While this is a very early example, marginal annotations suggest that this manuscript was being read in the later sixteenth century.⁵ As Cooper writes, most manuscript anthologies date from the fifteenth century';⁶ however, romances circulated individually and in anthologies in the sixteenth century too, and the later Percy Folio manuscript comprises verse narratives, ballads, and lyrics composed between the early fourteenth century and the 1640s when they were assembled together.⁷

Andrew King notes that '[r]omances in print are deprived of their manuscript "home" – the context of other romances, historical works, saints' lives, and other kinds of writing – which can adjust a reader's perception of a work's generic and thematic value.'⁸ However, the reception of romance material was infinitely wider and more complex than this model suggests. Certainly, the scholarly reader would recognise the 'generic and thematic' relations between romances and other forms of writing, although less literate members of society in the 1500s, hearing the romances aloud or reading them in cheap, small-format editions, would experience the texts divorced from their earlier plural contexts.

⁵ See Cooper, p.n.440; also, Derek Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham (intro.), *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 19.2.1* (London: Scolar Press, 1977).

⁶ Cooper, p.30.

⁷ Cooper, p.30.

⁸ Andrew King, *'The Faerie Queene' and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p.38.

It is in these circumstances of the irresistible spread and popularity of romances, and their formal recontextualisation, that specific objections materialise. While preachers in the Middle Ages expressed concerns about secular fiction, romances were commonly regarded as educational, offering models of good conduct for citizens and princes alike.⁹ More widespread unease about the harm which the narratives could cause is apparent in humanist writing. As my opening example shows, humanists such as Vives were especially nervous about the effects of reading romances, believing that people were more likely to be attracted to fabulous or immoral tales than moral ones. In *The Praise of Folly*, Erasmus writes that:

man's mind is so formed that it is far more susceptible to falsehood than to truth. If anyone wants an immediate, clear example of this he has only to go to church at sermon time, when everyone is asleep or yawning or feeling queasy whenever some serious argument is expounded, but if the preacher starts to rant (I beg your pardon, I mean orate) on some old wives' tale, as they often do, his audience sits up and takes notice open-mouthed.¹⁰

Not only did such fabulous matter draw the attention of the reader, it could instil immorality in the reader. In *The office and duetie of an husband* of 1529, Vives writes that romances would corrupt their readership, inspiring them to live their lives wickedly; the English translation by Thomas Paynell in 1550 reads, 'These bokes do hurt both man & woman, for they make them wyllye & craftye, they kinde and styr vp couetouesnes, inflame anger, & all beastly and filthy desire.'¹¹

Refining this idea of pervasive immorality in the texts, romances were seen specifically as storehouses of examples of sexual immorality and bloody

⁹ Cooper, p.6.

¹⁰ Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. Betty Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, rpt 1993), p.71.

¹¹ Juan Luis Vives, *The office and duetie of an husband*, trans. Thomas Paynell (London: John Cawood, [c.1550]), sig. O7^v.

violence. In what is now the most commonly cited objection to the romances, Roger Ascham writes in *The Scholemaster* that ‘the whole pleasure of [the *Morte Darthur*] stands in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye: In which book those be counted the noblest Knightes, that do kill most men without any quarell, and commit fowlest adoulteries by subtlest shiftes.’¹² While Ascham’s remark is often interpreted as an attempt to distance the Protestant present from Catholic medievalism,¹³ Robert P. Adams discusses the comment’s place within that belonged to the line of humanist criticism of Sir Thomas More, Erasmus, and Vives, who were keen to distance themselves from the apparently medieval elements of warmongering, tyrannicide, chivalric honour, and sensual women.¹⁴ Such critical disagreements indicate the occasional difficulties of separating out humanist and Protestant discourses in early modern England, and, throughout my thesis, I acknowledge the intersections between humanist and Reformist ideas on profitable texts and reading.

In the later sixteenth century, with the burgeoning book trade producing romances in more prestigious formats, Thomas Nashe criticises the writers and sellers of such books:

Are they not ashamed in their prefixed posies, to adorne a pretence of profit mixt with pleasure, when as in their bookes there is scarce to be found one precept pertaining to vertue, but whole quires fraught with amorous discourses, kindling *Venus*’ flame in *Vulcan*’s forge, carrying *Cupid* in triumph, alluring euen vowed *Vestals* to treade awry, inchaunting chaste mindes and corrupting the continenst [...] what els I

¹² Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. R. C. Alston (Menston: Scolar Press, 1967), p.231. For discussion, see, for example, Cooper, p.320, and Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), p.7.

¹³ For example, Arthur B. Ferguson, *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1986), pp.56, 70.

¹⁴ Robert P. Adams, *The Better Part of Valor: More, Erasmus, Colet, and Vives on Humanism, War, and Peace, 1496-1535* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), pp.223-6.

pray you doe these bable bookemungers endeuer, but to reparaire the ruinous wals of *Venus Court*, to restore to the worlde that forgotten Legendary licence of lying [...] those worn out impressions of the feyned no where acts, of Arthur of the round table, Athur of little Brittain, sir Tristram, Hewon of Burdeaux, the Squire of low degree, the foure sons of Amon, with infinite others.¹⁵

Nashe's text restates the earlier arguments of the immorality and implausibility of romances, but these now appear in the context of their place in the London book trade. The texts' popularity is confirmed by the fact that the impressions are 'worn out', both in the sense of being printed repeatedly and also being old and stale. His reference to the 'prefixed posies, to adorne a pretence of profit mixt with pleasure' alludes to the Horatian precept that a text should teach through delight which I will discuss in detail later in this introduction. Nashe's view that this precept is a 'pretence' when cited in romance paratexts points to the argument I advance in my thesis, that the prefatory matter of early modern romances is often knowingly at odds with the text it accompanies.

My aim throughout this thesis is to make connections between what and how readers in the sixteenth century were expected to read, and the impact this had on the production and positioning of romance texts in the marketplace. In recent years, studies of early modern romance have begun to take into account the conditions of reading and writing in the early modern period, and to revisit the subject of the respectability of romance texts in more constructive ways, recovering the idea that they were widely seen as unsuitable reading material from the footnotes of critical studies, and posing questions about the literary and educational environment in which romances came to be so popular in print.

¹⁵ Thomas Nashe, 'The Anatomie of Absurditie', in Ronald B. McKerrow (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 5-49, pp.10-11.

This thesis argues that the prefatory rhetoric of early modern romance paratexts is more than mere hyperbole or marketing strategy; that the evaluations of the texts which follow, and the constructions of their readerships, engage profoundly with discourses on reading and the acquisition of instruction from books which were so prevalent in sixteenth-century England, which I will discuss in greater detail below. Addressing the strategies which are used in romance paratexts, I seek to draw attention to the ways of defending the production and consumption of recreational fiction in the early modern period, re-investing claims to profit and pleasure with particular significance in relation to the romance mode.

Peter Burke defines the trend of describing books as ‘full, ‘faithful’, ‘true’ or ‘new’ as a device used to attract buyers, and this idea of paratexts as primarily commercial strategies has become increasingly prevalent in recent years.¹⁶ While it is indisputable that commercial considerations are of great importance in the production of books for the market in early modern England, my aim in this thesis is to acknowledge the importance of this aspect as self-evident, but to recover the importance of the rhetorical strategies which paratexts deploy in terms of their engagement with debates on readers and reading.

Burke also writes that, ‘[l]ike the French nobility, the English gentry abandoned the romance of chivalry to the lower classes. From the mid-seventeenth century on, *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* were reprinted only in chap-book form.’¹⁷ He equates this development with the widening

¹⁶ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978, rpt 1979), p.255. Recent studies which are concerned with the idea of paratexts as commercial strategies are Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), and Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

¹⁷ Burke, p.278.

divisions in terms of belief in, for example, witches between the educated and less educated, often represented by women and children. While the printing history of such romances as *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* does bear out the claim that they were exclusively chapbook material from the seventeenth century onwards, their print history in the sixteenth century suggests that they were not viewed as texts with instructive qualities at that time either. Among the first romances to be printed in England, texts such as these were issued initially by Caxton, de Worde, and Pynson. *Guy of Warwick* was first printed in 1497, and then in 1500, c.1553, 1565, and 1600. *Bevis of Hampton* was significantly more popular, and was printed in 1500, c.1500, 1503, 1510, c.1515, 1533, 1560, 1565, and 1580. Unlike the romance texts which I will discuss in my thesis, these texts were printed without prefatory material and, therefore, seem to require little introduction to the reader.

While these texts were undoubtedly widely known in the sixteenth century, they remain relatively free from comment in other texts of the time, with the scorn heaped on romances tending to be represented metonymically by Spanish and Italian texts or by Arthurian histories. Elements of *Bevis of Hampton* and *Guy of Warwick* appear in texts including Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* without being named, which implies that these references are made under the assumption that the reader or hearer will recognise them without explicit recourse to their titles. There are also scores of citations of the titles of romances without further comment; this merely requires that the reader be aware of the title and reputation of the romance. As I will discuss in my second chapter, the titles of certain romances, such as *Amadis de Gaule*, functioned metonymically in early modern texts, usually in disparaging ways, requiring the reader to recognise

the widely-known qualities of the text mentioned but ideally not to have detailed knowledge of it. The fact that these metonymic references could not in fact be tied to a common meaning, and that romances meant different things to different people, is a particular preoccupation of this thesis.

The ironic appeals to the educated embodied in the paratexts of romances attest to the self-consciousness with which the mode was discussed. However, there is not a concerted effort to rehabilitate or defend the reading of romances in print in the sixteenth century; the paratexts of the romances are significantly more diffuse and dissonant than that model would allow. Instead, what I believe we witness is an increasingly ironic presentation of the romances, synthesising the arguments levelled against the mode during the century and reproducing them in ways which an educated reader would recognise as creative and, perhaps, disingenuous. Therefore, the inclusion in the prefatory matter of arguments constructing the romance as profitable suggest to the reader, however facetiously, a way of approaching the text which would be sanctioned by the humanist reading programme.

Recent scholarship has begun to consider the reception of romances and popular fiction in useful ways. Much work has been done on women as producers and consumers of romance, notably by Caroline Lucas, Helen Hackett, and Heidi Brayman Hackel.¹⁸ These critical texts discuss the ways in which romance fashions a primarily female readership, and suggest that women were responsible for the romance's commercial success. In addition, in her recent important study of Robert Greene's *Pandosto*, Lori Humphrey Newcomb argues

¹⁸ Caroline Lucas, *Writing for women: the example of woman as reader in Elizabethan romance* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

that the popularity of romances was brought about by two kinds of reading practices: 'fiction was read by increasingly diverse audiences, and their tastes were read as constituting a subordinate cultural category.'¹⁹ I extend these arguments to show that, while romances were being produced and read by members of wider social categories, their prefatory matter contained material which aimed to situate them in relation to the arguments of their humanist detractors, which would require an educated reader to make the connection. In this, my argument diverges from that of Newcomb, by concentrating on the construction of readers in the paratexts and the related attempts to maintain a profitable mode of reading distinct from that of less educated readers, rather than tracing the popularisation and commodification of the texts.

My thesis brings this new work on the nature and reception of romance fiction into dialogue with the burgeoning field of the history of the book, due, in part, to a new emphasis on the ways in which texts were marketed and read, and, in part, to recent work which focuses on the rhetorical and ideological functions of the paratexts of early modern printed books: those material elements of the book, such as the preface or address to the reader, which lie outside the main body of the text yet inform the text's reception and interpretation. Gérard Genette describes the paratext as 'a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies).'²⁰ My research

¹⁹ Lori Humphrey Newcomb, *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p.1.

²⁰ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.2.

complicates this description, acknowledging that the paratexts I discuss expect different levels of literacy in their readers, but also aware that they often include material which challenges the expectations of the romance reader.

An awareness of the instructive function of reading is prominent in romance paratexts; they seek to classify the abilities of the reader in order to produce various modes of reading that position or reposition the romance as an instructional text, or ironically point up the disparities between romances and instructional texts. The paratexts, then, articulate a number of positions in relation to their texts, anticipating readings of varying degrees of sophistication. In this way, the producers of romances scatter their paratexts with intertextual references, encouraging a complex engagement with the text in spite of the cultural assumptions about the simplicity or unsuitability of romance. The prefatory material routinely advances the humanistic argument that fiction is a vehicle for moral instruction, which is not unusual in texts of this period. However, in the particular case of romances, this defence takes on a distinct significance for those aware of the arguments levelled against the production and reading of the mode. It would have been difficult to avoid such anti-romance discourses, whatever one's level of literacy. From the humanist schoolbook to the pamphlet and pulpit, it was impossible to escape debates on the implications of producing and reading such widely known and widely enjoyed texts.

The differentiation of readers' abilities occurs in a number of romance texts of this period. I will return to the wider context of these reading practices throughout my thesis and amplify the intersections of humanist texts and humanist reading practices with romance texts and the assumptions about them prevalent at that time. While I do not deal directly in my thesis with the

production and consumption of English translations of classical Greek romances, there are a number of occasions in which they become relevant to my argument, as they are generally invested with a higher level of prestige, being perceived as more worthy objects of study as they share a classical heritage with texts favoured by the humanist educational programme.²¹ In his translation of Heliodorus' *Æthiopica* as *An Æthiopian Historie* in c.1569, Thomas Underdowne writes in his dedicatory epistle to Edward De Vere, the Earl of Oxford, that this romance will be read to inspire exemplary conduct:

Now of all knowledge fitte for a Noble Gentelman, I suppose the knowledge of Histories is moste seeminge. For furtheringe whereof, I haue Englished a passing fine, and wittie Historie, [...] For such vertues be in your Honour, so hautie courage, ioined with great skill, suche sufficiency in learning, so good nature, and common sense, that in your Honour is, I thinke, expressed the right patterne of a Noble Gentelman, whiche in my head I haue conceiued.²²

Underdowne's dedication appears to be atypical in that it is decidedly moderate in its recommendation of acquiring knowledge, admitting that in 'matters of learninge, a Noble man ought to haue a sight: but to be to mucche addicted that waye, I thinke is not good.'²³ In this way, the translation which follows appears suitable for the Earl and for other readers in its capacity to teach by delight.

At the end of the sixteenth century, in his compilation, *The most famous history of the seauen champions of Christendome*, printed in 1596, Richard Johnson deploys the 'modesty topos' in his dedicatory epistle to Lord Thomas Howard, yet this also serves to betray an awareness of the low regard in which

²¹ For details of Greek romances, see Margaret Williamson, 'The Greek romance', in Jean Radford (ed.), *The Progress of Romance: the Politics of Popular Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1986), 23-46, and Margaret Ann Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (London: Harper Collins, 1997).

²² Heliodorus, *An Æthiopian Historie*, trans. Thomas Underdowne (London: Fraunces Coldocke, [1569?]), sig. ¶ii^v.

²³ Heliodorus, sig. ¶ii^v.

romances were held. Presenting his 'homely gift', he contrasts the quality of his text unfavourably with more noble recreational pursuits:

in steede of musicke, I bring you mislike: for a learned booke, an ildle discourse: thereby to beguile your ingenious Iudgements exercised in the best rudiments. Yet presuming vpon this, that as the Noblest mindes are euer the most curteous, so your Honour will vouchsafe to cast a smiling glaunce at this simple toy:²⁴

Extending the common description of a fictional text as a 'simple toy', he sets up direct comparisons between the perceived suitable pursuits of an educated man and the apparent experience of reading Johnson's text. Not only is the discourse 'ildle' rather than 'learned', but its effects are discord and unhappiness rather than harmonious music. Moreover, the text will 'beguile', a term which could mean either 'to charm, divert, amuse'²⁵ or 'to delude, deceive, cheat'²⁶ at the time of writing. This conflicted view of fiction as diversion or deception is crucial to my thesis; as I will go on to show, such humanistic- and Reformist-inflected attitudes to fiction resound in the paratexts of romances throughout the sixteenth century and illuminate both the status of pleasure in fiction and the progress of humanist teaching on reading practices and the acquisition of knowledge from books.

Johnson follows his somewhat self-derogatory dedication to Thomas Howard with a short address '[t]o all curteous Readers', to whom he 'wisheth increase of vertuous knowledge', claiming: 'what the simple say I care not: what the spightull speake I passe not: only the censure of the conceited I stand vnto,

²⁴ Richard Johnson, *The most famous history of the seauen champions of Christendome* (London: Cuthbert Burbie, 1596), sig. Aiii^r.

²⁵ OED 'beguile', v. 4.

²⁶ OED 'beguile', v. 1.a.

that is the marke I aime at'.²⁷ The early modern sense of 'conceited' here, meaning one who has intelligence or wit, distinguishes the type of reader who Johnson hopes will appreciate his text. His comment, 'what the simple say I care not', is interesting in this context: the histories of the seven chivalric heroes contained in the book are the subjects of popular tales, collected together and given a gloss of exemplarity in print. As with other romances, these stories would have been widely known for centuries,²⁸ and, in claiming that he is only interested in the opinions of intelligent readers, Johnson is displacing them from their previous environment as entertainment and recasting them as instructive texts; yet, the extended title of the text sets out 'their honorable battailes by sea and land: their tilts, iousts, and turnaments for ladies: their combats with giants, monsters, and dragons: [...] their inchauntments in the holie land: their knighthoods, prowesse and chiualrie'.²⁹ These features advertise common romance motifs and, therefore, emphasise the entertaining aspects of the text. This displacement of popular texts into print and directed to different readerships is an extremely common phenomenon in the period; and this direction of readerly expectations lies behind the argument which I present in this thesis. I endeavour to bring out the dissonances in expectations which occur in the presentation of these romances to an increasingly wide readership.

Johnson's text was clearly successful and spawned a sequel in 1597, the following year. *The second part of the famous history of the seauen champions of Christendome. Likewise shewing the princely prowesse of Saint Georges three sonnes, the liuely sparke of nobilitie* is yet further evidence of a related

²⁷ Johnson, sig. Aiiii'.

²⁸ See Jennifer Richards (ed.), 'Introduction', in Richard Johnson, *The Seven Champions of Christendome (1596/7)*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp.xvii-xix, for a discussion of Middle English romances as sources for Johnson's texts.

²⁹ Johnson, tp.

occurrence regarding romances at this time: the popularity of such texts resulted in further similar or correlated texts, creating a proliferation of romances in the marketplace in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Johnson dedicates the second book to Lord William Howard, the brother of Thomas Howard, the dedicatee of the first book. Johnson writes that Thomas Howard ‘grace[d] it with a fauourable countenance’ so he has decided to offer the book to Thomas’s brother.³⁰ He then professes his service to the ‘Gentle Reader’, claiming, ‘ I Haue finished the seconde part of the seuen Champions of Christendome, onely for thy delight, being thertoo encouraged by thy greate curtesie in the kinde acceptation of my first part.’³¹ This time Johnson does not differentiate between the differing abilities of readers, but instead mentions his ‘barren invention’, which ‘so excellently the wits of many in these daies in that kinde exceed.’ He solicits the reader’s good will with a particularly flattering account of his or her projected reading practices and subsequent opinion:

Onely thy curtesie must be my Buckler, against the carping malice of mocking iesters, that being worst able to doe well, scoffe commonly at that they cannot mend, censuring all thinges, doing nothing, but (monkey like) make apish iests at any thinge they see in Print: and nothing pleaseth them, except it fauor of a scoffing or inuectiue spirite. Well, what those say of me I doe not care, thy delight onely is my desire: And accept it and I am satisfied, reiect it and this shall bee my penaunce neuer againe to come in Print.³²

Johnson quickly sets aside his attention to William Howard and offers his text to the reader who he is certain will privilege delight in reading the text favourably,

³⁰ Richard Johnson, *The second part of the famous history of the seauen champions of Christendome. Likewise shewing the princely prowesse of Saint Georges three sonnes, the liuely sparke of nobilitie. With many other memorial atchiuements worthy of the golden spurres of knighthood* (London: Cuthbert Burbie, 1597), sig. A3^r.

³¹ Johnson, *The second part of the famous history of the seauen champions of Christendome*, sig. A4^r.

³² Johnson, sig. A4^r

before ending on an ever more deferential note: 'Walke on in the historie, as in an ouergrown & ill husbanded garden: if among all the weedes thou finde one pleasing flower I haue my wish'.³³ Johnson's description of his text as an unweeded garden is not uncommon, but I believe the metaphor invites further discussion when considered in the light of this text's particular mode; romances, in particular, were recognised as lengthy and problematic narratives and the humanist reading practices advocated in relation to them sought to yield instructive material and to cut down the text into parts extraneous to the narrative.

As I have discussed above, the stratification of readers occurs quite explicitly in romance paratexts and deftly informs the reader that s/he reads as one who is well-educated and therefore capable of forming favourable opinions of the text. According to this formulation, the reader who is not skilled or virtuous will be unable to draw moral instruction from the text and will find it tedious or unpleasant; in this way, the writer mischievously cajoles the reader into a sympathetic reception of the text. I will now turn to discuss more fully the implications of literacy and humanist pedagogy for this study of romances and their educated readers. I will consider literacy in the early modern period and the constructions of readers' abilities in romance texts which are contingent on the different levels of literacy achieved by schooling. I argue that the ways in which people attained different levels of ability in reading disciplined and shaped their approaches to reading in a way that was exploited by the authors of romance paratexts.

³³ Johnson, sig.A4^r.

ii. 'examples of vice [...] turned to the good': literacy, education, and the ambivalence of humanist fiction

In his influential essay on literacy in early modern England, Keith Thomas sets out the reasons why it is difficult to determine levels of literacy in that time and place. Questioning David Cressy's work on literacy rates from the period, which were based on the ability of an individual to sign his or her name, Thomas presents a more complex set of definitions of literacy, explaining that '[w]riting in the Tudor period, and indeed long after was a different skill from reading'.³⁴ He goes on to discuss the different levels of literacy among readers, observing:

The ability to read the printed word was thus the most basic form of literacy. Next came the ability to read and write written script. But beyond that there was a higher literacy, the knowledge of Latin.³⁵

Thomas goes on to discuss the primacy of the readerly aspects of literacy, stating that 'the literate were developing a new attitude to the book. We see them learning to use it for quick reference, skimming rapidly in search of a passage,

³⁴ Keith Thomas, 'The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England', in Gerd Baumann (ed.), *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition: Wolfson College Lectures 1985* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 97-131, p.100. See also David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). See also Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.19-44.

³⁵ Thomas, pp.100-101.

rather than plodding all the way through.’³⁶ Of prime importance to my thesis is

Thomas’s observation that:

the effect of printing was to undermine the independence of popular oral tradition. [...] people did not need to be able to read to be affected by literature culture; as a result, oral and literary forms rapidly intermingled.³⁷

Furthermore, ‘[t]he printed word thus helped to diminish the possibility of a genuinely independent “folk” tradition’.³⁸ As I discuss throughout my thesis, the popular material of earlier oral cultures is transformed into the corpus of romances in print in the sixteenth century, and my focus rests on the specific reading practices associated with higher levels of literacy, and their various figurations in romance paratexts.

I am guided in my thinking on reading practices by the work done on the field of popular culture and reading practices by such figures as Peter Burke, Roger Chartier, and, more recently, Newcomb. During the course of my research, I have come to realise that the following chapters bear out Roger Chartier’s claim that:

‘[p]opular’ readers did not have a ‘literature’ that was exclusively theirs during the Renaissance. Everywhere in Europe texts and books circulated throughout the social world, shared by readers of very different social conditions and cultures. This means that we need to look at the different uses of the same genres, the same works and often – although in editorial forms aimed at quite different publics – the same texts. The essential question shifts from popular reading to popular print practices.³⁹

³⁶ Thomas, p.115. He also discusses the proliferation and refinement of paratextual directions such as referencing and alphabetical order, pp.115-16.

³⁷ Thomas, p.120.

³⁸ Thomas, p.121.

³⁹ Roger Chartier, ‘Reading Matter and “Popular” Reading: From the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century’, in Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (eds), *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 269-83, p. 274.

The circulation among readers of different social conditions and cultures is detailed throughout my thesis, particularly the relationships between 'idle' texts and educated readers; that is, the construction of readers and reading practices which seem at first incongruous given the prominent attacks against romances, but which in fact acknowledge the ownership of romances in all levels of society.⁴⁰ As Chartier explains:

'[p]opular' literature, 'popular' religion, and 'popular' sociability were thus not radically different from what was read, practiced, or experienced by men and women of other social strata. This means that it is illusory to attempt to set up such categories on the basis of the use, supposedly peculiar to each, of certain objects, codes of behavior, or cultural motifs.⁴¹

Chartier's observation succinctly deals with one of the central ideas of my thesis, that the term 'popular' cannot be neatly applied to a set of texts which are perceived to belong to a particular social group. Romance texts were now appearing in large numbers in print, often in prestigious formats with aristocratic dedicatees, and anticipating diverse readings by readers of differing abilities; therefore, they had undergone a significant transformation from their medieval oral and manuscript origins.

In his book, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Peter Burke describes the gradual divergence of popular and 'élite' cultures, with the initial observation that '[i]n 1500 [...] popular culture was everyone's culture; a second culture for the educated, and the only culture for everyone else.'⁴² My research bears this out to a certain extent; evidence for the production and reading of

⁴⁰ Davis details the ownership of romances by Mary Queen of Scots, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and Sir Robert Sidney, pp.28-32. I will discuss aspects of this diffuse readership further, particularly in my chapter on Iberian romances.

⁴¹ Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton.: Princeton University Press, 1987), p.4.

⁴² Burke, p.270.

romances in the sixteenth century suggests that, despite the denigration of romances as unprofitable fiction, they were translated, written, patronised, read, and discussed by educated members of English society, both aristocratic and professional, as well as those who did not receive a humanist education.

Much work on romance and prose fiction of the sixteenth century presents a linear view of these modes as precursors to the novel, or as evidence of the widening gap in preferences and practices between literate and less literate readers. Burke describes the printing of romances as an act of preserving or arresting popular narratives and songs in performance by ‘encouraging the repetition, as opposed to the re-creation, of a song or story’;⁴³ he wonders ‘whether print did not preserve and even diffuse traditional popular culture rather than destroy it.’⁴⁴ If this is the case, and the frequent reprinting of romances suggests that there was a certain fixity in the content of the narrative if not in the material form of the book, then it becomes even more vital to identify the different uses to which such texts were put. Rather than a smooth progression down the social scale towards a less educated readership, the texts instead encourage different levels of engagement by their readers from their inception, and provide evidence of ‘increasingly differentiated’⁴⁵ reading practices within them. Moreover, while the narratives remain relatively unchanged, the paratextual material shows greater evidence of developments in response to debates on the utility of the romances, and to changes in readerships; for example, further explanatory material is appended to clarify or re-position the text, and patrons and readers of different social levels are addressed in prefatory material. For these reasons, my thesis delineates a movement more complex than

⁴³ Burke, p.255.

⁴⁴ Burke, p.257.

⁴⁵ Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, p.11.

that described by Burke; while he describes a bifurcation of culture with the result that popular culture was consigned to the lower classes, my research sets out a contrary pattern of development sensitive to the diversity of readings by those with greater or lesser levels of literacy.⁴⁶

Alexandra Halasz's discussion of the production and circulation of pamphlets in the early modern marketplace sets out the means by which widely-circulated texts and discourses were invested with cultural value. Comparing the relative statuses of the book and the pamphlet at that time, she writes of pamphlets, that:

[t]hey present an enigma not only of discursive register and authority but of kind, for neither 'pamphlet' nor 'book' is a generic category, but rather, an indicator of object form that slides easily into commodity designation (and dismissal).⁴⁷

Halasz's description is extremely useful when thinking about the relative positions of pamphlets and books and the relation of their discursive content to their form. While her view makes a lateral connection between two forms of printed material, my thesis approaches a similar distinction but from a temporal perspective. The persistence of earlier oral and manuscript contexts of romances surviving alongside the newer printed ones gives rise to a sense of stratification in terms of ownership of objects as well as treatment of the materials they contain. Tessa Watt makes a similar point in her book, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*, stating that:

⁴⁶ Burke, pp.280-1, does admit that this bifurcation occurs at different times in different countries during the early modern period, but this acknowledgment of the locality of such occurrences does not alter or complicate the essential shape of the process which he describes.

⁴⁷ Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.3.

buyers remained socially variegated: in the early seventeenth century gentry collectors were still copying ballads into their commonplace books; probably the same ballads which were to be found on the walls of 'honest alehouses', in 'the shops of artificers' and in 'the cottages of poor husbandmen'.⁴⁸

Watt highlights Bob Scribner's comments that source materials used in studies of popular culture tend to reveal only 'forms of downward mediation by educational or literate élites.'⁴⁹ My study, like Watt's, aims to take into account the specific continuities and crossovers of forms and practices, which occur, in this case, around the romance. Watt's example of a ballad being copied into a commonplace book touches on the appropriation of entertaining material by humanist practices for ostensibly profitable ends, to which I now turn.

Debates about suitable reading matter in the humanist educational programme are worth reiterating here since they are fundamental to my argument. Central to my thesis is the ambivalence towards fiction in the early modern classroom; as I will go on to discuss, the use of fiction as academic exercise and the means by which classical texts are incorporated in the curriculum provide models for discussions of fiction in romance paratexts. I also draw throughout my thesis on the research into the history of reading by such academics as Anthony Grafton, Lisa Jardine, and William Sherman, whose work on the 'goal-orientated' reading of early modern scholars informs my readings of the rhetorical constructions of profit and pragmatism in the romance paratexts.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.3.

⁴⁹ Watt, pp.3-4.

⁵⁰ See Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, "'Studied for Action": How Gabriel Harvey read his Livy', *Past and Present*, 129 (1990), 30-78, and William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

Classical texts were of prime importance to the humanist pedagogical programme and their inclusion was justified in various ways; they would provide moral instruction when read according to the methods instilled by the tutor; or, they were to be plundered by the student for examples which would serve to enrich their writing or provide material for orations and *controversiae*.⁵¹ The romance paratexts exploit these techniques of humanist teaching by which classical fiction is made to conform to Christian belief, implying that if a reader is sufficiently educated, s/he will necessarily read the text for instruction through delight.

In his *De tradendis disciplinis*, first published in Antwerp in 1531, Vives was greatly concerned with the interpretation of classical authors according to Christian teaching:

We shall not let the earliest studies be infected with heathen errors, and thus contaminate our religion, but, from the beginning, we shall accustom ourselves to right and sound views, which will then by degrees grow up with us.⁵²

Vives makes clear that readers will be prepared for an encounter with heathen authors if they are already accustomed to 'right and sound' views. The ability to read correctly was acquired in stages. Anthony Grafton gives the example of Guarino, who 'not only trained his pupils to read in a moral, positive way but marked up their texts so they could not avoid reaching the proper conclusions about them.'⁵³ The emphasis here is on the teacher shaping the reading experience of the student by careful guidance. In *The Education of a Christian*

⁵¹ For a full discussion of this, see Neil Rhodes, 'The Controversial Plot: Declamation and the Concept of the Problem Play', *Modern Language Review* 95 (2000), 609-22, pp.611-15.

⁵² Juan Luis Vives, *Vives: On Education: A Translation of the 'De tradendis disciplinis' of Juan Luis Vives*, intro. Foster Watson (Totowa, N. J.: Roman and Littlefield, 1913, rpt 1971), p.7.

⁵³ Anthony Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997, rpt 2000), p.47.

Prince, Erasmus also writes of the ways in which a tutor can make use of potentially problematic classical material by reinterpreting it to make a profitable point:

I think I have pointed out frequently how to accumulate examples by expansion in my book *De copia*. Even examples of vice, however, can be turned to the good: the energy and high-mindedness of Julius Caesar, which he prostituted to his ambition, you could well devote to the interests of your country, and the clemency which he simulated for the sake of winning and maintaining the position of tyrant you should use in all sincerity to winning over your subjects' affection to yourself.⁵⁴

In *On the Method of Study*, he suggests that the tutor take measures to 'protect' his audience from the problematic material: 'If, for instance, someone were going to read Virgil's second *Eclogue*, he should prepare or rather protect the minds of his audience with a suitable preface along the following lines: friendship can exist only among similar people, for similarity promotes mutual good will'.⁵⁵ Elsewhere, Erasmus stipulates that the reading of pagan material was only to be undertaken after schooling had formed the subject into a moral individual,⁵⁶ and more straightforwardly Christian texts had been studied to provide true examples of virtue. He writes in *The Education of a Christian Prince* that, 'it will take very little to incite a naturally wild and violent boy to tyranny if, without being equipped with an antidote, he reads about Achilles or Alexander the Great or Xerxes or Julius Caesar.'⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, trans. and ed. Lisa Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.63-64.

⁵⁵ Desiderius Erasmus, 'On the Method of Study', in Craig R. Thompson (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol.24, trans. Brian McGregor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 661-91, pp.684-5.

⁵⁶ For a detailed discussion of the humanist disagreement over the best age for study, see Bushnell, pp.109-11.

⁵⁷ Erasmus, *Christian Prince*, p.61.

It would seem, then, that the paradox at the heart of the humanist educational programme is the emphasis on reading all available books even though not all books are suitable to be read, or are only suitable to be read according to strict humanist practices. Vives states that there is no limit to the number of books that ought to be read, writing that:

[a]s in everything connected with observation there are no limits, for there is nothing so manifest to the senses that it would not require many minds to be most lavishly exercised for a very long time, for a complete record, so we find books have increased to such uncountable numbers.⁵⁸

While such humanists counselled that readers should read as widely and as often as possible, this was only with the caveat that the readers read the text in a way sanctioned by humanist teaching.

Rebecca Bushnell offers a useful perspective on humanist schoolroom reading; I am particularly sympathetic to her argument that there is a peculiar tension between 'extremes of flexibility and rigid control, [...] between a passion for variety and abundance and a fear of excess.'⁵⁹ Bushnell undertakes a reading of humanist educational teaching and reading practices which is sensitive to the contradictions of humanist attempts to direct the schoolmaster and student in their education. This is a reading much more attuned to the material practices and implications of humanist pedagogy than are characteristic New Historicist accounts of the educational process, typified by a writer such as Richard Halpern who comes to the conclusion that 'humanism enables the schooled subject to

⁵⁸ Vives, p.44.

⁵⁹ Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.117.

desire his own ideological subordination.’⁶⁰ Ann Moss reproduces this mode of thinking, writing of the schoolroom environment that:

boys were conditioned to think in ways determined by the instrument they used to probe material they were set to study, store in their memory, and retrieve for reproduction, that is to say, by their commonplace-book.⁶¹

Such interpretations deny the creativity of such a teaching programme. In the light of the concerns about romance reading which I cited at the beginning of this introduction, Juan Luis Vives is seemingly only authoritarian in his concerns for children and women, and is, in fact, reasonably lenient in his prescription of reading material for men. As Bushnell explains:

for adult readers Vives excluded only books that were violent in method (*libri altercatorii, rixosi, contentiosi*) or in content (praising war, tyranny, or cruelty); he regarded ‘lascivious writings (*rebus lasciviis*),’ popular songs, and vernacular writings as texts best left to individual judgment and taste⁶²

In ‘On the Method of Study’, Erasmus displays a similar level of trust in a teacher’s ability to read morally; he states that in order to be ‘omniscient’, a teacher should ‘range through the entire spectrum of writers so that he reads, in particular, all the best, but does not fail to sample any author, no matter how pedestrian.’⁶³ These examples shift the responsibility from the writer of the material to the reader, suggesting that, once a man has been educated to a sufficient standard, he can be trusted to read even profane texts as he is equipped with the necessary reading skills to interpret them within a Christian framework.

⁶⁰ Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p.30.

⁶¹ Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.134.

⁶² Bushnell, p.124.

⁶³ Erasmus, ‘On the Method of Study’, p.672.

In *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*, Erasmus instructs the reader in gathering examples to add variety and rhetorical 'colour' to writing. In his section on 'Enrichment of material', he advises, referring to Quintilian, that '[a] most effective means of making what we are saying convincing and of generating *copia* at the same time is to be found in illustrative examples'.⁶⁴ He goes on to say that:

We include under 'examples' stories, fables, proverbs, opinions, parallels or comparisons, similitudes, analogies, and anything else of the same sort. Most of these are introduced not only to make our case look convincing, but also to dress it up and brighten, expand, and enrich it [....] furthermore the variety of the material will prevent boredom.⁶⁵

It is then not a stretch of the imagination to see that romance writers seize on these modes of reading and writing to advertise the potential moral reading of a seemingly immoral text or to position the romance as a repository of good style.

I am not the first person to consider the 'ambivalence' towards fiction in humanist writing, but I think I am original in applying this concern articulated in pedagogical writing to the contemporary production and reading of romances.⁶⁶ In his essay, 'Moral Ambiguity and the Renaissance Art of Eloquence', Quentin Skinner discusses the persuasive faculty of classical humanism, highlighting two principal methods of amplification: the use of figures and tropes to make

⁶⁴ Desiderius Erasmus, *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*, in Craig R. Thompson (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 24, trans. Betty I. Knott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 284-659, p.606. For a detailed discussion of the use of *copia* in the classical and early modern periods, see Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp.3-34; also, Neil Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp.46-50.

⁶⁵ Erasmus, *De copia*, p.607.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Rhodes, p.609, on the 'moral ambiguity' generated by the rhetorical exercise of *controversiae* involving arguing both sides of the question; also, Arthur Kinney, *Humanist Poetics: Thought, Rhetoric, and Fiction in Sixteenth-Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), pp.10-11.

discourse persuasive or 'colourable', and rhetorical redescription.⁶⁷ The latter involves the re-casting of an action or event to bring out its moral significance and so influence the attitude of the reader or listener. Skinner writes that it is a strategy 'to replace the descriptions offered by our adversaries with a set of terms that picture the action no less plausibly, but serve at the same time to place it in a contrasting moral light.'⁶⁸ This is in order to 'persuade our hearers to accept our new descriptions, and hence to adopt a new attitude towards the action involved – either one of increased sympathy or acquired moral outrage.'⁶⁹ This technique is discussed in Book IV of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratorio*, and is picked up by early modern writers on rhetoric, including Puttenham and Wilson. The following part of Skinner's argument is of great importance to my reading of early modern fiction. He gives details of the proximity of virtue and vice in classical thought and writes:

Because of these neighbouring relations, a clever orator can always hope to challenge the preferred description of an action with some show of plausibility. For he can always hope to denigrate a good action by redescribing it with the name of a neighbouring vice. The moral, as Cicero puts in in *De Partitione Oratorio*, is that 'we need to take great care lest we find ourselves deceived by those vices which appear to imitate virtue'.⁷⁰

I go on to discuss in my next section the capacity for pleasing fiction to mask either virtue or vice. Cicero's warning that the reader or listener must 'take great care' anticipates the levels of training which humanist educational thinking decreed was necessary for the moral interpretation of texts.

⁶⁷ Quentin Skinner, 'Moral Ambiguity and the Renaissance Art of Eloquence', *Essays in Criticism* 44 (1994), 267-92, p.273.

⁶⁸ Skinner, p. 273. I discuss the fraught significance of early modern 'plausibility' in my third chapter.

⁶⁹ Skinner, pp.273-4.

⁷⁰ Skinner, p.277.

iii. Protesting profit in the early modern romance

Early modern treatises on poetry, and the prefatory material which accompanies poetry, regularly cite the Horatian principle that all material intended to instruct, whether written or oral, should convey profit and delight. In such a formulation, delight was seen to be necessary as it aided the transmission of material by holding the reader's or listener's attention and facilitated the committing to memory of the same material. The prefatory promise of profit and delight is so widespread in the sixteenth century that it is accepted nowadays as a given with relatively little need for further investigation.⁷¹ Nonetheless, the burgeoning field of book history encourages us to take into account the book as object and the practices of reading which can be constructed or reconstructed from early modern texts. My aim is to focus on the relationship between profit and pleasure in relation to the early modern mode of romance; this is a relationship that has received little critical attention in recent years and I hope to demonstrate that an examination of the humanistic, contingent ends of profit and delight is vital to an understanding of the production and reading of romances at that time.

The emphasis on the role of recommended texts and reading practices in early modern humanist discourses⁷² on education is central to my thesis, specifically the role of pleasure in such discourses. It is important to recognise

⁷¹ The exception is Lorna Hutson's influential study on the economic and humanist senses of 'profit', in *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁷² I aim not to treat humanist discourse as monolithic; throughout my thesis, I will take care to refer to the specific writers and theories of reading which influence the construction of romances in the sixteenth century.

that the generation of pleasure in reading is a means to an end; its function is merely to facilitate the comprehension and committal to memory of the text's useful material; pleasure as an end in itself is not acknowledged as a suitable outcome of writing or reading. Although the writers, translators, or compilers of texts commonly claim that their work is 'idle' or a 'mere toy' to be read at the patron's or reader's leisure, the idea of recreation as re-creation is implicit in their apologies.⁷³ In the sixteenth century, 'recreation' was understood, as it is today, to be 'a pleasurable exercise or employment',⁷⁴ but it carried primarily the now obsolete sense from the Latin '*recreare*', to restore, or reinvigorate.⁷⁵ Therefore, the idea that texts would provide refreshment and so instigate a renewed, active engagement with the world is implicit even in these self-deprecating preliminaries.⁷⁶

It seems clear that early modern humanists tended to interpret the linking of profit and delight as an unequal partnership in which was permitted only as much pleasure as would aid the transmission of the profit of the text. This reading of Horace, however, occludes the more varied permutations of profit and delight which are suggested by the significantly more equivocal original Latin, '*aut prodesse ... aut delectare*'. In considering the ways in which reading for pleasure could be figured in early modern texts, it is vital to bear in mind that this formulation permits a range of interpretations. As Robert Matz explains:

⁷³ I am grateful to Dr Mark Jenner for pointing out to me the etymological link between the idea of recreation as pastime and recreation as the re-formation, through instruction, of the self.

⁷⁴ OED, 'recreation', n.¹ 3.b.

⁷⁵ OED, 'recreate', v.¹ 1.a.

⁷⁶ Richard Helgerson argues this in his book, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); see also Juliet Fleming, 'The ladies' man and the age of Elizabeth', in James Grantham Turner (ed.), *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 158-81, p.168.

As Madeleine Doran has noted, the “aut...aut” of Horace’s definition presents a choice of “either/or.” Renaissance interpreters frequently shift from a decision between alternatives to the decision for both. Though this shift may be warranted by other passages in Horace and Lucretius that do not demand a choice between profit or pleasure, the conflict between a choice of “either/or” or “both/and” in the classical sources suggests [...] that the relations between profitable and pleasurable activity are subject to potentially contradictory, potentially strategic interpretation.⁷⁷

The equivocation over the interpretation of Horace’s famous precept that Matz describes is of particular value to an analysis of the status of pleasure in sixteenth-century reading matter. However, his view that early modern writers adopted the ‘both/and’ variety of profit and pleasure is only part of the story; as I will go on to argue in my second and third chapters, paratexts covertly construct a mode of reading in which the primary effect is delight; this is achieved through an engagement with humanist reading practices, and consequently serves to ironise the rhetorical claims to profit and delight which abound in the prefatory matter of many early modern texts.

The relationship between profit and pleasure is frequently transformed into the metaphor of the bitter pill with the sweet coating. This gustatory metaphor stems from classical writing; as Matz notes, Lucretius used the metaphor of wormwood daubed with honey to describe his instructional verse.⁷⁸ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this trope is reworked as the ubiquitous metaphor of the medicine whose unpleasant taste is masked by the addition of a sweetener to aid its internalisation and restorative effect. The sweet and palatable nature of poetry is addressed by Sir Philip Sidney in *An Apology for Poetry*; his famous definition of poetry as ‘an art of imitation [...] with this

⁷⁷ Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.1.

⁷⁸ Matz, p.1.

end, to teach and delight'⁷⁹ is followed by the division of poetry into several kinds; the second, says Sidney, taking his cue from Scaliger, deals with 'matters philosophical' and includes writers such as Virgil and Lucan, 'which who mislike, the fault is in their judgments quite out of taste, and not in the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge.'⁸⁰ Sidney then goes on to the third kind of 'poesy' whose practitioners 'most properly do imitate to teach and delight';⁸¹ discussing poets who do not write in verse, Sidney cites Xenophon and 'Heliodorus in his sugared invention of that picture of love in Theagenes and Chariclea'.⁸² Sir John Harington employs the metaphor to distinguish the different levels of instruction that readers of different abilities will receive on reading his translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*:

For the weaker capacities will feede themselues with the pleasantnes of the historie and sweetnes of the verse / Some that haue stronger stomackes will as it were take a further taste of the Morall sence, a third sort more high conceited then they, will digest the Allegorie⁸³

In the above examples, the implication of this metaphor is that the instruction to be found in the text is unpalatable and so requires the addition of poetry in order to be made pleasant; the reverse of this is that matter which is detrimental to the health can be similarly masked by a sweet veneer. Objectors to the chivalric romance employ this sense to explain the ways in which perilous material could be masked and fed to the unwitting reader. Chief among François de la Noue's objections to *Amadis de Gaule* and its fellow Iberian romances (discussed in

⁷⁹ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry: or, The Defence of Poesy*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. ed. R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965, rpt 2002), p.86.

⁸⁰ Sidney, p.86.

⁸¹ Sidney, p.87.

⁸² Sidney, p.87.

⁸³ Sir John Harington (trans.), 'An Apologie of Poetrie', in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* (London: Richard Field, 1591), sig. ¶.iiii.v.

detail in Chapter Two) is the view that the subject and language of the romance is so appealing that it inspires in the reader a kind of craving for wicked reading material. Instead of the soul being nourished by profitable discourse, it is instead malnourished with the delights and lies of the romance:

Whereof some after they had learned to *Amadize* in speech, their teeth watered, so desirous were they even to taste of some small morsels of the delicates therein most livelie and naturally represented. And although many disdained and reiected them, yet haue but ouer many, hauing once tasted of them, made them their continuall foode. This sustenance hath ingendered euil humours that distempered those soules which paraduerture at the first thought not to haue growen so weake.⁸⁴

Thomas Howell, in *His deuises, for his owne exercise, and friends pleasure*, includes the following lines in the first poem in his collection, entitled 'No assurance but in Vertue': 'Then who so sees the Sugar strawde on Gall, / And shunnes the same, by sacred Vertues skill: / Shall safely stande, when Follyes children fall'.⁸⁵ From these examples, it appears that 'poison' and instruction can equally be camouflaged by pleasure in texts; this shifts the emphasis onto the reader's literary skills which are required in order to detect the difference.

Recently, critics have begun to turn their attention to the negotiation of profit and pleasure in the preliminary materials of early modern prose. Introducing his edited collection on early modern prose fiction, Donald Beecher writes that, in prefatory material, '[l]evels of expectation emerged through their selection of processes concerning both the recreational and the didactic content of these works.'⁸⁶ Beecher's subsequent comments suggest that he takes these

⁸⁴ François de la Noue, *The Politicke and Militarie Discourses of the Lord de la Noue*, (London: Thomas Orwin, 1587), p.48.

⁸⁵ Thomas Howell, *His deuises, for his owne exercise, and his friends pleasure* (London: H. Jackson, 1581), STC 13875, sig. Bi^r.

⁸⁶ Donald Beecher (ed.), 'Introduction', *Critical Approaches to English Prose Fiction, 1520-1640* (Ottawa, Canada: Dovehouse Editions, 1998), 1-30, p.12.

assertions to be rhetorical, in the sense that they bear little relation to the actual reading of the text and that they are included for commercial reasons:

statements concerning the social and moral utility of fiction became a routine part of the packaging, though the stories following such introductions, once they were reformulated in the imagination (and to their aesthetic credit), did not always yield up the formulaic moral visions or preachments that had been proposed. The promise of moral instruction was but one of many tactics used for marketing fiction.⁸⁷

While Beecher dismisses the formulation as ‘routine’, my aim in this thesis is to reconstruct the relationships between humanist reading and romance which are set out in the paratexts to romances at the time. Beecher and others, whom I will discuss below, note the apparent disjunction between claims to the moral benefits of fiction and the predominantly, or even exclusively, pleasurable text. In fact, Beecher, while insisting on the reciprocal abilities of fiction and audiences to fashion one another according to models of supply and demand, remains resistant to the idea of pleasure and instruction being anything other than mutually exclusive; an opinion which posits a rather monolithic idea of ‘the reader’ and reading practices in the early modern period.⁸⁸ As Howell’s quotation above shows, a reader trained to read vigilantly would be skilled in extracting profit from the text; the humanist reader’s active engagement to seek out the moral instruction available in a text is adopted by romance writers to suggest, often not entirely seriously, the ways in which their texts might be read and the uses to which they might be put. The printed paratexts, if not the texts themselves, bring a vitality and contemporaneity to these centuries-old romances, inscribing and

⁸⁷ Beecher, p.12.

⁸⁸ Beecher, p.13.

contesting ways of reading which are seemingly ill-matched to the romance mode.

Beecher writes that the 'social gesturality' of the paratexts is the product of an anxiety on the writers' parts to control the reception of their texts and to reassure readers of their moral utility. He goes on to say that the writers' attempts to achieve delight and instruction in their texts produced limitations:

But that art must accomplish both successfully for all readers, and in ways that might place a stranglehold on creativity, also amounted to a critical impasse. [...] What writers could not find was that middle ground that defends the value of fiction in terms of the life of the imagination itself, in terms of felt experience and aesthetic pleasure. [...] The dichotomy remained between fictional truth and fictional toys.⁸⁹

The paratexts which accompany many sixteenth-century romances demonstrate an awareness of the maligned status of the mode in the light of humanist and Reformist teaching, and construct readers and readings with such discourses in mind; this results in a complex interplay of the reader's expectations and, I argue, a frequent playfulness on the part of the composers of the paratexts, dealing in ever more ironic ways with the possible tensions between recommended and actual reading material and practices. Because Beecher effaces the differences between readers, he reaches the conclusion that no middle ground could be achieved in the struggle between profit and pleasure; however, by acknowledging that what one reader might find to be fictional truth, another might find to be a fictional toy, one can see that there is much scope for licence in interpretation of preliminary matter. The paratexts of romances do not amount to a 'critical impasse', but rather exploit the fraught relationship between profit and pleasure; they can on the one hand defend the active, moral reading of

⁸⁹ Beecher, pp.16-17.

fiction, and, on the other, covertly licence the educated reader to read for pleasure by drawing attention to the arguments against reading in such away.

Making reference to Halasz's work on the printing and dissemination of pamphlets, Arthur Kinney states:

While we might take issue that works of fiction were finally, or even primarily, pleasureable [*sic*], as surely the authors did who pronounced repeatedly their interest in morality and conduct by using fiction as cultural exemplarity, there can by no doubt that pamphlet production – and here I include fiction – quickened the book trade, supported the book trade, and helped to shape it.⁹⁰

Kinney's comments are symptomatic of the prevailing critical view that the pleasing fiction was an awkward necessity of reading material, that the principal concern of early modern texts was to instruct, and that their popularity was an important factor in the development of the book trade in the sixteenth century. Kinney implies a division between the intentions of the authors, who sought to produce a moral canon of texts, and inexorable market forces governed by the huge demand for fiction; that is, that the pleasurable outcomes of reading, leading to further book production, were not those which the authors sought to produce. Though it would be foolish to argue that the great proliferation of romance titles and editions throughout the century was due to anything other than the common appetite for such texts, I argue that the producers of such texts were more sensitive to the idea of reading for pleasure than is generally credited, and that, while they were advertising the moral benefits of their texts, their means of doing so alluded to a bolder pleasure in reading which was directed toward those schooled to draw moral benefit from the text.

⁹⁰ Arthur Kinney, 'Marketing Fiction', in Beecher, 45-61, p.48.

In an article on the prefatory material to early modern fiction, Roger Pooley suggests that ‘these preliminary matters [...] show writers of fiction, and their publishers and friends, engaged in constructing, imagining, and positioning their readership. In particular, fictional prose seems concerned about the tensions between reading for profit and reading for pleasure, and in the difference made by the gender and class of the reader.’⁹¹ In this thesis I will articulate these concerns, exploring the ways in which gender and social status are taken into account in the constructions of readers and their abilities. However, I depart from Pooley’s observations to address specifically the implications of these tensions between profit and pleasure, and to argue that they enable a productive understanding of attempts to make explicit the educative potential of romance or, more remarkably, to construct elaborate parodies of humanist writing on instruction and so provide a skilful legitimation of reading for pleasure. As romances in print reached ever wider readerships, their paratexts provided a means for more educated readers to distinguish themselves from the less well educated by preserving distinctions on the level of literacy between those who would appreciate the jesting in the paratexts and those who would not and, in doing so, provided a complex pleasure in recognising the arguments against reading for pleasure.

Since the inception of this thesis, a few critical works have appeared which touch on the relationship between humanism and romance, but they do not enlarge on their initial observations or take into account the ways in which romance writers retaliate in the face of criticism of their texts. In his excellent book on *Chivalry and Romance in the Renaissance*, Alex Davis writes that

⁹¹ Roger Pooley, “‘I confesse it to be a mere toy’: How to Read the Preliminary Matter to Renaissance Fiction”, in Beecher, 109-22, p.110. See also Kevin Dunn, *Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

'romances fill a space logically implied by and created by humanistic literary theory: the structurally necessary Other of Erasmian reading practices', and that they are, moreover, 'an image of the humanistic nightmare: of books that gain mastery over their readers'.⁹² My work extends this idea to consider the reactions in romance texts which show that they are aware of their detractors and that they endeavour to point out the ways in which these texts might be of use to the humanist reader, at times seriously and at times in jest. Peter Mack devotes a chapter of his book, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, to the idea of common features in histories, conduct manuals, and romances. He writes that they have in common, 'moral stories, ethical sentences, techniques of amplification, speeches and letters, debate, and shared themes',⁹³ and that these are the product of Tudor rhetorical education. Once again my thesis extends this study by addressing the role of the paratext and the book in shaping the reader's approach to the text. Goran V. Stanivukovic, shifting the emphasis from women's suggestible reading of romance, has also recently argued that narratives of early modern romances were fashioned as conduct books for young men, through such common romance *topoi* as a young man leaving home, male friendships, and loving a maiden.⁹⁴ While all of the texts advance the study of the relationship between humanism and romance in early modern England, my thesis is the first to offer a sustained analysis of the relationship and to note the ironic strategies deployed in the paratexts.

⁹² Davis, p.15.

⁹³ Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.135.

⁹⁴ Goran V. Stanivukovic, 'English Renaissance romances as conduct books for young men', in Naomi Conn Liebler (ed.), *Early Modern Prose Fiction: the Cultural Politics of Reading* (London: Routledge, 2006), 60-78.

In my first chapter, I extend the terms of this introduction to consider the constructions of King Arthur in early modern England as variously an historical figure, an exemplar, and a romance hero. I focus on the catalogues of English writers compiled by John Leland and John Bale and discuss their exclusion of romance and popular texts in favour of historiographical and theological writing, addressing the primacy of individual and national profit and the suppression of readerly pleasure in these catalogues. I then address Leland's long-term project of defending the historicity and exemplarity of King Arthur in the light of continental humanist historiographical methods, and argue that the discourse of exemplarity which coalesces around Arthur anticipates the terms in which romances are positioned for their readers as profitable and delightful, as discussed in my later chapters. I end with a discussion of Richard Robinson's English translation of Leland's Latin treatise on Arthur, paying attention to the ways in which Robinson's paratexts and translation reshape Leland's initial project, inscribing Arthur as a figurehead for the clandestine society of archers to which Robinson belonged; this society of archers participates in the nostalgic return to chivalry in the later years of the sixteenth century, during which time the figure of Arthur is irrevocably consigned to romance fiction.

My second and third chapters consider the influence of continental romances and anti-romance discourses on English romances. Since neither humanism nor romance were exclusively English phenomena, it is necessary to trace the influences on, and connections between, the romances written and printed on the continent which then arrive in England with a host of paratextual and extratextual arguments in their wake. Chapter two traces the development of the hugely popular yet extensively censured Iberian romances, including *Amadis*

de Gaule and *Palmerin of England*, from their initial printing in Spain and Portugal, through their French translations, to English. I argue that the terms in which the romances are condemned by churchmen and humanists in Spain are transported across the continent with the texts themselves. The French treatment of the romances runs to extremes, with extracts from the numerous volumes of *Amadis de Gaule* anthologised as an extremely popular humanist letter-writing manual, *Le Thresor des livres d'Amadis de Gaule*, while Bishop Jacques Amyot and the soldier, François de la Noue, publish texts attacking the indecency of the romances. The terms, 'Amadis' and, to a lesser extent, 'Palmerin', are employed in England long before the romance texts are first printed in English, standing for the kind of unprofitable fiction that was so enticing and dangerous to uneducated readers; moreover, the *Thresor* and la Noue's text are translated into English almost two decades before the romances themselves, helping to shape diverse expectations of the romances before their arrival. The paratexts written by the English translator of many of the romances, Anthony Munday, seek to position the romances as humanist texts, yet the strategies he employs are humorous and intertextual, turning the argument of Jacques Amyot on itself for the benefit of the aware and discerning reader.

Chapter three discusses the Italian and English editions of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Sir Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, I draw attention, in particular, to the translator of *Orlando Furioso*, Sir John Harington's, approach to the romance material and his playful addresses to his highly restricted court readership. I then discuss the representation of reading in *The Faerie Queene*, arguing that Spenser employs a humorous mode of address to his educated readers in his 'Letter to Raleigh', referencing humanist and

Reformist arguments against reading for pleasure while inviting his readers to do so.

I conclude by outlining the ways in which the increasingly varied and inventive responses to romance in the sixteenth century, and the attempts to fashion a legitimate educated and entertained romance readership, unfold in the seventeenth century. I acknowledge that humanist concerns about the distractions of romance persist, but alongside these, there is an increasing acceptance of romances as canonical reading, a situation shaped by the rehabilitation of pleasure in reading in the romance paratexts of the sixteenth century.

CHAPTER 2

BALE AND LELAND: THE DENIAL AND RETURN OF ROMANCE IN
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

In my introduction, I discussed the ways in which the acts of writing and reading were constructed in humanist instructive materials, and introduced the idea that the accommodation of fictional material in these pedagogical texts provided those involved in the production of romances with a means of defending their texts, whether earnestly or humorously. This first chapter extends the concerns of my introduction into specific examples of the conflicts between profit and pleasure, and truth and fiction, as they were played out by writers invested in the defence of King Arthur as an historical figure. By addressing these concerns, I will set out the continuities and discontinuities between humanist and Reformist ideas of profitable texts and reading, and suggest that the struggles between these conceptions of valuable material offer a way of approaching early modern romances which takes into account their relations to wider debates on the utility and morality of texts in the sixteenth century.

The textual history of King Arthur is central to this chapter. In order to illuminate my ongoing argument of the disjunctions between romance paratexts and the texts they accompany, I revisit the treatment of King Arthur in print, arguing that debates on the function of verifiable truth in humanist historiography, when set against humanist writing on the use of fiction in exemplary texts, foster an intellectual climate in which the veracity of King Arthur can be successfully challenged at the same time as his status as an exemplary figure can be promoted. This discussion may appear a rather circuitous route to the paratexts of the early modern romances I will discuss in chapters two and three, but it is vital to my argument that the centrality of

classical fiction in humanist pedagogical theory provides romance writers with a sophisticated register of apology for their texts. I argue that the terms in which humanist and Reformist ideas of distinguishing that which is true and that which is profitable in reading shape the terms by which romance texts are condemned.

Protesting the truth was a necessity for modes of theological and humanist writing. The discourse of veracity was required to support the foundations of the state in historiographical writing, and complete trust in scriptural interpretation was central to the establishment of the Protestant Church. The intersections of historiography, religious polemic, and romance, and their claims to profit the reader are vital to this discussion, since the discourses which pervade each mode of writing have interesting points of contact and divergence. I argue that, by tracing their intersections and dynamics, a clearer picture emerges of attitudes to the consequences of writing and reading in early modern texts.

The paratextual claims to a text's profit and pleasure which are so pervasive in the early modern period are central to this discussion, as they are throughout my thesis. By exploring humanist and Reformist ideas on acceptable reading materials and acceptable reading practices, I argue that there is an inconsistency which cannot be resolved between exemplarity and true history, and which results in Arthur being tacitly recast as a fictional, exemplary hero by being aligned not only with Christian heroes but also with those of classical antiquity. The terms by which the continued interest in Arthur are justified are then seized on by contemporary producers of romance who, as I will go on to show in later chapters, use them in increasingly ingenious and ostentatious ways to indicate the ostensible profit in reading their romances.

My chapter begins with a survey of the role of the exemplary life narrative in early sixteenth-century humanist discourses on recommended reading material and reading practices. Such discourses deal with the matter of secular or classical fictional sources. I then go on to discuss the cataloguing projects of John Leland and John Bale which aim to set forth a canon of historiographers and proto-Protestant writers; Leland and Bale have different, but equally narrow, criteria by which they select and write about their favoured writers, but they are both hostile to the inclusion of romances and other fictions since these serve no purpose in their projects; nonetheless, Leland in particular is occupied with the status of King Arthur, whose historicity came under increasing scrutiny during the early sixteenth century, due to the arrival in English of Italian humanist historiographical treatises which advanced a different set of criteria in determining the truth of history. I will detail the attempts of Leland and others to preserve the impression of Arthur as an historical figure in the light of mounting evidence to the contrary. The terms of these debates centre on humanistic truth and profit in texts; throughout the chapter, I show how they are relevant to the terms in which romance writers position and defend their texts in the following chapters. The chapter culminates in a discussion of the tensions which are apparent in the paratexts of Richard Robinson's translation of Leland's antiquarian defence of the historicity of Arthur, *A Learned and True Assertion of the original Life, Actes, and death of the most Noble, Valiant, and Renoumed Prince Arthure, Kinge of great Brittain*, printed in 1582. I argue that Robinson's preliminary material to his translation participates in common paratextual constructions of exemplarity while defending his personal concerns for a nostalgic revival of chivalry, and that these are strategies which significantly

undermine Leland's attempts to construct an unambiguously credible history of King Arthur, and do much to consolidate the fictiveness of Arthur. While much critical material has been written on the use of the figure of Arthur in Tudor historiography in the sixteenth century,¹ I focus on the protracted process by which Arthur's status as a historical figure is diminished at the same time as his status as a fictional exemplar and romance hero is cemented.

While I am predominantly concerned in my thesis with humanist discourses and their relevance to the shaping of romance paratexts and the rehabilitation of reading for pleasure in the early modern period, the importance of Reformist ideas of writing and reading to such an argument is undeniable. The period on which I concentrate witnessed huge debates on the methods and uses of texts and reading, and the Reformation provided as great an impetus for reflections on reading as the reforms in humanist pedagogy. In his recent book, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*, Brian Cummings defines sixteenth-century Europe as 'a radical and volatile moment in the history of reading. The availability of books; the form and construction of those books; the shape and function of the scholar's study; the praxis of silent or private reading; the framework of annotation; the methodology of interpretation, are all in flux.'² While I cannot hope, in my brief study, to cover all of these aspects which Cummings identifies, my argument does acknowledge the consequences of the Reformation for reading and writing.

¹ See, for example, T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London: Methuen, 1950), May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), and John E. Curran Jr, *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England, 1530-1660* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002).

² Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.60. John N. King's recent article, "'The Light of Printing': William Tyndale, John Foxe, and Early Modern Print Culture', *Renaissance Quarterly* 54.1 (2001), 52-85, also provides a useful account of the relations between material print practices and the Reformation ideology.

Cummings also neatly describes the relationship between past and present in texts in the early years of the sixteenth century:

The Reformation as a historical event has traditionally been seen as a battle between two religious groups, but it might be truer to say that it was a process founded on division: between new and old, protestant and catholic, righteous and sinner, 'faith' and 'works', repentant and reprobate, or elect and damned.³

Cummings' fondness for binary distinctions is useful up to a point; I am, however, interested in the ways in which the distinctions between 'new and the old' and, to a lesser extent, 'protestant and catholic', are elided in the texts and paratexts which I discuss. In these, I examine the competing impulses towards historical and textual truth, and fictive exemplarity, and argue that the terms in which humanist fiction comes to be discussed set precedents for the ways in which those who write, translate, and print romances position their texts in the marketplace. Defining the Reformation as a profoundly textual moment, Cummings writes, 'religion [...] cannot be separated from writing.'⁴ By the same token, writing at this time cannot be separated from religion. As I will make clear, the distinctions between humanist and Reformist ideas are often extremely complex to set out and they provide the impetus for this chapter, drawing attention to the competing statuses of true history and exemplary fiction at this time.

Much useful critical attention has recently been paid to the cataloguing projects of John Leland and John Bale,⁵ and, while I do not intend to make these

³ Cummings, p.13.

⁴ Cummings, p.5.

⁵ See James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History: Volume 2: 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Trevor Ross, 'Dissolution and the Making of the English Literary Canon: The Catalogues of Leland and Bale', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 15 (1991), 57-80.

the ultimate focus of my chapter, these projects are crucial to my argument on the rehabilitation of exemplary fiction in opposition to progressively more discredited arguments about the historicity of King Arthur. Moreover, their complex manuscript and print history offers a fascinating insight into the conflicting and shifting status of authority in instructive texts in the early modern period, and connected to this, the implicit debate on suitable reading material and suitable reading practice.

The overlapping biographical and bibliographical projects of John Leland and John Bale were compiled and regularly revised from the mid-1530s to 1559; these were published as catalogues of British authors and their most prominent texts by Bale after Leland's death, firstly as the *Illustrium maioris Britannie Scriptorium ... Summarium*, in 1548, revised and expanded as the two-volume *Scriptorum Illustrium maioris Britanniae ... Catalogus* in 1557-59, printed respectively in Wesel and Basel during Bale's two periods of exile.

The significance of these catalogues for my study lies in the fact that they offer an insight into two available, and often competing, modes of reading in the wake of the Reformation. Although Leland and Bale were associated at various points during their writing careers, as Bale wrote a history which Leland commissioned,⁶ their work on the catalogues was in no way a collaboration, and much of Leland's humanistic writing which made it into print was mediated by Bale's characteristically Reformist, and somewhat heavy-handed, interventions. Bale's lists of authors in particular iterate a rather narrow set of criteria by which writers are judged, and the literary qualities of those who we might nowadays regard as writers of fictional texts are passed over in favour of those writers

⁶ For details of this text, see Peter Happé, *John Bale* (New York: Twayne, 1996), pp.7;65

included primarily for the 'truth' or 'profit' which their texts were believed to yield. The 'frutefull auntyent authors' which Bale describes as the object of Leland's study represent contrasting groups for the two catalogue compilers. Leland looked for a tradition of good letters and engaging, useful rhetoric, such as that found in classical writers, to rival the contemporary reputations for writing of continental countries such as France and Italy, while Bale makes clear his wish to remove British writers from such a humanistic account of their values and recast them as figures in the periodised scheme of history set out in the Book of Revelation for which he thinks they serve as evidence.

Writing about Leland and Bale's cataloguing projects, James Simpson argues that:

Bale and Leland together participate within, and in some ways establish, powerful frames for the writing of English literary history. [...] In the first place, they paint a chiaroscuro picture of ages, in which they see themselves as writing on the boundary of one, positive, epoch, about another, negative period ending in the immediate past. Both writers seek to highlight the brilliance of their own age, and to contrast that with the darkness of the past.⁷

While it is, I think, questionable whether Leland and Bale do introduce the terms in which English literary history is written since Bale in particular is unconcerned with the literary qualities of texts, Simpson's comments are valuable in describing the urgency with which Leland and Bale seek to mark out their own time as distinct from the past while simultaneously drawing on that past to reinforce their current concerns. As Simpson continues:

they claim to speak with the voice of a coherent modernity, in which a reformed religion sits easily and naturally with humanist learning. In fact, however, they speak for radically different cultural enterprises. Together

⁷ Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, p.11.

they expose the dividedness of mid-sixteenth century English historiography. Bale the millenarian Protestant constantly differs from Leland the civic humanist, even as he would speak with Leland as the joint voice of a coherent new age.⁸

The identification of the 'dividedness' of early modern historiography is highly relevant to this chapter. However, as I go on to show, it is rather reductive to define the dividedness of Leland's and Bale's projects solely along the lines of competing methods of historiography. Time after time, texts by the two writers betray a similar dividedness in terms of the purpose of the texts: the impulse towards pragmatic learning which is so strong in Leland's texts and paratexts is constantly under threat of erasure by Bale, yet his texts themselves betray the traces of early modern humanist discourses associated with the patronage system and humanistic prefatory rhetoric which constantly qualify his claims to the absolute truth of the text.

Both Leland and Bale, I argue, are keen to allow didactic fiction a profitable purpose and this aspect of their projects is illuminated by the increasing distrust of fiction demonstrated in exemplary accounts of the history of King Arthur. Exemplarity is a central idea governing the way in which texts are taught and read in the early modern period. Exemplarity in its most specific sense is of primary importance to the humanist mode of education. Following the precepts of Cicero, the rhetorical practice of invoking ancient classical or Christian figures as exemplars to be emulated has, as Timothy Hampton writes, the potential 'to define the self in relation to ideal images from the past'.⁹ Hampton's thesis stresses the outcome of rhetoric as 'inducement to action',¹⁰ the

⁸ Simpson, p.12.

⁹ Timothy Hampton, *Writing From History: the Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p.3.

¹⁰ Hampton, p.3.

public and political functions of the rhetorical study of exemplary texts. It operates in the same sphere as the goal-oriented reading which I discussed in my introduction. However, it is distinct from the practice of commonplacing which is more generally concerned with the identification and committal to memory of sententious precepts than with dealing with the extended narrative of an exemplar's life. Nonetheless, both commonplaces and examples were central to the humanist school curriculum and these pedagogical approaches were inculcated with the expectation that they would be maintained throughout a person's life. As William Kempe writes, in *The Education of Children in Learning*, taken together, commonplaces and examples have an aesthetic and pragmatic function, aiming to 'teach [the student] all things, framing him to eloquence in talke, and vertue in deedes.'¹¹

As Hampton stresses, exemplarity involves an act of reading: 'It constitutes an attempt to interpret ancient history and apply it to action in the world, to move beyond word to flesh.'¹² This inducement to action is present in discussions of rhetoric by both Cicero and Augustine. In the pre-eminent early modern exemplary text, Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *The liues of the noble Grecians and Romanes*, his dedication to Princess Elizabeth details the many practical outcomes of reading the 'liues'. Of course, North is keen to stress that Elizabeth is an ideal example rather than an ideal reader, but is sure that her subjects will find much of value in the text:

For amonge all the profane bookes, that are in reputacion at this day, there is none (your highnes best knowes) that teacheth so much honour,

¹¹ William Kempe, *The Education of children in learning* (London: John Porter and Thomas Gubbin, 1588), quoted in Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.53

¹² Hampton, p.3.

loue, obedience, reuerence, zeale, and deuocion to Princes, as these liues of Plutarke doe.¹³

As a narrative, the exemplary life is a specific form of biography, lacking interiority, relying on the reader to reflect on the parts of the life which are most suitable to be emulated. At the beginning of his life of Alexander the Great, Plutarch writes:

I do not declare al thinges at large, but briefly touch diuers, chiefly in these their noblest acts & most worthy of memory. For they must remember my intent is not to write Histories, but onely Lives. For the noblest deeds do not always shew mens virtues and vices, but oftentimes a light occasion, a word, or some sport, makes mens naturall dispositions and manners appeare more plaine, then the famous battles wonne, wherein are slaine ten thowsand men; or the great armies, or cities won by siege or assault.¹⁴

Hampton explains that in humanist theory, if not in humanist practice, the exemplar's name is 'a noun with a verb phrase (the various great deeds) condensed inside it.'¹⁵ Thus the reader is expected to understand the narrative that this name signifies synecdochically. In order for the exemplar to teach most effectively, it must be 'a representation reduced to absolute semiotic stasis, devoid of ideological ambiguity or figural play.'¹⁶ That is, there should be no ambiguities or conflicting interpretations in the narratives available to the early modern reader, something which Hampton concedes is impossible in practice. As I go on to argue at the end of this chapter, the competing purposes to which the figure of Arthur is put, and the persistent debates over his historicity, prevent consensus in representation and Arthur's status as a romance hero is invested

¹³ Plutarch, *The liues of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. Thomas North (London: Thomas Vautroullier and John Wight, 1579), sig. *ii^r.

¹⁴ Plutarch, p.722.

¹⁵ Hampton, p.25.

¹⁶ Hampton, p.27.

with exemplary terms. As I discussed in my introduction, much critical work on humanist pedagogy, after Grafton and Jardine, underscores the distance between theory and practice.¹⁷ In this chapter, I contribute to that trend, offering a reading of the various uses to which the narrative of Arthur was put.

i. Leland, Bale, and the credibility of catalogues

John Leland undertook the task of compiling records of texts deemed worthy of preservation and so, by implication, study on the grounds of their value to the contemporary religious and historical climates.¹⁸ On inheriting Leland's gargantuan project, Bale found material which he was readily able to adapt to his own Millenarian Protestant ends. Entries in the catalogues were listed under the author's name, but it is apparent that the intention was not simply to record the entire bibliography of an author but to guide the reader towards those of the author's texts which were seen to be in compliance with the opinions of the compilers. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine what Leland and Bale wanted the country's readers to continue to have access to, and the specific cultural conditions which permitted such revisions to take place.

Commissioned by King Henry VIII, John Leland travelled throughout England in the years 1535 to 1543, taking notes on the landscape, buildings of

¹⁷ With specific reference to the disparity between exemplary theory and practice, see Michel Jeanneret, 'The Vagaries of Exemplarity: Distortion or Dismissal', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59.4 (1998), 565-79.

¹⁸ Earlier catalogues had been compiled, such as the fourteenth-century *Catalogus scriptorum ecclesiae* of Henry of Kirkstede, but those of Leland and Bale were the first to purport to include the significant writers of a whole nation. For more, see Simpson, p.11. Simpson cites R. H. Rouse, 'Bostonus buriensis and the Author of the *Catalogus scriptorum ecclesiae*', *Speculum* 41 (1966), 471-99.

interest and, in particular, monasteries and colleges and their literary contents at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. He had the intention of writing a work called 'History and Antiquities of this Nation' but this remained in note form when he died in 1552 after suffering a mental breakdown. According to the seventeenth-century antiquarian, Anthony Wood, Leland was ordered to undertake 'a search after England's antiquities, and to peruse the libraries of all cathedrals, abbeys, priories, colleges...and all places wherein records, writings and secrets of antiquity were reposed.'¹⁹ He then undertook further travel, during the summer months, to research the topographical and cultural landscape, to the north-west in 1539, to East Anglia in 1540-41, to the West Country in 1542, the West Midlands in 1543, the north-east in 1544 and to the Bristol area in 1545.²⁰

The texts which Leland chose to record were selected not only for their supposedly proto-Protestant sentiments but also for the perceived quality of the writing. Leland had, after all, received his education at St Paul's School under the humanist educator, William Lyly. James Carley speculates that, in his time at St Paul's and, later, in Cambridge, Oxford and Paris, he may have been in contact with the humanists, Erasmus, Colet, Grocyn, Linacre and More.²¹ Whatever the truth of this, Leland's reasons for inclusion of texts in his *Commentarii de Scriptoribus Britannicis* were justified in terms as humanist as they were Protestant. He describes the rationale for his project when it was still in its early stage as a dictionary of British writers, *De viris illustribus*:

¹⁹ Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. P. Bliss, 3 vols (1813), I, col.198, quoted in James Simpson, 'Ageism: Leland, Bale, and the Laborious Start of English Literary History, 1350-1550', *New Medieval Literature*, eds. Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 213-35, p.214.

²⁰ See John Scattergood, 'John Leland's *Itinerary* and the Identity of England', in A. J. Piesse (ed.), *Sixteenth-century Identities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 58-74, p.58; and John Chandler (ed.), *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993), pp.xxvii-xxxii.

²¹ For Carley's argument, see 'Four Poems in Praise of Erasmus', *Erasmus in English* 11 (1981-82), pp.26-7.

I knowynge by infynyte varyete of bokes, and assyduouse readyng of them, who hath bene learned and who hath written from tyme to tyme in this realme, haue digested into iiii. Bokes, the names of them with their lyues and monuments of learnynge.²²

The short text, entitled the 'Newe Yeares Gyfte', which he presented to Henry VIII in 1546, outlined the ludicrously ambitious plans he had for his mass of notes: in it, he claimed that he would produce a catalogue of British writers called *De viris illustribus*, a silver map of England with accompanying ancient names of places and peoples called *Liber de Topographia Britanniae Primae*, a history of Britain called *De Antiquitate Britannica or Civilis Historia*, a study of English noble families called *De Nobilitate Britannica*, and a compilation of descriptions of England from classical and medieval writers called *Antiquitates Britanniae*.

In addition to writing a number of Protestant polemical texts, John Bale undertook the completion of Leland's catalogue of British authors after the latter's breakdown. His education had been very different from Leland's. He had spent thirty years as a Carmelite friar and, during that time, developed an enduring interest in history and antiquities. After his conversion to Protestantism, Bale sought patronage and worked for Leland during the 1530s, writing a conservative history of the Carmelites, the *Anglorum Heliades*. After being bequeathed all of Leland's notes, he compiled the *Index Britanniae Scriptorum* (1549-57), which was not published until the nineteenth century. His re-interpretation of Leland's cataloguing project, the *Illustrium maioris Britannie Scriptorium ... Summarium*, which was printed in 1547 in Wesel during Bale's

²² John Leland, *Newe Yere's Gyfte*, sig. Diiii^v. Published, with notes, by John Bale as *The Laboryouse Serche for Englandes Antiquitees* ([London: S. Mierdman for John Bale], 1549).

first period of exile, was expanded into the *Scriptorum Illustrum Maioris Britanniae ... Catalogus* and printed in Basel in 1557, and again, with expansions, in 1559. He also compiled Leland's topographical notes into *The Laboryouse Journey and Serche of Johan Leylande for Englandes Antiquitees* in 1549. Bale's writing in the *Summarium*, his first comprehensive list of authors and their works, was not as polemical as his later project, the *Catalogus*, and it appears to have been a published 'work-in-progress' for Bale as, at the end of the text, he mentions that it contains many of the views of John Leland and he asks his readers to send him further names for inclusion.

The conclusion drawn from his manuscripts by Leslie Fairfield is that Bale's studies at Cambridge were not especially rigorous and that he had no obvious interest in the humanist advances occurring elsewhere in the university at that time.²³ After his conversion to Protestantism, Bale wrote a number of verse plays, including *Kynge Johan* and *A Comedy concernynge thre lawes*, in the service of Thomas Cromwell in his campaign against papal superstition. He set forth his theory of the periodisation of history in *The Image of bothe churches*, printed in 1545, and a more elaborate revision of English history took place in the two volumes of *The Actes of the Englysh votaryes*, printed in 1546.

Leland and Bale's various attempts to define a canon of texts are symptomatic of a desire to rein in conflicting discourses and try to achieve a kind of fixity and authority in the proliferation of printed materials at the time. This divided attempt at canon formation is based on the assumption that the texts grouped together each contain a distinct meaning for the reader. The reasoning behind the grouping of texts assumes that the same value will be extracted from

²³ Leslie P. Fairfield, *John Bale: Mythmaker for the English Reformation* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1976), pp.6-15.

each text by each reader. It is a process, therefore, which denies the polyvalency of a text. Such a difference in readerly responses was already evident in the politics embodied in Bale's work undertaken to complete Leland's catalogues.

In a period of such theological and state struggles, it is unsurprising that texts which could not be seen to advance Scriptural truth and knowledge are not included in Bale's conspicuously partial bibliographies. Bale does not initiate a new way of characterising texts, but he is anxious to establish a library of authors who, he believes, uphold the truth of Protestant teaching. He includes only the qualities of writers which agree with his view that texts should advance the truth of Scripture. In his entry on Chaucer, he writes:

Thus he turned out an intelligent logician, thus a sweet orator, thus a witty poet, thus an important philosopher and finally a pious theologian. He was besides a naturally-gifted mathematician, ... and a man learned and well-versed in astrology: who is glorified in his book *de Sphaera* and is called a venerable priest.²⁴

Chaucer's status as a poet is buried in a list of his abilities which stresses his rhetorical and theological training. More sustained praise for his poetry only comes in the 'Appendix: *Ex Lelandi Catalogo*' which appears at the end of the entry. In taking pains to distinguish his mode of categorisation from that of his predecessor, Bale demonstrates his commitment to organising the chosen authors into 'centuries', illustrating his fervent belief in the periodisation of history.

The two writers were both, however, concerned with the credibility of the texts they singled out. The texts which feature prominently in the catalogues are mostly either chronicles or religious texts. With these, Leland sought proof of the

²⁴²⁴ Bale, *Catalogus*, p.525. My translation of:

Hinc acutus dialecticus, hinc dulcis rhetor, hinc lepidus poeta, hinc grauis philosophus, ac sanctus denique theologus euasit. Mathematicus insuper ingeniosus erat...uirisque in Mathesi eruditus, instructus: quos ipse in libro suo de Sphaera celebrat, & clericos reuerendos uocat.

existence of a national literary heritage to rival that of continental nations, hoping to dispel doubts about the truth of the Tudor history in the process; Bale instead required texts to instruct the reader in the Reformist views to which he had converted. Fairfield comments that:

Bale's plan of action, after he became a Protestant in the 1530s, was simply to assert the futility of medieval theology, using Scripture and chronicles as evidence. He did not consider it his calling to refute the traditional theologians on their own terms, systematically and syllogistically.²⁵

When Bale inherited Leland's notes, his Reformist intentions allowed him to use essentially the same mode as Leland to praise the purity of the pre-Roman church rather than England's literary past. Leslie Fairfield recognises the importance for Bale of establishing a chronicle history on new terms since 'medieval traditions of historical writing had bequeathed a good deal of organizational confusion'.²⁶ Bale thought that the material which he had inherited from Leland provided evidence of the periodisation of history according to the Seven Seals of Revelation.²⁷ He divided up his catalogues into "centuries" of one hundred authors whom he thought proved Scriptural predictions and looked forward to the opening of the seventh seal which would signify the fall of papal Rome and Judgment Day.

Bale's publication of Leland's 'Newe Yeaes Gyfte' at the beginning of *The Laboryouse Journey* provides an immediate point of comparison between the two writers. Bale reproduces Leland's letter to Henry VIII with his own interpretations interpolated throughout, the names of the two writers heading

²⁵ Fairfield, p.15.

²⁶ Fairfield, p.87.

²⁷ For further discussion, see John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp.63-4 and Fairfield, pp.57-88.

their respective parts. Typically superimposing his own perspective on Leland's earlier enterprise, he writes in the 'Newe Yeares Gyfte':

Not onely ded Johan Leylande collect those frutefull auntyent authors togyther, that men might by them inneye [*i.e.* inveigh] against the false doctrine of pappystes, corruptyng both the scriptures of God and the chronicles of thys realme, by execrable lyes and fables but also that their wyttye workes myghte come to light and be spredde abroad to the worthy fame of the land.²⁸

Leland's stated intentions in his 'New Year's Gyfte' had, as this quotation shows, become subsidiary to Bale's more overtly Protestant project. Unlike Leland, Bale was interested in what English historiography could do to aid the Reformers' cause.

ii. Chronicles and credibility: the problem with Arthur

The focus of this chapter is ultimately Leland's *Assertio inclytissimi Arturii Regis Britanniae* (1544), a tract written to refute the increasingly prevalent arguments by historians such as Polydore Vergil against the historical existence of King Arthur. This Latin text was translated into English by Richard Robinson as *A Learned and True Assertion of the original Life, Actes, and death of the most Noble, Valiant, and Renoumed Prince Arthure, Kinge of great Brittain* and published in 1582. In the final section of this chapter, I will go on

²⁸ Bale, 'Commentary on Leland's *Newe Yeares Gyfte*' in John Leland, *The Laboryouse Journey and Serche of Johan Leylande, for Englandes Antiquitees, geuen of hym as a newe yeares gyfte to Kyng Henry the viii. in the xxxvii. yeare of his raygne, with declaracyons enlarged by Johan Bale*, (1546), in John Chandler, *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993), p.6.

to examine the crucially overlooked fact that Robinson's paratexts reposition Arthur as both an exemplar and a nostalgically chivalric figurehead, positions at odds with the line of credible historicity which Leland advanced for nationalist reasons earlier in the century. In this section, I will set out the terms of the debate over the historicity of Arthur, preparing the way for my reading of Arthur's conflicted status by detailing early modern debates on the writing and reading of historiography which generate doubts about the credibility of accounts of Arthur's existence. This defence was motivated by a desire to uphold, if not prove conclusively, the Tudor account of the history of Britain in defiance of the emerging discourses on methods of humanist, textually-driven historiography by humanists such as Polydore Vergil.

The defence of Arthur's historicity occupied Leland throughout his adult life; in addition to the *Assertio*, he also wrote the *Codrux sive Laus et Defensio Gallofridi Arturii contra Polydorum Vergilium* (c. 1536), which was never published, but formed the basis of his entry on Vergil in the *De viris illustribus*, his catalogue of noteworthy writers.

Polydore Vergil was an Italian who came to England in 1502 as deputy papal collector and began to write his chief text, the *Anglica Historia*, in 1506 or 1507. The earliest manuscript of the work dates from 1512-13, but it first appeared in print in 1534; two further editions appeared in 1546 and 1555.²⁹ Vergil's offence, in the eyes of Leland, Bale, and John Foxe, among others, was

²⁹ For further details of the life and career of Polydore Vergil, see James Carley, 'Polydore Vergil and John Leland on King Arthur: The Battle of the Books', in *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. And intro. Edward Donald Kennedy (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996), p.185; Michael Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. pp.41-43.

to have questioned the authority of Geoffrey of Monmouth's medieval chronicle, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the prime text of the Tudor myth.³⁰

Bale employed similar practices to Vergil in the composition of his religious texts yet, as I shall go on to discuss, he was virulent in his criticism of the Italian. The mode of compilation which Bale employed throughout his writing career compelled him to negotiate multiple versions of events and persuade the reader of the credibility of his texts as soon as he moved away from the task of Scriptural exegesis. Bale's writing career is notable for the extent to which he casts himself in the role of a humanist compiler or gatherer. His 'Chronicle' on Oldcastle has been 'collected' by him. His method of weighing up source materials is signalled in a similar manner in the titles of some of his other works; for example, *The ymage of both Churches after the moste wonderful and heavenly Revelacion of Saincte Iohn the Euangelyst, contaynyng a very frutefull exposition or paraphrase vpon the same, wherin it is co[n]ferred with the other scriptures, & most auctorysed histories. Co[m]pyled by Iohn Bale....*³¹ His treatises are accompanied by remarks which indicate that he has taken decisions in his selection of materials and give the impression that he had contended with all manner of lying or conflicting texts to bring out the truth. Such a strategy inevitably involves engagement with humanist methods of historiography and the conferring of credit on texts. Certainly, Bale's target is less the classical historian than the Catholic Church, yet his attacks on 'Rome' inevitably stray onto the subject of contaminated writings disseminated by Italian writers. In particular, he saw the history of Britain, as reported in chronicles, as flawed due to the input of Catholic writers. In predictably zealous, Protestant terms, Bale argued that the

³⁰ For details, see Kendrick.

³¹ John Bale, *The image of bothe churches after reuelacion of saynt Iohan the euangelyst* (Antwerp: S. Mierdman, 1545).

reason that some chronicles had come to be seen as disreputable was that monks and friars ‘obscured’ ‘the excellent and lyuely actes of Kynges’, and ‘[t]hus it is no surprise that the chroniclers, John Harding, William Caxton, Robert Fabian and Polydore Vergil, came ‘so deeply to erre’.³² This dispensation does not however lessen the vitriol directed towards Vergil in much of his writing. In Bale’s rewriting of the life of Sir John Oldcastle, after Vergil’s account of the lord in his *Historia Anglica*, he attacks the Italian writer for ‘pollutyng our Englyshe chronicles most shamefullye with [...] Romish lyes and other Italyshe beggerye.’³³ In his commentary on Leland’s ‘Newe Yeares Gyfte’, he praises Leland for ‘myndyng to haue polished our Chronycles, by fabulous writers sore blemished.’³⁴ In his entry on ‘Brutus Iulius, rex’ in the *Catalogus*, he writes: ‘The extent to which Boccaccio, Polydore [Vergil] and other Italian writers persecute this Brutus the founder everywhere is amazing, continuously scorning him *ad nauseam*’.³⁵ In *Sir John Oldecastell*, he writes:

I wold wyshe some learned Englysheman (as there are now most excellent fresh wyttes) to set forth the inglish chronicles in their right shape, as certain other landes hath done afore them al affections set a part. I can not think of a more necessarye thing to be laboured to the honour of God, bewtye of the realme, erudicion of the people and commodité of other landes, next the sacred scripturs of the byble, than that worke wold be. For trulye in those they haue there yet is vyce more auanced than vertu, & Romish blasphemy, than godlynes. As it may full well appeare unto eyes of right iudgement, in the lamentable history here following, and such other, which hath bene long hyd in the darke.³⁶

³² Bale, *Laboryouse Journey*, p.4.

³³ Bale, *Oldecastell*, sig.Av^r.

³⁴ Bale, *Laboryouse Journey*, p.3.

³⁵ Bale, *Scriptorum Illustrium Maioris Britanniae Catalogus* (Basle: John Oporinus, 1557), I, p.7. My translation of Bale’s Latin: ‘Mirum in modum circa huius Bruti originem se undique torquent Boccatus, Polydorus, & consimiles Itolorum scriptores, ad nauseam usque dedignabundi’.

³⁶ Bale, *Oldecastell*, sig. A5^v.

He goes on to name Vergil explicitly, singling out his perceived abuse of the British history:

Polydorus Virgilius a collectour somtyme in Inghland of the Popes Peter pisan, afterwarde Archdeacon of Welles, hath in this point deformed his writings greatly, pointinge our Inglyshe chronicles moost shamfully with his Romish lyes & other Italysh beggary [...]. This do I not wryte in dispraise of his lerning (which I knowe to be very excellent) but for the abuse therof, being a most syngular gyft of God.³⁷

Again, the appeal to the reader is to use 'ryght iudgement' which is necessary due to the 'Romish blasphemy' contained in the texts. Throughout his writing, Bale insists that the correction of chronicles was the most important undertaking to be attempted after the promotion of Scripture. Unlike Leland, however, and despite a gesture towards the argument that England ought to be fashioning itself as a literary rival to Italy and France, Bale does not wish to improve the stylistic merits of the chronicles, but identifies the need to present a single version of history which would confirm his theories on periodisation.

Leland was concerned about the physical, as well as the textual, status of England's monuments, complaining:

It would be a great profit to students and honour to this realm; whereas, now the Germans perceiving our disidiousness and negligence do send daily young scholars hither, that spoileth them, and cutteth them out of libraries, returning home and putting them abroad as monuments of their own country.³⁸

Both writers were, however, deeply concerned with the credibility of their sources. Examination of the early to middle years of the century brings an awareness of the value of credibility to the Reformers' cause. Unlike humanists,

³⁷ Bale, *Oldecastell*, sig.Av^{r-v}.

³⁸ Leland, 'Letter to Cromwell, 1536', quoted in John Chandler (ed.), *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993), p.xiii.

Reformation scholars had, above all, to insist on the truth and credibility of the Scriptures. The argument ran that Catholicism had been able to take hold so effectively for so long as it was plausible, that is, able to persuade through its superficial appeal. John Bale writes in the Preface to *A brefe Chronycle concerning the examination and death of the Blessed martir of Christ, Sir John Oldecastell* (1548) that before the writings of John Wyclif the multitude were so dazzled with 'the glytteryng shyne of hypocresye' that they were not able to discern the truth of the Scriptures. He explained that, '[t]he friers with their charminge sophistrye threwe such a darke myst over the universall worlde, [that] supersticyon coude not be knowen for supersticyon, nor ydolatrie for ydolatrie.'³⁹

Bale relentlessly attributed the centuries-long hold of Catholicism to 'charming sophistry'. One justification for his vernacular projects was the demystification of religious writing; he claimed that stripping away the superstitions and idolatry of Catholicism could be achieved through unswerving adherence to Scriptural instruction. However, he also frequently invoked the concept of judgement in the spirit, especially in his martyrological writing and his biographies in the *Catalogus*. In the Preface to the martyrology, *Sir John Oldecastell*, he stated that 'he that hath iudgement in the spyrite shall easely perceyve by this treatise, what beastly blockheaes these blody bellygods were...'.⁴⁰ According to Bale, those who had become converts to, or great proponents of, Protestantism possessed this 'judgement' yet he also argued that Scriptural teaching would benefit the populace. It is an ambiguity which Bale never managed to reconcile. He was, on the whole, more interested in eradicating

³⁹ Bale, *Oldecastell*, sig.Bi^r.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, sig.Aiii^r.

Catholicism's lies through his own projects than theorising the reception of his writings among the reading public. He justified his writing of *Actes of the English Votaryes* with the explanation: 'I have therefore thought yt best, seyng they regarde not the sacred scrypturs, to laye before them their own legends, chronicles, and sayntes Lyues, that all men maye knowe what legerdemaynes they have used, and what lecherouse lyues they haue led here in Englande sens the worldes begynnyng.'⁴¹ In the Preface to *Oldcastle*, he attacked Polydore Vergil's 'legerdemaine' which aimed to 'please his frindes in Inghland and also at Rome'.⁴² Unsurprisingly, the 'legerdemaynes' of the votaries and of Vergil were of particular interest to Bale. Given his previous vocation of Carmelite friar, not to mention the nation's recent Catholic past, his writing persistently returned to the question of how it had been possible to be taken in by such lies. To Bale, the answer was obvious: it was down to the 'legerdemaynes': the sleights of hand or plausible words of the Roman Church which had managed to dupe Christendom for so long.

Moving from the credibility of Scripture to the credibility of chronicles, recourse to the 'old authentic histories and chronicles' was of prime importance to the writers who took it upon themselves to elevate the English nation above the Catholic continent at the time. They found it particularly expedient to invoke the version of history contained in the medieval chronicles in order to refute the claims of Catholicism.⁴³ Polydore Vergil's crime was to raise doubts about the veracity of earlier chronicle accounts, aiming to bring to bear on such texts the

⁴¹ John Bale, *Actes of the Englysh Votaryes*, Aiiii^v.

⁴² Bale, *Oldecastell*, sig. Avi^v.

⁴³ For extensive treatment of this subject, see Marc Shell (ed.), *Elizabeth's Glass: with 'The Glass of the Sinful Soul' by Elizabeth I and 'Epistle dedicatory' and 'Conclusion' by John Bale* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

defining features of Italian humanist historiography.⁴⁴ He not only disparaged Brutus but greatly diminished the role of Arthur in the history of the nation.⁴⁵

As I have noted, Leland was so incensed by Vergil's allegations that the story of Brutus was a fiction he issued two defences of Arthur and, more particularly, of his own methods as a historiographer, explaining:

An other way, do equity, honesty, the rule of fame, and heerehence a iust loue to my country, yea truth it selfe (then which one thing, nothing more dear I loue) fully moue me.⁴⁶

Contrasting his own patriotism with Vergil's willingness to trace England's history back to Germanic immigration instead of the commonly held Trojan myth of origin, Leland insisted on the truthfulness arrived at through his solid historical method. Leland's *Assertio inclytissimi Arturii Regis Britanniae* contains accounts of seeing items on his travels throughout the country which were reputed to have belonged to King Arthur. The text does not confront the contrary arguments in any systematic fashion and the proof he presents is undeniably weak in comparison with the contemporary humanist mode of historiography which attached great importance to contemporary eyewitness accounts and a logical weighing of opposing ideas before a refutation of the less likely evidence.⁴⁷ This ideal model of historiography was set out by Lorenzo

⁴⁴ For details, see Wyatt, p.42.

⁴⁵ It is a critical commonplace (see, for example, Chandler, p.xiii) to state that Vergil questioned the existence of Arthur when, in fact, he only sought to discredit some of the more implausible of the Arthurian myths.

⁴⁶ Richard Robinson (trans.), *A Learned and True Assertion...of Prince Arthure, King of great Brittain*, from the original by John Leland, *Assertio inclytissimi Arturii regis Britanniae* (London: 1544), repr. in William Edward Mead (ed.), *The Famous Historie of Chinon of England*, EETS OS 165, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925, rpt 1971), p.17. Leland's original reads: 'Alio me aequum, honestu, famae ratio, hinc & amor patriae iustus, ac ipsa veritas, qua nil mihi charius vna, perducunt', p.97.

⁴⁷ See E. B. Fryde, *Humanism and Renaissance Historiography* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983).

Valla in his *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione* (1440). In it, Valla complained about the use of anachronistic details in historical narrative:

As for the text of the document, it is still more absurd and unnatural that Constantinople should be referred to as one of the patriarchal sees, when it was not yet either patriarchal or a see or a Christian city; it was not yet called Constantinople; it had not yet been founded or even planned.⁴⁸

William Nelson writes that '[b]y the sixteenth century, the idea was gaining currency that something approaching certitude about what happened in the past was not unattainable and, more important, was worth striving for.'⁴⁹ In the preface to his biography of Cicero, Leonardo Bruni maintains that an historian must be able to back up all of his assertions with evidence. He compares Aristotle with Plato and favours Aristotle because he includes a large amount of historical information in the *Politics*, and because he never asserted anything which he could not prove.⁵⁰

Texts such as Valla's were required reading for the humanist student but Leland found their direction difficult to follow in his own writing. The first of his defences of Arthur, the *Codrus sive Laus et Defensio Gallofridi Arturii contra Polydorum Vergilium* (c.1536), was never published in its own right, but much of it is included in the section on Geoffrey of Monmouth in the *De viris illustribus*. The *Assertio* is, in fact, a lengthier exposition of the issues of the *Codrus*. Leland's defences demonstrate an awareness of humanist historiographical methods but are hampered by the lack of eyewitness evidence of Arthur's

⁴⁸ Lorenzo Valla, *'The Profession of the Religious' and the principal arguments from 'The Falsely Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine'*, trans. and ed. Olga Zorzi Pugliese (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1985), p.70.

⁴⁹ William Nelson, *Fact and Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Storyteller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.36-37.

⁵⁰ Fryde, p.5.

existence and his reluctance to engage with other writers' arguments. His case is constructed on the scant information available to him. Taking the accounts of William of Malmesbury and Gerald of Wales found in the Glastonbury library, supplemented by chronicle references, Leland aims to reconstruct a coherent account of Arthur's reign which could be substantiated by the relics *in situ*: the famous leaden cross, an ancient seal, and Arthur's tomb.⁵¹

When Caxton published an edition of the *Brut* in 1480, it functioned as an official history of England and, as T.D. Kendrick notes, 'throughout the sixteenth century most of the compilers of the English histories intended for general reading began their narrative with an uncritical account of Brutus and the Trojans.'⁵² Kendrick explains the reasoning of the chroniclers whose accounts of the English nation were of such importance to Leland and Bale:

Consulting the encyclopædic synopses of early history such as the Eusebius-Jerome *Chronicon*, they found there were *reges Albanorum*, surely the kings of Albion, descended from Æneas, through his son Silvius, and a Brutus who conquered Spain *usque ad Oceanum*; he was assumed to be Britto, and to put him far enough back in time he was at first said to be a brother of Romulus and Remus, and, later, the son of Silvius and grandson of Æneas. After all the Italians had accepted a saga of Trojan origin; the Franks had one; let Britain do the same and begin its history with the splendid figure of Brutus, the prince of Trojan blood.⁵³

Leland's approach in the *Assertio* is to insist on the credibility of the material he includes. As David A. Summers notes, his argument is that, as there is not much material evidence for Arthur's existence, the oral tradition now set down in print lends great authority to the case and Arthur's life should be believed to be true

⁵¹ Carley, 'Polydore Vergil', p.187.

⁵² T.D Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London: Methuen, 1950), p.38.

⁵³ Kendrick, pp.3-4.

unless proved otherwise.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Leland advises vigilant reading of the history of Arthur, noting that some inaccuracies have undoubtedly crept in:

Howe much better is it (casting away trifles, cutting off old wiues tales, and superfluous fables, in deede of stately porte in outwarde shew, but nothing auayeable vnto credit, beeing taken away) to reade, scanne vpon, and preserue in memories those thinges which are consonant by Authoritye. For, that which nowe a long time is embraced of Learned men with great consent: ought not in what soeuer moment of time barcking against it, together with faith or credit thereof, to be taken quite away.⁵⁵

Leland's wish to purge the history of errors shows his priority to lie in ridding the history of as much rumour as possible to minimise the possibility of attacks from humanist historians. He writes: 'Truly, in fables which haue crept into the history of Arthure, I doe not more delite, then Polidorus [*i.e.* Polydore Vergil] the Judge.'⁵⁶ However, Leland concedes that:

[i]t is no noueltie, that men mixe triflinge toyes with true thinges, and surely this is euen done with a certaine employment that writers might captiuatye ye simple common people with a certaine admiration at them when they heare of marueylouse matters. So was *Hercules*, so was *Alexander*, so *Arthur*, and so also *Charles* commended.⁵⁷

Leland's reference to the humanist practice of permitting the fabulous in exemplary life-writing in order that the audience or readers remember the account is an attempt to explain the fiction of the Arthurian history. With regard to Leland's assertion that the lives of Hercules, Alexander, Arthur and Charles may happily contain 'triflinge toyes' alongside 'true thinges', it is perhaps striking that he places his subject in a list alongside the fictional figure of

⁵⁴ David A. Summers, 'Re-fashioning Arthur in the Tudor Era', *Exemplaria* 9 (1997), 371-92, pp.383-5.

⁵⁵ Robinson, sig.Dii^r.

⁵⁶ Robinson, sig. Ci.^r,

⁵⁷ Robinson, p.84.

Hercules when he is intent on establishing Arthur's historicity. Yet, as I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, humanist pedagogical theory permitted the uses of fictional exemplars as well as historical ones. It is interesting that, while Leland is intent on defending the historicity of Arthur, he writes him into exemplary lists which could include fictional figures as successfully as historical ones.

Leland had strong humanist credentials. His *Collectanea*, unpublished during his lifetime, comprises a collection of classical transcriptions of commonplaces and separate marginal comments in which he displays an interest in cross-referencing, the age of the text, and its authority.⁵⁸ He moved in humanist circles with friends of Erasmus, such as Colet, Grocyn, Linacre and More, and there is some manuscript evidence to suggest that he may have been acquainted with Erasmus himself.⁵⁹ This association with Erasmus and his circle is telling since Leland galvanises a second discourse to support his writing of Arthur's remains, that of the educative value of such an enterprise. Perhaps because of the fragility of his argument, he chooses to use humanist appeals to good reading practice and the moral profit to be gained from it.

Despite Leland's best efforts, doubts about Arthur were amplified in the years after the printing of the *Assertio*, and differing degrees of concern about the king's existence and his actions emerged in print. In 'Cooper's Chronicle', Thomas Lanquet wrote that, although he could not avoid summarising the contents of the British History, it was, in his view, 'full of errors, and hath in it no manifest things in the apparence of truthe, as byenge written neither of no

⁵⁸ See James Carley, 'The Manuscript Remains of John Leland, "The King's Antiquary"', *TEXT: Transcriptions of the Society for Textual Scholarship* 2 (1985), p.114.

⁵⁹ For more on this subject, see James Carley, 'Four poems in praise of Erasmus by John Leland', *Erasmus in English* 11 (1981-82), pp.26-27.

ancient tyme, nor yet by no credible historian'; of Arthur, he writes that there 'be written many thinges in the englyshe chronicle of small credence and farre discordant from other writers.'⁶⁰

Leland was not the first to admit that some fictional material had crept into the historiography of Arthur. In the preface to his edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, William Caxton writes that 'dyvers men holde oppynyon that there was no suche Arthur and that alle suche bookes as been maad of hym ben but fayned and fables, bycause that somme cronycles make of hym no mencyon ne remember hym noothynge, ne of hys knyghtes.'⁶¹

In his entry on Thomas Malory in the *Catalogus*, Bale writes that, '[i]n my view, his work abounds in old wives' tales which need to be expurgated lest the historical veracity of the work be compromised.'⁶² Bale's view of Malory as an erudite historian compromised by doubtful sources epitomises the terms of sixteenth-century disputes surrounding the recording of King Arthur's life. Due to the humanist insistence on both credible historiography and pleasure in an instructive text, champions of the history of Arthur were forced to address the problem of improbable material in their sources in the light of increasing reliance on material evidence demanded by humanist historiographical methods. They also had to address the pleasing narrative elements of the texts which were characterised in humanist and Reformist polemic as capable of distracting the reader or audience from the valuable truth of the text. As I discussed in the

⁶⁰ From *An Epitome of Chronicles* (1549), quoted in Kendrick, pp.41-42.

⁶¹ William Caxton, 'Preface', in Thomas Malory, *Complete Works*, Eugène Vinaver (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.xiii-xiv.

⁶² John Bale, *Scriptorum Illustrium Maioris Brytannia* (Basle: John Oporinus, [1557]), in Marilyn Jackson Parins (ed.), *Malory: The Critical Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p.55.

introduction to this thesis, pleasure was merely tolerated as a means of sweetening instruction; it was not to be encouraged as an end in itself.

When Bale does venture to use the humanistic *exempla* or precedent, he does so with caution. In the Preface to *Sir John Oldecastell*, Bale employs classical historiography which he then backs up with references to Scripture:

In the prophane Histories of olde Oratours & Poetes both Grekes and Latines are they moch com[m]ended a[n]d thought worthy of aeternall memory, whyche have eyther dyed for theyr naturall cou[n]tre, or daungered their lives for a com[m]onwelthe [...]. In the sacred scrypturs of the Byble hath Moeses, Josie, Gedeon, Jepthe [...] theyr fast praises for theyr myghtye zeale and manyfolde enterprises concernynge the children of Israel.⁶³

In the marginal note accompanying this statement, he lists: 'Plutarch, Properc., Cicero, Catullus, Horatius, Lucanus'. These writers were among the models recommended by the humanist curriculum for their persuasive language. Given Bale's insistence on faith in the words on the page, it is evident that he mistrusts those who are singled out both for their manipulation of language and their classical or Catholic subject matter. In *Sir John Oldcastell*, humanist exemplary writing is conflated with Catholicism as the target of Bale's anger:

Farre is this Christen knight more prayse worthy for that he had so noble a stomake in defence of Chrystes verité against these Romish supersticions than for any temporall nobilities eyther of blode brith [*sic*] landes or of marciall feates [...]. Whan I so[m]time rede the works of som men learned, I mervayle not a lytle to sé the[m] so aboundau[n]t in vayne flattering praises for matters of no value, yea, for thinges to be dispraised rather than praysed, of Menne that were Godly wyse.⁶⁴

The antiquarians who had sought to preserve the historicity of Arthur appear to have been defeated by the end of the sixteenth century. By the early

⁶³ Bale, *Oldecastell*, sig. Aii^r.

⁶⁴ Bale, *Oldecastell*, sig. Aiii^v.

seventeenth century, it had become customary for writers to refer to the doubtfulness of the 'Matter of Britain'. In his prefatory piece, 'From the Author of the Illustrations', to Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, John Selden writes: 'I insert oft, out of the *British* story, what I importune you not to credit.'⁶⁵ It would seem that there was now a new-found self-consciousness about Arthur and the British History. Arthur had become an ostensibly mythical figure but could still figure in a chorographical poem, signifying heroism and Britishness. The historicity of Arthur's life had become historically dubious, but this did not diminish the narrative's usefulness in fiction. Reading for profit and pleasure had supplanted reading for truth in the history of Arthur.

iii. The early modern Arthur: from history to exemplarity

Recent studies on the debates about the historicity of Arthur tend towards the opinion that these debates resulted in a neat and irreversible separation of history and fiction with respect to Arthur's life. David A. Summers writes:

The result of the historical controversy surrounding the figure of Arthur was that a sharper distinction was made between the historical and the literary or cultural elements of the Arthurian matrix of meanings.⁶⁶

While the debate over Arthur does divide historiographers and poets in the sixteenth century, I believe that the crises of historical truth and exemplary fiction in the various parts of one text provide further fascinating examples of the

⁶⁵ John Selden, 'From the Author of the Illustrations', in Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion, a Chorographical Description of Great Britain* (London: Humphrey Lownes, 1612), sig. Aiii^r.

⁶⁶ Summers, p.387.

dividedness of early modern texts. Writers who espouse the humanist discourses proclaiming the truth and utility of a text, and who illustrate their arguments with classical *exempla*, encounter difficulties in negotiating the relationship between truth and exemplarity. The 'divided consciousness' over the modes and purposes of historiography identified by Simpson, which I discussed in the first section of this chapter, manifests itself here as a uneasiness between the humanist rehabilitation of classical precedent, and a necessity to set forth the truth convincingly and plainly. As I will go on to show in the following chapters, this tension manifests itself regularly in relation to romances in the sixteenth century.

To conclude my chapter, I will discuss the shifting significance of Arthur in evidence in Richard Robinson's translation of Leland's *Assertio*. As I have argued throughout this chapter, the emphasis on the figure of Arthur as an exemplary hero proved problematic for those attempting to reinforce the truth of his existence. As I have already discussed, exemplars do not have to be historical, so those scholars who labour to assert Arthur's historical importance find themselves caught between two competing modes of representation.

As they belong to the humanist mode of historiography which insists on the pleasure of instruction, texts such as Robinson's, asserting Arthur's historicity, take pains to cite the pleasingly instructive quality of the text at the same time as insisting on its veracity. This proves troublesome in the sense that exemplarity does not require a life narrative to be truthful, only to be a model for virtuous imitation. Moreover, in the 1580s, at the time of publication of Robinson's translation, a chivalric revival was taking place among courtiers and

men of letters.⁶⁷ Arthur Ferguson describes this time as one of 'imaginative refeudalization', in part a product of the public appetite for chivalric romances which were being printed in ever greater numbers and which were read by all levels of society.⁶⁸ Ferguson argues that earlier generations had not been conducive to chivalry as 'Reformation England had little use for a secular mystique only too readily associated with a time when papistry flourished in the land.'⁶⁹ Ferguson and Alex Davis detail the return of chivalry as pageant or recreation for aristocrats and writers.⁷⁰ Richard McCoy suggests that, rather than being driven by literary and cultural values, Elizabethan ceremonial chivalry was guided by a desire to affirm Tudor sovereignty.⁷¹

It is under these cultural conditions that Robinson translates Leland's *Assertio* in 1583, thirty-nine years after Leland's original. Robinson is an important but neglected figure in the history of the dissemination of Arthurian material in the later sixteenth century. While his printed material suggests that he was a typical professional writer of late sixteenth-century London, participating in the common projects of translating and compiling ostensibly moral texts, his association with the Society of Prince Arthur, a secret order of archers, marks out his interest in translating Leland's *Assertio* as more than merely coincidental. Richard Mulcaster, in his *Positions*, refers to the 'friendly and franke fellowship of prince *Arthurs* knights in and about the cite of London' who had revived the practice of archery.⁷²

⁶⁷ See Arthur Ferguson, *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1986), p.65.

⁶⁸ Ferguson, pp.68-69.

⁶⁹ Ferguson, p.66.

⁷⁰ Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp.73-98.

⁷¹ Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp.2-3.

⁷² Cited in Davis, p.124.

Robinson's translation must be considered in the light of the small but striking alterations he makes to Leland's dedicatory epistle, originally to Henry VIII, but now to a cluster of significant figures, Lord Arthur Gray, Baron of Wilton, Sir Henry Sidney, and Thomas Smith, as well as 'the Worshipfull Societie of Archers'. Robinson translated a further book of chivalry, from the French, a year later: *The Auncient Order, Societie, and Unitie Laudable, of Prince Arthure, and his knightly Armory of the Round Table. With a Threefold Assertion frendly in fauour and furtherance of English Archery at this day. Translated and Collected by R. R.*, printed by John Wolfe in 1583.⁷³ Therefore, it seems that Robinson was as interested in participating in the chivalric revival as in asserting the historicity of Arthur's life.

Robinson's paratexts of the *Assertio* expand greatly on the use of Arthur as an exemplary hero which Leland suppresses in his original 'Epistola Dedicata' to Henry VIII. As Leland's sustained campaign to defend the truthfulness of the British History was refashioned almost immediately after his illness by Bale as a model of Millenarian teaching, Robinson's reshaping of the *Assertio* marks yet another moment in the transformation of Leland's original project. Tellingly, the title has changed from Leland's brief *Assertio inclytissimi Arturii Regis Britanniae* to *A Learned and True Assertion of the Original Life, Actions, and Death of Arthure*; the emphasis on truth is now coupled with the need to indicate the significance of Arthur's life and actions.

⁷³ I regret that I do not have the time to devote more study to the role of the printer and publisher, John Wolfe, in romance printing. He seems to have been involved with most of the texts which I discuss during my thesis, publishing the Iberian romances I discuss in chapter two and printing *The Faerie Queene* for William Ponsonby. For further information on Wolfe, see Sonia Massai, 'John Wolfe and the Impact of Exemplary Go-Betweens on Early Modern Print Culture', in Andreas Höfele and Wener von Koppenfels (eds), *Renaissance go-betweens: cultural exchange in early modern Europe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 104-18, and Clifford Chalmers Huffman, *Elizabethan Impressions: John Wolfe and his Press* (New York: AMS Press, 1988).

In spite of his repetition of the arguments in defence of Arthur's historicity, the methods of which, as I have argued, were at odds with new humanist historiographical practices, Robinson was keen to stress the morally educative value of reading the history of Arthur in distinctly humanist terms. Unlike Leland's dedicatory epistle to Henry VIII, upon which Robinson bases his dedication, Robinson's dedication has printed marginalia directing the reader to passages of the Bible fitting with the content of the text. While the Christian framework of the dedication is typographically distinct in this paratextual apparatus, the argument which Robinson puts forward relies as much on classical example as Christian. His opening metaphor of a rainbow as a symbol of God's promise is transformed into a gloss by Aristotle on the formation of rainbows.⁷⁴ From the outset, Robinson situates Arthur in the tradition of exemplary heroes:

The Hebrewes with greate and not undeserued titles extolled their Iudas Maccabeus. Homer the glory of all Greeke Poets left Hector and Achilles most commendable vnto the world. Neyther by lesse diligence did the Grecians adorne with praise Alexander the most mightie conquerour. And the Romanes advanced the noble actes of Caesar to the Skyes not enough....so in like manner there were neuer Brittaines wanting of excellent learning and exquisite knowledge to leaue with carefull diligence and credible commendation, the progenie, life, prowesse, prosperities, and triumphant victories of our said auncient Arthure...⁷⁵

It is revealing that Robinson allows Homer into his list, showing tolerance of classical poetry as a suitable mode for the communication of exemplary narratives. This indicates that Arthur's life was being invested with new values as attempts to prove his historicity waned.

This movement towards a nostalgic version of chivalry authorised by humanist discourses is carried through to the Iberian romances which began to

⁷⁴ Robinson, p.3

⁷⁵ Robinson, sig.Aiiii^r.

appear in English translations at around the same time as Robinson's translation. As I have argued, humanist historiographical methods made it increasingly difficult for writers to defend the existence of Arthur while humanist instruction in exemplary reading in the early modern schoolroom provided a way of interpreting the fictional Arthur and Arthurian narratives as educational. My next chapter argues that the paratexts of the extremely popular Iberian texts which appealed to a much broader readership than the texts of the chivalric revival and which supplanted medieval romances as targets for humanist criticism, refashioned these humanist discourses in a highly self-conscious way; this led to the development of a complex dialogue between romance and humanism in the last decades of the sixteenth, and the early decades of the seventeenth, centuries, as the romances sought to camouflage their contentious fictional material in humanist exemplary and historiographical terms.

CHAPTER 2

**INTERTEXTS AND PARATEXTS: THE RECEPTION OF IBERIAN
ROMANCE**

When Iberian romances arrived in the English marketplace, their reputations preceded them. The most popular of these romances, *Amadis de Gaule*, was first published in English translation in 1590, but it, and the many related Iberian chivalric romances, had been known by reputation or read in French translations before this. From the time of printing of the first and most ubiquitous of these romances, Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo's *Amadís de Gaula*, in Zaragoza in 1508,¹ the text became the subject of great debate; on the one hand, Spanish romances were hugely popular reading matter throughout Europe, and were admired as models of eloquence and pleasant reading material, particularly in their French and Italian translations; on the other, the name *Amadis* came to be used as a byword for the kind of frivolous or harmful text which was counselled against by humanist and theological writers.

In my previous chapter, I addressed the concerns of Roger Ascham, who commented famously that Arthurian texts were full of nothing but 'open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye'. However, Ascham's less frequently quoted qualification of these views is that these home-grown romances were not as detrimental to the reader's moral health as continental romances:

ten *Morte Arthures* do not the tenth part so much harme, as one of these bookes, made in *Italie*, and translated in England. They open, not fond and common ways to vice, but such subtle cunnyng, new, and diuerse shiftes, to cary younge willes to vanitie, and yong wittes to mischief, to

¹ This is the date of the earliest extant copy of *Amadís de Gaula*. For more on the origins and early Spanish printing of the romance, see Helen D. Moore (ed.), *Amadis de Gaule: By Anthony Munday* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.x, and Henry Thomas, *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry: the Revival of the Romance of Chivalry in the Spanish Peninsula and its Extension and Influences Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), pp.42-64.

teach old bawds new schole poyntes, as the simple head of an English man is not hable to inuent, nor neuer was hard of in England before²

While Ascham complains of Italian texts, his comments underline the view in England that continental romances were a greater threat to morality than English ones. As I mentioned at the end of the last chapter, critics such as Ferguson and Davis identify the self-conscious return of chivalry as entertainment in the late sixteenth century as a response to earlier, Reformist suspicions about continental Catholicism; in this chapter, I will broaden this argument to show that the continuities and discontinuities in writing about the Iberian romances throughout Europe transcend such a schematic view of Catholic and Protestant differences, and speak to broader humanist concerns about the profitable ends of writing and reading.

This chapter examines the ways in which the paratexts of the romances, encompassing their preliminary materials and their adaptations and compilations, engage in a variety of ways with the prevailing negative humanist attitudes to the indecency or idleness associated with these narratives. I chart the progress of the most prominent Iberian romance cycle, *Amadis de Gaule*, alongside *Palmerin of England*, a Portuguese romance completed by Francisco de Moraes in 1546, and translated into Spanish by Luis Hurtado in 1547. *Amadis*, *Palmerin*, and their progeny, proceeded across Europe, from their Spanish and Portuguese origins to French translations and then into English. I argue that a common set of assumptions accretes around these romances and is revisited and adapted at each stage of their translation; moreover, the paratextual and intertextual games in the English prefatory matter of these romances require a highly literate

² Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. R. C. Alston (Menston: Scolar Press, 1967), p.231.

understanding of the history of the romances in other countries as well as the conventions of the humanist educational programme.

In this instance, the 'goal-orientated' reading of humanist scholars, which has for so long been the focus for academics working on the history of reading, is useful up to a point, as it conveys the sense of humanistic personal and public profit that was thought to be inculcated by the correct reading of suitable material; in her book, *Reading Material in Early Modern England*, Heidi Brayman Hackel extends the work of recent scholars of early modern reading, such as Anthony Grafton, Lisa Jardine, and William Sherman, who have tended to concentrate on the scholarly readers of humanist texts, and claims that she will concentrate on the 'less extraordinary readers'³ whose recreational reading consisted of 'trifles', that is, prose romances, miscellanies, and chapbooks. My chapter collapses this distinction, and shows that the Iberian romances were read by readers of all levels of literacy and education, and their paratexts reflect this; what is more, they also contain elaborate intertextual strategies which rely on the educated reader of these 'trifles' to make connections between the romances and humanist texts and practices. In this way, the trifling reading material favoured by everyone from queens to servants proposes a mode of humanist reading which excludes the 'less extraordinary readers' and, in doing so, presents a knowing reassurance that the time spent reading romances is not profitless to those who possess advanced skills in reading.

I am situating the paratexts and adaptations of Iberian romances in their French and English translations against recent work on prefatory material which, as I detailed in my introduction, concentrates almost exclusively on this material

³ Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.3.

as a sales pitch, or nothing more than conventional *topoi*.⁴ While I do not deny that the paratexts, treasuries, and other texts associated with the romance translations do act as advertisements for their narratives, and frequently aim to whet the reader's appetite for the mass of romances yet to be translated, I am arguing that it is necessary to consider the ways in which their prefatory materials enter into a complex dialogue with the attacks on the romances' reputations and, most notably, seek to refashion or camouflage these fictional romances as humanist exemplary texts, primarily for the delight of their educated readers.

The copious paratextual material which accompanies the Iberian romances in France and England attests to the need of the translators and authors of prefaces, dedications and commendatory poems to justify their association with such texts in more than merely economic terms. The Iberian romances had been the subject of fierce debate throughout Europe since their initial publications and, as I will demonstrate, were most often attacked for their supposed capacity to lead the reader astray into idleness or wickedness, or for containing nothing but the unedifying themes of profane love and anachronistic warfare. Most significantly, though, they were deemed unsuitable reading matter on the grounds that they contained little in the way of instruction, a prerequisite of the humanist definition of a profitable text. The attacks and defences, which are inseparable from the romance narratives, afford a useful perspective on conceptions of reading in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, always

⁴ See, for example, Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), and Paul J. Voss, 'Books for Sale: Advertising and Patronage in Late Elizabethan England', *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 29 (1998), 733-56.

engaged with the subject of the ostensibly profitable recreation to be had in reading fictional texts.

The numerous paratexts to the English editions of *Amadis de Gaule* and *Palmerin of England* employ a number of conflicting strategies, often within the same text, variously praising the language of the translation, seeking to excuse the translator for the crudity of the translation, praising the instructive qualities of fiction, and denying that the text they accompany is a fiction. These dissonant paratexts engage, with varying degrees of seriousness, with the contemporary opposition to their printing and reading. However, while I indicate the breadth of the positions adopted in this prefatory material, I will focus on what I consider to be the most 'disingenuous' paratexts; that is, those which seek to cast the narrative they accompany as a less problematic mode according to the humanist rules on acceptable reading material, and which therefore function as ironic rejoinders to the objections circulating at the time.

This chapter analyses the roles of a number of key figures in this debate on the status of Iberian chivalric romances. These protagonists are Anthony Munday, the translator of many books of the *Amadis* and *Palmerin* cycles from French into English; Bishop Jacques Amyot, the French translator of Plutarch and Greek romances and one of the most virulent opponents of the Iberian romances in their French incarnations; and Sir Thomas North, the translator of Amyot's translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. I begin by summarising the attitudes to the romances in their native countries where they immediately became controversial reading matter, vilified by churchmen and humanists alike, and prominently discussed in relation to voyages to the New World where it was thought their harmful influence would be particularly acute since listeners to the

romances lacked the necessary education to distinguish the immorality of the texts. I then move on to consider the use of the terms 'Amadis' and 'Palmerin' and their variations as they occur in texts in England and France during the half century before their printing in English. These texts present a range of opinions on the romances, usually unfavourable and formed in the absence of having read them. I then detail the project of translating the texts into French from the Spanish, in order to contextualise the production and translation of a text crucial to my argument, *The Tresurie of Amadis of Fraunce*. Finally, and in light of my observations on the movement of *Amadis* across Europe to England, I examine the engagement with the various opinions on romance reading as they occur in the paratexts of several editions of the romances in England. In particular, I consider the sardonic defences of the romance which camouflage it as an exemplary and / or an historical text. In doing so, I show that the romance paratexts written by Anthony Munday and his associates playfully rebuff the attacks on the texts which formed so lucrative a part of their professional careers.

i. 'a knife in a madman's hand'?: the earliest attacks on Iberian romance

When Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo's romance of chivalry, *Amadis de Gaula*, was first published in Spain in 1508, it became the touchstone of a controversy which would occupy commentators on the peninsula throughout the sixteenth century. The suitability of romances as reading material for the rapidly expanding reading public was contested primarily by humanist and religious writers. The humanist argument ran along the by now familiar lines that reading

romances constituted an unprofitable use of one's time and encouraged an interest in individual pleasure, while Catholic protests centred on the inappropriateness of the sexual relationships in the texts which would inspire impressionable young readers to imitate the actions of the romances' protagonists; both sides were worried that the fictitiousness of the texts would make readers incredulous when confronted with true chronicles and Holy Scripture. Later in the century, as translations of the romances made their way north through France to England, similar arguments would resurface repeatedly. Humanists objected to the liberal use of incredible narrative incidents, as well as the apparent inelegance of the language, and the implication that these texts privileged entertainment over education.

Much has been written on the relationship between the consumption of romances in Spain and Portugal and the voyages of exploration and commercial enterprise to the Americas.⁵ Lorna Hutson makes the connection between such opinions and the pedagogical writings of such figures as Erasmus and Vives on improbability and immorality, adding that, '[t]his critical disparagement then tends to be accompanied by the assertion of a causal link between the popular consumption of printed chivalric romances in Spain and the fantasticality of the Spanish expectations of the New World.'⁶ To illustrate her claim about the critical tendency to reiterate 'the fantasticality' of the enterprising Spaniards' expectations, Hutson quotes from Irving Leonard, whose study of conquistadors

⁵ See, for example, Stephanie H. Jed, 'Relations of prose: knights errant in the archives of early modern Italy', in Elizabeth Fowler and Roland Greene (eds), *The Project of Prose in Early Modern European and New World Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 48-65, and Peter Burke, 'Chivalry in the New World', in Sydney Anglo (ed.), *Chivalry in the Renaissance* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1990), 253-62.

⁶ Lorna Hutson, 'Chivalry for Merchants; or, Knights of Temperance in the Realms of Gold', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26 (1996), 29-59, p.31. Hutson is principally concerned with the parallels between the commercial exploitations of the genre of romance and of the New World.

and their reading habits, *Books of the Brave*, has been for many years the standard account of the books and experiences of those Spaniards who sailed to America and the West Indies in the early sixteenth century. Leonard's study tends to reproduce the argument that the books and the newly-discovered territories were mutually supporting: the books provided the terms of reference which the sailor-chroniclers used to describe their experiences and the discovery of landscapes assimilable to those of the romances added to the credence of the romances in a time when profitable texts were required to emphasise their historical veracity or plausibility. As Leonard explains, '[t]he apparent historicity of these tales, together with the enormous expansion of the physical horizons brought about by recent discoveries in Africa and the New World, gave a plausibility to the wildest notions with which writers might season their stories.'⁷

In a discussion of the ways in which *Amadis de Gaula* captured the imagination of its first Spanish audiences, it is worth repeating the frequently quoted remark of Bernal Diaz del Castillo, who, on viewing the coast of Mexico for the first time, wrote that:

[w]hen we saw so many cities and villages built in the waters [of the lake] and other large towns on dry land, and that straight, level causeway leading into Mexico City, we were amazed and we said that it was like the enchanted things related in the book of Amadis because of the huge towers, temples, and buildings rising from the water and all of masonry.'⁸

⁷ Irving A. Leonard, *Books of the brave: being an account of books and of men in the Spanish Conquest and settlement of the sixteenth-century New World, with a new introduction by Rolena Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.19. This potential blurring of the boundaries between history and romance fiction is used to comic effect by Edmund Spenser, in his Proem to Book Two of *The Faerie Queene*, in which he employs the common romance trope of feigned historicity to claim that Fairyland is a real, but as yet undiscovered, land: 'And daily how through hardy enterprize, / Many great Regions are discovered, / Which to late age were neuer mentioned. / Who euer heard of the 'Indian Peru?' (II. Proem. 2. 3-6), ed. A. C. Hamilton (Harlow: Longman, 2001), p.157.

⁸ Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The true history of the conquest of New Spain*, trans. A. P. Maudsley, vol. 2 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1908-1916), p.37.

Díaz remarks that he relies on the vocabulary and imagery of the romances since he has no other means of describing such a unique event. This particular extract has done much to consign *Amadis* and other romances of chivalry to the critical abyss since it appears to reinforce the idea that these texts were widely read primarily because of their fantastic qualities. Recently, however, academics have begun to re-examine the importance of Spanish and Portuguese chivalric romances to the 'Golden Age' of literature in Spain. Barry Ife singles out 'the growth of private reading made possible by the printed book' as a factor which caused writers to reflect on their own art.⁹

Religious objections in sixteenth-century Spain tended to centre on the power of the texts to corrupt youths who had been previously schooled out of their natural tendency towards evil; yet there was also the suspicion that independent reading was antithetical to the teaching of the Church at that time. However, those who objected did so on their own behalf and for differing reasons; there was no concerted attack on fiction by the sixteenth-century Catholic Church. An edition of Montalvo's *Four Books of Amadis of Gaul* of 1519, was printed in Rome by Antonio de Salamanca who had, in the same year, received a papal privilege to print six books of *Amadis* over ten years. Ife notes that the lone voices who criticise the availability and effects of reading fiction at that time were likely to be speaking out in defiance of the Church since all books were inspected by Church authorities before being printed; therefore, those churchmen who objected 'were fighting an additional battle against an

⁹ Barry Ife, *Reading and fiction in Golden-Age Spain: A Platonist critique and some picaresque replies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.3.

ecclesiastical establishment which they saw as being too liberal in its attitudes, or too narrowly concerned with doctrinal matters to be alert to other dangers.’¹⁰

For the most part, condemnations of the romances by individual churchmen resembled those of humanists who were preoccupied by the texts’ apparent encouragement to behave immorally. Father Pedro Malón de Chaide’s lengthy diatribe of 1588 is worth quoting in full:

We are naturally prone to evil, and require no incitements to sin, such as these lascivious and profane books which [are likened] to rocks whereon the frail barques of foolish youth split, and their good manners (if they have acquired any from their teachers) suffer shipwreck, founder and miserably perish: for those love stories, and the *Dianas*, the *Boscans*, the *Garcilasos*, the monstrous books and collections of fabulous tales and lies, as the *Amadis*, *Florisels*, *Don Belianis*, and a fleet of similar prodigies – what else are they but a knife in a madman’s hand?... Others read those marvels and fabulous conceits and fancies, without head or tail, which abound in the books of chivalry, as they are called, though if we were to deal honestly with them we should change a few letters and call them books of ribaldry rather than chivalry. And if you ask those who get their Christianity from such Catechisms as these, why they read them, and what good they got out of them, they will reply, that they learn from them faithfulness and truth in their dealings, nobility and magnanimity towards their enemies; so that they will persuade you that *Don Florisel* is the *Book of the Maccabees*, *Don Belianis* the *Morals of St Gregory*, *Amadis* the *Offices of St Ambrose*, and *Lisuarte* Seneca’s *Books on Clemency*, not to mention the story of David, who forgave so many enemies.¹¹

As with the earlier examples, an attack on the dangers of reading chivalric fiction transforms into an expression of fear that readers will mistake the chivalric texts for instructional or historical ones. For Malón de Chaide, it is the fluidity of the boundaries of classification between fictional and non-fictional, and instructional and entertaining, texts which generates comment on the possible effects of reading on the ignorant reader.

¹⁰ Ife, p.17.

¹¹ Ife, p.17

Francisco de Ribera explains, in his *Vida de Santa Teresa de Jesus* (1590), that St Teresa was seduced by chivalric romances in her younger years because of their language and style and wasted a great deal of time in reading them; de Ribera even claims she was also guilty of writing a chivalric book with her brother but this appears to be unsubstantiated.¹² Antonio de Guevara, Bishop of Guadix, also discussed the dangers of reading such pernicious texts, writing in the preface to his *Aviso de privados y doctrina de cortesanos*, first published in 1539, that Christians should follow the example of Roman practice and banish writers who wrote damaging books, adding that those such as *Amadís de Gaula* and *Primaleon* 'should be forbidden by law from being either printed or sold; for the lessons which they teach incite sensual natures to sin, and weaken the desire to live rightly'.¹³ De Guevara was also the author of *Los relox de principes*, which was translated into French by Nicolas Herberay, Seigneur des Essars, the translator of *Amadis*, and into English by Sir Thomas North, as *The diall of princes*, and by John Bourchier as *The golden boke of Marcus Aurelius*.

For all of the religious men who wished to ban or burn *Amadís de Gaula*, there were those who thought that adopting the techniques of the romance mode could produce instructive texts to limit the negative effects of the profane ones. The earliest religious romance of chivalry, Pedro Hernandez de Villaumbrales' *Cavallero del Sol*, was printed in Spain in 1552, and was later translated into Italian and German. Other religious romances included the *Cavalleria Christiana* by Friar Jaime de Alcala (1570) and the *Historia y Milicia Christiana del Cavallero Peregrino, conquistador del cielo* by Friar Alonso de Soria (1601). Also deciding to join them, not beat them, was Dominican Friar, Luis de

¹² For details, see Thomas, p.150.

¹³ Thomas's translation, p.170.

Granada, who contended in the introduction to his romance, *Introduction del Symbolo de la Fe* (1582-85), that, profanities aside, romances appealed since they showed men acting courageously in the face of death.¹⁴

If de Granada seems audacious in his assumption that reading chivalric romances will inspire readers to read martyrologies, he seems prudent next to the Franciscan, Miguel de Medina, who associated *Amadis* with Xenophon, Euripides, Sophocles, Plautus and Terence.¹⁵ In this instance, not only is *Amadis* elevated to the ranks of classical writers, but Xenophon, whose *Cyropedia* was usually classified as exemplary history, is included to substantiate the claim that pleasurable reading and verisimilar exemplarity can co-exist in one text.

Humanist objections to the Spanish romances of the sixteenth century are sheepish in their rejections of romance material as the kind of reading matter that one learns not to enjoy. Juan de Valdes confesses in his *Dialogo de la Lengua* (c.1535) that he spent ten years reading romances but places a positive gloss on the experience, writing:

although I have said this of *Amadis*, I also say that it has many and very good points, and that it is well worth reading by those who would learn the language; but you must understand that you are not to hold as good and to imitate all that you find in it.¹⁶

Humanist critics occasionally pointed to the possible benefits of reading romances and this usually involved recommending them as language-learning tools. Valdes also concedes that there are 'many and very good points' to be found in the book, much as Thomas Paynell would do in the preface to his translation of *The Treasurie of Amadis of Fraunce* in England in 1572, which I

¹⁴ Thomas, pp.173-74.

¹⁵ Miguel de Medina, *Christianæ Parænesis*, (1564), cited in Thomas, p.83.

¹⁶ Thomas, p.154.

discuss in the third section of this chapter. Paynell also translated into English the works of Juan Luis Vives, the Spanish humanist educator who, as I discussed in my introduction, was intensely opposed to the reading of unprofitable texts.¹⁷

Another common humanist view was that the romances lessen the instructive value of other books already in the marketplace. This arises, like the fears of the religious commentators quoted earlier, from the fact that they could be mistaken for truthful narratives by readers. Whereas religious writers thought that Spaniards and Americans could be confused as to the truth of the Scriptures by reading fictional romances, humanist historiographers in particular became concerned that readers would be unable to distinguish the credibility of their narratives from the falsehoods of fictional ones. Pedro Mexia's *Historia Imperial y Cesaria*, published in Seville in 1547, contains the author's claim that, not only do the romances afford bad examples, but their authors 'should never be believed, for I think it difficult for a man to tell the truth who has written a book so full of lies, after the offence he has committed against God, in wasting his time and wearying his brains by inventing them, and making everybody read them, and many believe them.'¹⁸ He goes on to say that these lying writers discredit chronicles and true histories by allowing their works to exist alongside the latter ones.¹⁹ Diego Gracian, the translator of Plutarch and Xenophon, was equally concerned about the effects of the romances. His prologue to his translation of Xenophon's *Cyropedia* expresses the hope that translating the Greek into the vernacular will divert people from reading chivalric romances,

¹⁷ See also Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), p.16.

¹⁸ Thomas's translation, p.158.

¹⁹ See Thomas, p.158.

'for they serve no other purpose than to waste time and to discredit other books which are true and of good doctrine and utility.'²⁰

As is often the case with humanist arguments against unprofitable fiction, the fictiveness of classical texts is overlooked and they are absorbed into the wider category of exemplary texts, which includes religious writing and historiography. The ambiguity which permits classical texts to be classified as exemplary enables Diogo Fernandes, in his dedication to the third book of the *Palmerín* cycle, to list Plato, Homer, Pythagoras, and Xenophon as writers of fictions which contain *exempla*.²¹ This equation of contemporary romance fiction and classical writers is highly significant and points to the strategies used in the French and English paratexts which I will discuss later in this chapter.

This survey of the initial reception of chivalric romances in a time of burgeoning literacy²² shows that, while individual writers were troubled by the potential effects the reading of romances would have on the population, no sustained attack was made on the genre, notwithstanding the Royal Decree of 1531 which prohibited the transportation of such books to Spanish colonies.²³ It is clear, however, that the controversy which the romances generated was widespread and initiated the terms in which the romance would be discussed throughout Europe in the sixteenth century.

ii. Early reactions to the romances in England

²⁰ Thomas's translation, pp.160-161.

²¹ Ife's translation, p.178.

²² For a highly illuminating study of literacy, education, and the early modern Spanish reading public, see Sara T. Nalle, 'Literacy and Culture in Early Modern Castile', *Past and Present*, 125 (November 1989), 65-96.

²³ In her introduction to Leonard's *Books of the Brave*, Rolena Adorno notes that Leonard demonstrates that this ban was not implemented by officials or citizens, pp.xv; 241.

Having devoted the beginning of this chapter to a summary of the debates on the various dangers or benefits of reading the romances in their native Spain and Portugal, this section deals with the ways in which the reputations of the romances, in the Spanish and French incarnations, preceded them. As I noted in my introduction, the romances gained an unfavourable reputation in England many years before they were first made available in English. There is evidence that some English readers engaged with the texts in continental foreign-language editions. In her address to Thomas Howard, for example, Margaret Tyler suggested that 'some may be rather angry to see their spanish delight toured to an English pastime, they could wel allow the story in Spanish, but they may not afford it so chepe, or they would have it proper to themselves.'²⁴ Alex Davis records both Scottish and English readers engaging with French and Spanish editions of *Amadis*.²⁵ Perhaps fittingly, it was a Spanish humanist writing in England, Juan Luis Vives, who was most intensely opposed to the reading of romances; I will go on to discuss his objections alongside those of other English writers.

Amadis de Gaula was not the only Iberian romance cycle to become popular reading matter in English in the later sixteenth century, but it was the longest, and most influential in terms of its use by other texts and also in terms of the vitriol with which it was attacked. The two other notable Spanish romance cycles translated into English preceded it in the English marketplace. The first cycle to be printed in English was Margaret Tyler's *Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood* in 1578, a translation of the Spanish *Espejo de Principes y Cavalleros (El Caballero del Febo)*, written by Diego Ortúñez de Calahorra in

²⁴ Margaret Tyler, *The Mirrour of Princely deedes and Knighthood*. (London: Thomas East, [1579?]), sig.A4^v.

²⁵ Davis, pp.28-29.

1562; the other major cycle of *Palmerin* romances included such texts as *Palmerin of England* which was printed in Spain in 1511 and was first translated into English by Anthony Munday in 1588.

As I have already mentioned, the terms 'Amadis' and less frequently 'Palmerin' came to stand by synecdoche for the kind of fantastic, enticing text which was counselled against in much contemporary writing on reading and education. The suitability of the romances to the rapidly expanding reading public was once again contested primarily by humanist and religious writers. Humanists objected to the liberal use of incredible narrative incidents as well as the apparent inelegance of the language and the narrative's flouting of the Horatian model that poetry should teach through delight. The romances, it was thought, suffered from an excess of delight and the morals they included were not those which should be taught.

Juan Luis Vives attacked *Amadís de Gaula* primarily for its reliance on the themes of love and war. His instructional text, *De institutione feminae Christianae*, was addressed to Catherine of Aragon, and was translated from the Latin into English by Richard Hyrde in 1525, as *A verie fruitfull and pleasant booke, called the instruction of a Christian Woman*. In his Latin original, Vives complains that 'A custom has grown up, worse than any pagan usage, that books in the vernacular – written in that tongue so that they may be read by idle men and women – treat no subjects but love and war.'²⁶ Complaining of the phenomenal success and consequent proliferation of the Iberian romances, he singles out 'pernicious books like those popular in Spain: *Amadís, Esplandián, Florisando, Tirant, Tristán*, books filled with endless absurdities. New ones

²⁶ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman*, trans. and ed. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), p.73.

appear every day'.²⁷ Hyrde adapts Vives's list of unsuitable reading material, missing out *Esplandián*, and attaching a list of English romances which do not appear in the original: 'In Englande, *Parthenope, Genarides, Hippomadon, William and Melyour, Libius and Arthur, Guye, Beuis, and many other.*'²⁸

As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, this position was adopted more or less comprehensively by humanists who took exception to what they saw as texts devoid of useful material for the schoolroom, the commonplace book and the battlefield. In his *De officiis mariti* of 1529, Vives writes that unprofitable texts would corrupt their readership, inspiring them to live their lives badly. The translation by Thomas Paynell reads, 'These bokes do hurt both man & woman, for they make them wyllye & craftye, they kindle and styr vp couetousnes, inflame anger, & all beastly and filthy desire.'²⁹ It is precisely this view which is echoed later in the century, although transposed to an attack on English romances, in Ascham's depiction of 'open mans slaughter and bold bawdrye'.³⁰

While humanists discouraged the reading of Spanish romances on the grounds of their capacity to deceive, Reformist writers linked them to their country of origin, connecting their obvious fictiveness with the charges of religious hypocrisy levelled at Catholic texts. Rudolf Gwalther, in his epistle, 'The Translatour to the Christian Reader', to *An hundred, threescore and fifteen homelyes or sermons, vppon the Actes of the Apostles, written by Saint Luke* (1572), blames 'newe-broched' Divines for preventing people 'from reading the holye Scriptures of God in their owne proper tongue and language'. In place of

²⁷ Vives, p.74.

²⁸ Juan Luis Vives, *A verie fruitfull and pleasant booke, called the instruction of a christian woman*, trans. Richard Hyrde (London: Robert Waldegrave, 1585), p.34.

²⁹ Juan Luis Vives, *The office and duetie of an husband*, trans. Thomas Paynell (London: John Cawood, [c.1550]), sig. O7^v.

³⁰ Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, p.231.

the Scriptures, they promote 'whatsoever mannes ydle braine coulde devise, whatsoever anye Monke or Friers grosse *Minerua* could forge or inuent, though it were no better than *Amadis de Gaule*, the foure sonnes of *Amon*, the tales of Robin Hoode, and such other like fables, yet were they thought very trimme and gaye geare to occupie the peoples eares withal.'³¹ This example makes clear the connection between anti-Catholic sentiment, views on popular susceptibility to fiction, and romances.

Alexander Hume's epistle 'To the Scottish youth' accompanying his 'Hymnes, or Sacred songs wherein the right vse of poësie may be espied', makes explicit the relationship between the reading of prophane texts and dissolute behaviour, as well as giving a picture of the socially diverse readership of the romances in Scotland. He writes, that '[i]n such sort that in Princes courts, in the houses of greate men, and at the assemblies of yong gentlemen and yong damesels, the chiefe pastime is, to sing prophane sonnets, and vaine ballats of loue, or to rehearse some fabulos faits of Palmerine, Amadis, or other such like raueries & such as ather haue the art or vaine poetike'.³² This echoes Vives's concern that young people were especially susceptible to the charms of romance.

Despite the concerns of humanists such as Vives and churchmen, the nascent spirit of utilising fictional material in the humanist reading programme becomes more apparent in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Sir Philip Sidney most famously extended the possibility of moral reading from fictional poetry read as an exemplary text. In *An Apology for Poetry*, he asserts the

³¹ Rudolf Gwalther, 'The Translatour to the Christian Reader', *An hundred, threescore and fiftene homelyes or sermons, vppon the Actes of the Apostles, written by Saint Luke* ([London: Henry Denham], 1572), sig. Aiiii^v.

³² Alexander Hume, 'To the Scottish Youth', *Hymnes, or Sacred songs wherein the right vse of poësie may be espied* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldgrave, 1599), sig. Aiii^v.

possibility of reading for example in *Amadis de Gaule*. He admits that romances, if read selectively, might provide useful material for emulation:

That imitation, whereof Poetry is, hath the most conveniency to Nature of all other, in so much that, as Aristotle saith, those things which in themselves are horrible, as cruel battles, unnaturall monsters, are made in poetical imitation delightful. Truly, I have knowen men, that even with reading *Amadis de Gaule* (which God knoweth wanteth much of a perfect poesy) have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality, and especially courage.³³

The texts' use by 'men of iudgment' is detailed further in 'A letter sent by F. A. touchyng the proceedings in a priuate quarell and vnkindnesse betweene Arthur Hall, and Melchisedech Mallerie gentleman', published in 1576. F. A. defends his reporting of 'so long a treatise of so small a matter' with the explanation that:

I haue meruayled oft what the wryters meant, to put to our readings in the *Rounde table* knights, *Beuis of Hampton*, the *Knight of the Swanne*, the foure sonnes of *Amon*, *Amadis*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Esplandion il Caualleire del sole*, *Valentine and Orson the Greekes*, *Olgarden the Dane*, & a thousand more such tryfling Fables, yet do I see many men of iudgement read them, some for the tongue, and some for the matter, reape benefite of both.³⁴

What begins as a familiar list of maligned fictional texts turns into an expression of incredulity at the application of humanistic modes of reading to the texts which allow them to be mined for eloquence, *i.e.* 'the tongue', or 'the matter'. F. A. goes on to defend the matter but not the eloquence of his letter, observing that 'a man may profite himselfe in one of the two partes', adding, with perhaps some

³³ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. ed. R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.95.

³⁴ Arthur Hall, 'A letter sent by F. A., touchyng the proceedings in a priuate quarell and vnkindnesse betweene Arthur Hall, and Melchisedech mallerie gentleman, to his very friende L. B. being in Italie', (London: [Arthur Hall, 1576]), sig. Aiiii^v.

self-deprecation, that 'there is not so euill a floure but the Bee may gather hony of it.'³⁵

George Whetstone, in *An heptameron of civill discourses*, printed in 1582, gives many examples of immoral women, commenting that, '[i]f you coueit more Authorities, to approue so common a mischiefe, read *Ouid Metamorphosis* in Latine, *Segnior Lodouicus Regester*, in Italian. *Amadis de Gaule*, in French, and the *Pallace of pleasure*, in English, where you shall finde store of Histories to the like purpose.'³⁶ This witty cross-referencing suggests that Ovid and contemporary European texts provide negative examples of behaviour which should be read as a means of acquainting oneself with what is to be avoided.

The most sustained advertisements for *Amadis* in English, which provide highly conflicting views on its merit, are the anonymous, *Le Thresor des Douze Livres d'Amadis de Gaule*, translated into English as *The tresurie of Amadis of Fraunce* by Thomas Paynell in around 1562, and the *Discours Politiques et Militaires* of François de la Noue, of 1587, which was translated into English as *The Politicke and Militarie Discourses of the Lord de la Noue* by E. A. in the same year. The *Tresurie* presents short extracts from the various volumes of the romance as examples of eloquent prose style which are glossed as models for letter-writing, oration, and civil instruction. La Noue's argument reiterates the humanist concern that a narrative full of extravagant bloodshed and profane love is both attractive to youths and detrimental to their upbringing. Both of these texts originated in France in response to the widespread reading of the text there; they occupy a different position in the English marketplace, being translated and

³⁵ Hall, sig. Aiiii^v.

³⁶ George Whetstone, *An heptameron of civill discourses* (London: Richard Jones, 1582), sig. R[i]'.

published well in advance of the translations of the romances. In the following section, I will discuss the positions which these two texts occupied in the context of the publication of Iberian romances in France, and will then go on to discuss the two texts' appearance in England in advance of the romances they reference.

iii. Iberian romances in France

Knowledge of the Iberian romance cycles in England came by way of the French, not only by the translations; the various volumes were read in their French versions by the well-educated for many years before they were printed in English. More significantly, *Amadis de Gaule's* first appearance in English was preceded by translations of two influential and opposing French treatises, one of which publicised the myriad examples to be extracted from the cycle about to emerge on the English market, the other striking a pre-emptive blow against what the author regarded as the pernicious, corrupting lies of the romance and the potential damage that its anachronistic presentation of combat could cause both to the individual reader and the commonwealth. The favourable book was *The treasure of Amadis of Fraunce*, translated by Thomas Paynell in 1572 from *Le Thresor des douze livres d'Amadis* (1559). With this text, English readers had fifteen years to digest the short narrative extracts with nominal moral glosses from the *Amadis* cycle before the text disparaging the romance, François de la Noue's *Discours politiques et militaires*, was translated by E. A. as *The Politicke and Militarie Discourses of the Lord de la Noue* in 1587. The translation of La

Noue was printed in 1588, two years before the first book of *Amadis de Gaule* was printed in English.

Before discussing these two ancillary texts and their contributions to various English perceptions of the romances, I will outline the printing history and cultural uses of the romances in France as these bear heavily on the ways in which the texts were received in England; in many cases, the arguments employed by the French writers to advertise the merits of the texts were adopted with little change by the English paratextual authors. Moreover, the prime objector to the romances in France, Bishop Jacques Amyot, is introduced here as a proponent of the arguments of humanism and the Catholic Church against the publication and reading of romances. As I will discuss in the final section, his words come to be used in a novel way by Anthony Munday, the English translator of many of the romances.

The translations of the Iberian romances do not belong to a distinct sphere of popular culture. Following Roger Chartier's comments on the relationship between elite and popular print culture, the French printing history of the Iberian romances demonstrates the interconnectedness of the reading publics in early modern France. Chartier writes of the 'popular' urban market for printed texts in early modern France:

Popular receptivity to printed matter did not create a literature specific to the popular audience; it meant that the humblest of citizens handled texts that were also read by "notables" great and small.³⁷

In a discussion on the spread of printed matter, Chartier gives the example of Gilles Picot, Lord of Gouberville, who recorded in his diary on the 6th February

³⁷ Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p.180.

1554: 'It is raining without cease. [My men] were in the fields, but the rain chased them off again. In the evening, all through vespers, we read in *Amadis de Gaulle* about how he vanquished Dardan.'³⁸ This example demonstrates the use of the text as recreational reading; since Chartier is talking about contact with printed material among the illiterate, it would seem that Picot made the decision that the romance, or at least the episode he chose to read, would be suitable for his men.

The high prestige afforded to the romances when they were translated into French shifts the emphasis away from the possibility of reading the narrative for pleasure and concentrates instead on the uses to which the translated text can be put; for example, to promote it as a tool proclaiming the beauty of the French language at a time of increased humanist interest in the status of the literary vernacular, or to break up the abundant narratives into a series of epistolary models or commonplaces. The arguments attesting to the utility of the texts rely on the reader interpreting the material in a conventionally humanistic way; as the arguments of those who oppose the romances show, the concern lies with those new 'popular' readers who do not ostensibly have the education to do so.

Nicolas Herberay, Seigneur des Essars's, translation of *Amadis de Gaula*, commissioned by François I, was published in 1539, and Herberay translated a subsequent book every year until 1546. The translations of later books were undertaken by a number of different French translators, including members of the Pléiade, until, in 1574, Antoine Tyron translated Book XIV, the last book of the original Spanish cycle. The romance was immediately popular with French readers, and was reprinted three times in its first year. Because of the sustained

³⁸ Chartier, p.157.

popularity of the cycle, French publishers turned to its Italian continuations to provide translations of Books XV to XXI, which arrived in France between 1576 and 1581.

The first editions of the books were prestigious objects; the typography, woodcuts and binding testify to this. Commercial logic dictated that these translations became quickly available in more modest, inexpensive formats. Their commercial popularity notwithstanding, the books of *Amadis*, *Palmerin*, and their continuations, generated unease in several quarters in sixteenth-century France; foremost among these was the participation of the translations in French humanist debate on the value of writings in the vernacular; in addition, la Noue objected to what he felt were the lies and lack of verisimilitude in the representation of warfare in the narratives, as well as the idleness of the writer and reader who would devote time to such a large cycle of texts. French religious and humanist objectors voiced concern over the corrupting power of the narrative.

Herberay's translation of *Amadis* was celebrated in France for its eloquent use of the French language. His text was used by the English, German, Dutch and Italian translators of the romance. John J. O'Connor points out that, in his *Itinerary* (1617), Fynes Moryson recommends *Amadis* to those among his readership who wish to brush up on foreign languages because it is available in so many languages and because the translators are "Masters of eloquence".³⁹ Later French editions of *Amadis* in particular testify to the influence of the Pléiade, who sought to bestow humanist principles on a national poetic language by imitating Italian and Greco-Roman models. Claude Colet, closely linked to

³⁹ For further reference, see O'Connor, p.259.

this circle of poets, took over the task of translating the books of *Amadis* from Herberay, beginning with Book Nine in 1553. He is keen to declare in his preface that he only undertook the translation during his breaks from more serious activity; moreover, his translations are accompanied with commendatory verses in Latin, Greek and French from his fellow humanists.⁴⁰ Etienne Jodelle later adds further qualifications in the preface to Colet's translation of *Histoire Palladienne*, published in 1555 after Colet's death in 1553; he admits that he was averse to Colet's translation of 'Spanish lies'⁴¹ but, on reflection, concedes that Colet must have seen some value in the fables. In the same preface, Jodelle equates the text to the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid* and *Orlando furioso*, grouping these texts together as 'trois romants'.⁴² Colet's broadside to his critics in his translation of Book Ten, printed in 1552, is in the form of a sonnet, '*Contre aucuns mesdisans de l'histoire d'Amadis*', 'Against certain slanders of the history of Amadis'.

The prime concern of these translators was to bolster the reputation of the French language and it is once more essential to note the constant tension between form and content and the inability of the romance's defenders to agree on the merits of translating and reading such a text. Joachim du Bellay was another advocate for the dissemination of *Amadis*. Du Bellay's *Défense et illustration de la langue française* was published in 1549 and his particular liking for Herberay's *Amadis* centres on the quality of the Frenchman's translation rather than the subject matter as, in his 'Ode to des Essarts', he calls Herberay 'L'Homère françois'.⁴³ The project to enrich the vernacular language had found a

⁴⁰ For details, see Marion Rothstein, *Reading in the Renaissance: Amadis de Gaule and the Lessons of Memory* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), p.31.

⁴¹ See Marc Fumaroli, 'Jacques Amyot and the Clerical Polemic Against the Chivalric Novel', *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985), 22-40, pp.35-6.

⁴² Quoted in Rothstein, p.26.

⁴³ Cited in Fumaroli, p.28.

seemingly ideal vehicle in terms of the widespread popularity of the romances among the reading public, but the question of its content also had to be addressed. The labours of the translator Jacques Gohory echo Spanish arguments for *Amadis's* inclusion in the canon of profitable fiction. In his dedication to Book X, he makes the case for *Amadis* to be read as a courtesy book. He argues that classical writers such as Xenophon, Herodotus, and Æsop, employ fiction in a similarly instructive way, and also claims that allegorical interpretations are required for many episodes of the romance, comparing it with Apuleius' *Golden Ass* and Boccaccio's *De genealogia deorum*.⁴⁴

Jacques Gohory's translation of Book Ten was the last edition of *Amadis de Gaule* to be printed in the expensive and luxurious folio format. In the following years, only cheaper reprints and compilations appeared and the French book-buying public began to take an interest in such shorter prose texts as Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques*, first published in 1563. Michel Simonin advances the view that, by 1611, the romance was distinctly unpopular with the French reading public.⁴⁵ However, Chartier advances the more nuanced argument that chivalric romances began to be produced in cheaper formats and were the principal titles of the *Bibliothèque bleue*, so it would seem that it was perhaps only among the more educated in French society that the romances no longer held any appeal.⁴⁶

It was in the context of the earlier unprecedented popularity of the Iberian romances that concerns about their use began to emerge. François de la Noue was a Protestant nobleman and professional soldier who became an advisor to Henri de Navarre. During the Wars of Religion he acquired a famous reputation

⁴⁴ See O'Connor, pp.62-3.

⁴⁵ See Michel Simonin, 'La disgrâce d'Amadis', *Studi Francesi*, 28 (1984), 111-35, p.34.

⁴⁶ Chartier, pp.170-82.

for virtuous conduct. Le Sieur de Fresnes, the gatherer of La Noue's writings, compares him, in his dedication to the King of Navarre, to the Greek historian, Xenophon, who was regarded by writers throughout the sixteenth century as the model of exemplary historiography. La Noue objected to the lack of historical accuracy in the romances and wished for something more relevant to the young male reader who might find himself in a battle during the course of his life. What is significant is that in this treatise on military matters, detailing his experiences in France's last three civil wars, la Noue devotes an entire chapter to a denunciation of chivalric fiction. He gives it the title, 'That the reading of the bookes of Amadis de Gaule, and such like is no less hurtful to youth, than the works of Machiavel to age.'⁴⁷ La Noue takes the typical humanist view, put forward by Horace, that books are to be read to teach and to delight; the delight should not be excessive and should be harmonious with the lessons to be learned, not impeding or perverting the knowledge to be gleaned from the reading. He alludes to the potential to read *Amadis* for instruction as follows:

I graunt that the instructions and examples of this fabulous historie, may also be propounded, to the end to teach both to love and fight, yet will I saie that the most of those loves are dishonest, and almost all the combats full of falsehood and not to be practised, so that the following of those rules is to walke in error.⁴⁸

At first glance, the vocabulary of the passage appears typical of the humanist attack against romance fiction. Terms such as 'fabulous', 'dishonest', 'falsehood', and 'error' are all common to diatribes against the romance; but more specific in la Noue's writing is the fear that 'instructions and examples' will be drawn from this text for practical purposes. In his view not only are the

⁴⁷ François de la Noue, *The Politique and Militarie Discourses of the Lord de la Noue*, trans. E. A. (London: Thomas Orwin, 1587), p.51. All quotations from la Noue are taken from this edition.

⁴⁸ La Noue, p.52.

combats 'full of falsehood' but, more importantly, they are also 'not to be practised'. La Noue appears to regard the text as a potential repository of fighting techniques and strategies and is concerned that a humanistic 'goal-oriented' reading of the text would produce martial error.

He is particularly concerned that the text will prove damaging to male youth who will be imbued with a false view of combat and conduct through reading the extraordinary chivalric exploits of *Amadis et al.*:

I will not otherwise speak of these mightie blowes that cleave a man to the waste, or cut asunder a *Vantbrasse* arme and all: neither of those shockes or fals that doe a man no harme, but that he may rise and leape againe upon his horse back, as he were become a leopard, neither of their continual combats of two houres long, together with their foolish enterparlies: neither of their imaginarie valiancies that make one man to kill 200, because the matter it selfe sheweth it to tend onley to terrifie women and children.⁴⁹

La Noue complains that the reading of such romances as *Amadis de Gaul* are 'verie fit instruments for the corruption of maners, which I am determined to prove in few words, to the end to dissuade innocent youth from intangling themselves in these invisible snares which are so subtilly laide for them.'⁵⁰ many humanists of this period, he counsels that young readers should be as with exposed to the edifying influence of classical writers on the subject of the formation of a young man's character: 'To have in our own language, lectures out of the auncient writers that intreat of moral virtues, policy, and war. They might also be instructed in the Mathematiks, Geography, fortification, and some most usual languages.'⁵¹ In this instance he is hoping that the text will be a former or reformer of manners and instil virtues in the reader; elsewhere he is

⁴⁹ La Noue, pp.84-85.

⁵⁰ La Noue, p.51.

⁵¹ La Noue, p.73.

more concerned with the false representation of combat in the romance cycle. Throughout his text he employs an extended metaphor of the student as a seed to be nurtured into a fruitful plant and the environment in which he is to be nurtured as the battlefield. He writes that:

[those] imagining that good examples should always shine in Princes Courtes, forreine Countries, or warres, do very inconsideratly cast their young seede into those fieldes which they thinke to bee fruitfull. But experience teacheth them that many tymes reporte is a lyer, and many graines are quite lost.⁵²

He complains that a man could '[bestow] all his time in reading the bookes of *Amadis*, yet will it not all make him a good soldiour or warriour. For to attaine to be the one or the other, he shall neede nothing that therin is contained.'⁵³ He concludes:

Finally, I will yet set downe one point concerning the exercise of armes, which hee maketh so unlike to common use, that it is rather a mockery and abusing of youth in giving them such precepts: for although the wiser sort do account such knightly prowesses and giantlyke strength, wherewith the reader is so importuned to bee but fables, yet the more undiscreete, underso sweete a charme of wordes cannot forbear, but remember some such draughts as are most conformable to their affections.⁵⁴

Humanist texts tended to emphasise the value of reading as a means of acquiring practical knowledge; la Noue worries that the lack of verisimilitude in the romances will confuse those who are not skilled in reading fables. La Noue's main grounds for hostility seem to be that the text cannot be easily read as an instructive manual for the modern soldier. His very specific concern for the educational potential of the text is at odds with the plentiful examples from the

⁵² La Noue, p.77.

⁵³ La Noue, p.88.

⁵⁴ La Noue, p.84.

romance cycle which are anthologised by the compilers of *Le Thresor des livres d'Amadis de France* as models of eloquent writing and civil behaviour, to which I will return later in this section.

Alongside la Noue, Jacques Amyot is another prominent Frenchman who objected to the printing and reading of Iberian romances in sixteenth-century France, and whose views were available in English many years before the translation of the first of the Iberian romances. Amyot's early career was as a tutor, notably to the young Charles IX and Henri III. He became a priest at Bellozane in 1548, *Grand Aumônier* of France in 1560, and bishop of Auxerre in 1570. On his appointment to the Catholic Church, he began to devote much of his time to translating. His first translation was of Heliodorus's *Æthiopica* in 1547, completed while he was still a lay professor at Bourges University and presented to François I. He also translated Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* as *Les Amours pastorals de Daphnis et de Chloé* in 1559. He was the translator of Plutarch's *Lives* as *Les Vies des homes illustres grecs ou romains* in 1559, and *Moralia* as *Les Œvres morales et mêlées* in 1572. Amyot's choice of texts is particularly interesting; his translations of Plutarch's exemplary texts are not surprising, but his choice of classical fiction is less predictable, given the vitriol with which he attacked contemporary Iberian romances. It would seem that Amyot drew a distinction between the classical and contemporary fiction, and that he viewed the classical ones as relatively innocuous and, therefore, permissible recreation.

Amyot's preface to his translation of the *Histoire ethiopique d'Heliodore* acknowledges that human nature renders impossible the constant reading of instructive books and that suitable literary diversions must be provided to refresh

the mind for more serious study. He accordingly allows the reading of fiction if it resembles nature.⁵⁵ As Marc Fumaroli observes, for Amyot, probability equals propriety.⁵⁶ In the same preface, he claims that he translated the Greek text specifically to counterbalance the trend at court of reading *Amadis*. Herberay, the first and most prolific French translator of *Amadis*, appears to have responded to the views of Amyot since, as Fumaroli points out, the seven books of *Amadis* which were printed before the publication of the *Histoire ethiopique* had no apologetic preface while those that appeared after it included paratextual material which engaged with Amyot's assertions.

Amyot's 'Epistle to the Readers' accompanying his translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, sets out to defend the inclusion of invented details in historiography or life-writing while, at the same time, denouncing romances. He identifies a hierarchy of genres, with historiography at the top, and is careful to distinguish between the 'reformed' moral fable, which illustrates the truth of human nature despite being fictional, and the romance, which affords no moral benefit to the reader. He also cites Cicero's *Academica* (2.1.2), echoing la Noue in illustrating the centrality of texts to the practical instruction of soldiers, stating of Lucius Lucullus:

when he left Rome as general and field commander of the Roman people to wage war on Mithridates, [he] had no experience whatever of war, but on the way he diligently read histories and questioned old officers and men of long experience who were travelling with him, so that when he arrived in Asia, where action was called for, he was a well-formed general [...] he did not require long apprenticeship nor the coarse training of practice.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ For a full discussion of this, see Fumaroli, p.34.

⁵⁶ Fumaroli, p.30.

⁵⁷ Rothstein's translation, p.72.

Amyot's address to the reader is reproduced by Sir Thomas North in his translation of Plutarch's *Lives* from Amyot's French. North translates Amyot's preface as 'Amiot to the Readers', placing it after his dedication to Princess Elizabeth, and his brief epistle 'To the Readers'; it makes up the most substantial part of the *Lives*' prefatory material.

Discourses of humanist profit in opposition to Amyot can be discerned in the paratexts of other contemporary French translations of Iberian romances. François de Vernassal, the translator of *Primaleon de Grece*, printed in 1550, explains in his preface that he has augmented the Spanish and Italian editions of the romance by the addition of various rhetorical features,:

[t]he better to express and render more honorable the reading of it, I have described some passages according to true cosmography, brought to bear many authorities and comparisons (both from history and the fables of poetry) and often made use of sententia, explanations, metaphors, similes, notes, letters, verses, speeches, orations, and long decorations of my own finding in those places where I saw the little that I know to be proper and suitable.⁵⁸

The list of rhetorical features including moral sententia and embellishing decorations counters Amyot's classification of romance at the bottom of his list of suitable genres.

Objections like those set forth by Amyot and la Noue were not the only texts which influenced the paratextual material to the romances printed subsequently; a small text, *Le Thresor des liures d'Amadis de Gaul*, was instrumental, in its various incarnations, in the refashioning of the romance as a humanist text. The *Thresor*, revised and reprinted at regular intervals between 1559 and 1606, firstly as the *Thresor des douze livres d'Amadis de Gaule*,

⁵⁸ Rothstein's translation, p.23.

gathered short extracts from the French translations of *Amadis* and presented them as a manual of eloquent models for writing and speaking. There were twenty-five editions in total, in octavo or sextodecimo formats, with many augmentations as subsequent volumes of the romance cycle appeared in print. The prefatory matter positioned them for women at court, but they were popular with other readers and succeeded in bringing *Amadis* to a wider audience. Véronique Benhaïm makes the point that the various editions of the *Thresor* did more to advertise the civil virtues of *Amadis* than the romances themselves.⁵⁹ She observes that they also played a role in shaping preliminary material of the later translations of the romances, with the paratextual authors increasingly adopting the arguments of the *Thresor* about the utility and beauty of the text.⁶⁰ The educational reputation of the text was cemented further when it was bound with a bilingual edition of Vives's *Dialogues*, a collection of exercises in Latin conversation, by Gabriel Cotier in 1561 and 1562. One can only imagine what Vives, who was so vitriolic in his writing about the romances, would have made of this! What is clear from the printing history is that there is once again a closer relationship than is generally acknowledged between humanist pedagogical texts and the romances maligned in several quarters as unprofitable and detrimental to the morality of the reader. This proximity of forms is developed further when the romances arrive in English at the end of the sixteenth century.

Following in the tradition of humanist letter-writing manuals, Thomas Paynell's English translation of the *Thresor*, the *Treasurie of Amadis of Fraunce*, appeared in around 1572, eighteen years before the English translation of the first book of the cycle. The printer of the *Treasurie*, Thomas Hacket, dedicates the

⁵⁹ Véronique Benhaïm, 'Les *Thresors* d'Amadis', in Nicole Cazauran (ed.), *Les 'Amadis' en France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2000), 157-81, p.163.

⁶⁰ Benhaïm, p.170.

text to Sir Thomas Gresham, describing the centrality of writing good epistles and being a good orator to the profit of the individual and the commonwealth: ‘to be an excellent Oratour, singular in orations, pythie and ingenious in writing Epistles, for therby is brought to passe the moste excellent things for publike gouernment, as also for euery mannes priuate cause and vse’.⁶¹ As is typical of the prefatory matter of Iberian romances and related texts printed in England during the later sixteenth century, no mention is made of the text’s romance origins; instead, conventional formulations appear, which situate the text in a classical tradition of ‘theose worthie Oratours the Grecians, as Demosthenes, Isocrates, and that worthie Romaine the Prince of Eloquence Marcus Tullius Cicero’.⁶² Hacket sets out the text as useful to all readers, as it is ‘stuft with pleasant orations, fine epsitles, singular complaintes, with matter mixt so fitly and aptly to serue the turne of all persons, not curious nor filled full of obscure and darke sense, but playne and pleasant’.⁶³ Echoing Hacket, Paynell lists the ways in which good behaviour will be instilled in reading the text in his epistle, ‘To the gentle Reader’; the readers will become ‘wise and prudent counsellors’, ‘fervent and honest lovers’, ‘elegant enditers of lovely Epistles’; he comments, ‘[w]hat weake and cowardly heartes and stomackes have they that will not be stirred or moved with the rhetorical orations, the vehement persuasions, and liberall promises and rewards of wise, noble and worthie captains’.⁶⁴

The *Treasurie* contains a table at the front, listing ‘the principall matters of this booke reduced into common places for the more speedie and easie finding of the maner to wryte Letters missives, according to the minde and argument of

⁶¹ Thomas Hacket, ‘To the right worshipfull sir Thomas Gressam knight’, in Thomas Paynell (trans.), *The tresurie of Amadis of Fraunce* (London: Thomas Hacket, 1572), sig. ¶ii^r.

⁶² Paynell, sig. ¶ii^r.

⁶³ Paynell, sig. ¶ii^v.

⁶⁴ Paynell, sigs. ¶iiii^{r-v}.

him that writeth'. The templates include: 'A Forme to declare his aduice, to aske or to giue counsel of any thing to Lords, friends, parents, alies, or subiects', 'A forme to declare to a man, the good affection that he beareth him', 'A forme to giue thanks to one', 'A forme to excuse him of the thing, whereof a man may be taxed' and a 'forme to threaten, or to answeere to the threatenings of an other', 'Orations to incite his vassalles, friends, or alies to take armes, and to encourage the souldiers readie to fight.'⁶⁵ Paynell was also the translator of compilations of precepts from Erasmus and Vives. In addition, he translated *The pithy and moost notable sayings of al scripture gathered by Thomas Paynell: after the manner of common places* and *A frutefull booke of the common places of all S. Pauls Epistles*. Given this glimpse into his catalogue of translations, it seems reasonable to assume that he regarded the extracts from *Amadis* as being in the same instructive vein. However, the extracts also potentially function as advertisements for the arrival of the English translation with a collection of narrative highlights, from the thirteen volumes already translated into French, camouflaged as a humanist letter-writing manual. Moreover, the protean quality of the romance material when humanist forms and reading practices are attached to it anticipates the playful ambiguities of the preliminary matter of the romances when they are printed in their English translations at the end of the sixteenth century.

iv. 'the versatile Elizabethan' and the camouflage of Iberian romances in England

⁶⁵ Paynell, sigs. ¶¶ii^{r-v}.

In this final section, I will address the array of paratextual arguments which accompany the romances when they are eventually translated and printed in English, and which make use of the discourses on the suitability of romance fiction as reading material which had dogged them since their initial publication, and which had permeated English attitudes to fiction since the printing of Vives's texts early in the century. I argue that the multiple paratexts position the romances in relation to various sections of the reading public and, to these, they present the texts jestingly as profitable fiction or as exemplary historiography

The translator of many of these romances, Anthony Munday, who occasionally wrote under the pseudonym Lazarus Pyott, is central to my argument: the paratexts with which he was involved provide a wealth of examples of the curious ways in which these texts were positioned in the marketplace. Until very recently, little critical attention had been paid to Munday's role as a translator of continental romances, other than to discuss his use of a pseudonym in his textual relations with associates including Thomas Nashe and Henry Chettle. While I will return to this pseudonymous paratextual strategy, my aim here is to situate the prefatory material of Munday's romances in relation to the arguments on the utility of texts common to early modern humanist discourses. I will show that Munday and his friends were aware of the controversy surrounding the romances and were able to position their texts as profitable discourse with a level of irony which would not be lost on their educated readers. While many of the preliminaries to the Iberian romance translations obviously do function as advertisements for the texts they

accompany, many of them offer conflicting accounts of their texts and offer comments on the status of romance fiction and its potential readers. To dismiss these paratexts as empty rhetorical ploys or market-driven negotiations, is, I believe, as short-sighted as to embrace their content as a transparent revelation of the issues and circumstances surrounding production.

Firstly, however, some attention must be given to the first Spanish romance to be translated into English as this provides a useful context for the paratexts of the later translations by Munday *et al.*. Margaret Tyler's *The Mirrour of Princely deedes and Knighthood*, licensed in 1578 and printed by Thomas East in 1579 or 1580, was the first English translation of a Spanish romance to be published in England.⁶⁶ This romance was translated directly from the Spanish, unlike the later translations which arrived by way of their French editions.

Kathryn Coad speculates that Tyler's choice of Diego Ortúñez de Calahorra's *Espejo de principes y cavalleros (El Caballero del Febo)*, Part I, was a safe one as it presented a highly moralised narrative.⁶⁷ Daniel Eisenberg argues that the didactic tone which Ortúñez adopted in the Spanish original was in response to the increasingly derogatory views of romance in Spain in the later sixteenth century, which permeated throughout Europe.⁶⁸ However, this defensive positioning did not exempt the text from criticism in England; in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), Francis Meres lists *The mirror of knighthood* as a text to

⁶⁶ For further details of the publication of *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood*, see Kathryn Coad (ed.), 'Introductory Note', in *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Part 1: Printed Writings, 1500-1640, Volume 8: Margaret Tyler*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp.ix-x.

⁶⁷ Coad, p.x.

⁶⁸ Cited in Coad, p.x.

avoid, alongside those translated by Munday, including *Palmerin de Oliva*, *Primaleon of Greece*, *Palmendos*, and *Palladine*.⁶⁹

Alongside the attempts in the *Mirror*'s narrative to bring to light the moral of the story, Tyler takes pains in her prefatory material to emphasise the utility of the text. In a concise expression of the dual importance of profit and pleasure in reading, she writes in her 'Epistle Dedicatorie to Lord Thomas Haward':

I haue aduentured vpon a peece of worke not in deede the most profitablest, as entreting of arms, nor yet altogether fruitlesse, if example may serue, as being historicall, but the while, either to be born withal for the delight, or not to be refused for the stra[n]genes:⁷⁰

Beginning her dedication with the common protestation of having been 'forced by the importunity of my friends to make some triall of my selfe in this exercise of tra[n]slation',⁷¹ Tyler then proceeds to justify her translation on familiar grounds. However, the tortuous qualifications of the dedicatory epistle betray an equivocal attitude to the translated text; it seems that Tyler is damning it with faint praise when she claims that it is not 'altogether fruitlesse' since it is 'historicall', and then notes that it should be 'born withal' on account of its capacity to 'delight'. This is somewhat at odds with the address to the readers which follows directly after the dedication. In 'M.T. to the Reader', Tyler writes, 'whether a true storie of him [*i.e.* Trebatio, the protagonist of the romance] in deede, or a fained fable, I wot not', adding 'neither dyd I greatly seeke after it in [the] translation, but by me it is done into English for thy profit and delight'.⁷²

⁶⁹ For details, see Thomas, pp. 264-5.

⁷⁰ Margaret Tyler, *The Mirrour of Princely deedes and Knighthood*. (London: Thomas East, [1579?]), sig. Aii^r. Repr. in Coad.

⁷¹ Tyler, sig. Aii^r.

⁷² Tyler, sig. Aiii^r.

Here, Tyler proves herself to be adept with the rhetorical argument that it matters little whether the 'storie' of Trebatio is true or feigned, since this does little to affect the profitability of the narrative.

Expanding on the formulaic opening lines of the preface, Tyler goes into detail about the practical profit which can be gleaned from reading the text; she writes that it will be of particular use to young gentleman because of the examples it contains:

The chiefe matter therin contained is of exploits of wars, & the parties therin named, are especially renowned for their magnanimitie & courage. The authors purpose appeareth to be this, to animate thereby and to set on fire the lustie courages of you[n]g gentlemen, to the aduancement of their line, by ensuing such like steps.⁷³

Tyler then begins to engage more thoroughly with the actual concerns surrounding romance production and reading. Having reiterated that she was compelled to undertake this translation by 'others', she argues that it is no more problematic than other kinds of texts also being published:

I should alledge for my selfe [that] matters of lesse worthynesse by as aged years haue bene taken in hand, & that dayly new deuises are published, in songs, sonets, enterludes, & other discourses, and yet are borne out without reproach, only to please the humour of some men⁷⁴

She rounds off her preface 'To the Reader' with a justification of the pleasure in the text, figuring the Spanish original as a 'Spaniard' with which 'to sport they self',⁷⁵ maintaining that:

thou shalt finde in him the iust reward of malice & cowardice, with the good speed of honesty & courage, being able to furnish thee with sufficient store of forren example to both purposes. And in such matters

⁷³ Tyler, sig. Aiii^r.

⁷⁴ Tyler, sig. Aiiii^r.

⁷⁵ Tyler, sig. Aiiii^v.

which haue bene rather deuised to beguile time, then to breede matter of sad learning, he hath euer borne away the price which could season such delights with some profitable reading.⁷⁶

Tyler's argument goes some way towards acknowledging the importance of pleasure in reading, yet it is interesting to see that the printed marginalia which accompanies this preface glosses this section with 'The vse & profit of this Spanish translation'. The marginalia only draws attention to the prime function of writing according to the Horatian precept, although the section of the preface it accompanies admits that this profit is achieved through pleasure. Tyler's efforts to establish the utility of the text pave the way for the *Amadis* and *Palmerin* cycles translated by Munday.

Anthony Munday, the 'versatile Elizabethan'⁷⁷ to borrow Celeste Turner Wright's description, translated the majority of Iberian romances to appear in England between 1588 and 1619; he translated most of the volumes of the *Amadis* and *Palmerin* cycles after his initial venture in the mode with *Palladine of England* in 1588. Munday was unquestionably incredibly prolific and varied in his writing career and he is recognised today primarily as a protagonist in the Martin Marprelate debate, and as a collaborator with Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle, and others, in popular drama and civic pageants; however, it is his earlier, less well-documented literary output which is relevant to my argument here.

Working as a professional writer, Munday was used to producing the kinds of compiled texts and translations for ostensibly moral purposes which were in vogue at that time. One of his earliest texts was in the exemplary 'mirror'

⁷⁶ Tyler, sig.Aiiii^v.

⁷⁷ Celeste Turner Wright, "'Lazarus Pyott' and Other Inventions of Anthony Mundy', *Philological Quarterly* 42 (1963), 532-41, p.532.

mode; he translated a *Mirroure of Mutabilitie*, its extracts selected from Scripture, in 1579. His skills in gathering were put to further use in 1580 when, working for the printer John Alde, he selected a neighbouring publisher's pamphlet and ballad accounts of recent murders, interspersed them with Biblical quotations and moral glosses, and called it *A View of Sundry Examples*. In 1589, he translated a text of the arch-detractor of Iberian romances, *The declaration of the Lord de la Noue*. In 1593, he translated Ortensio Lando's *Paradossi* under the title *The Defence of Contraries*. He also translated Alexander Silvayn's *The Orator* in 1596 under the pseudonym Lazarus Pyott. This text was an English version of the French text, *Epitomes de cent histoires tragiques*, of 1581, and Alexander Silvayn was a pseudonym for Alexander van den Busche.⁷⁸ The full title in English was *The Orator: Handling a hundred severall Discourses, in forme of Declamations: Some of the Arguments being drawne from Titus Livius and other ancient Writers, the rest of the Authors owne invention: Part of which are of matters happened in our Age*, and subsequently, referencing its French source, as 'The Mirroure of Eloquence: Containing an hundred Historicall, or rather Tragick Declamations'. As Neil Rhodes observes, 'It is true that some material came from Livy, and also that some would appear to be written by Silvayn, but nearly half the declamations (or 'discours de controverse') in fact derive from Seneca's *controversiae*.'⁷⁹ As this brief selection of some of Munday's translations shows, he was accustomed to compiling and translating texts from classical, Scriptural, and contemporary sources, and advertised them as profitable reading to their prospective readerships. It will be useful to bear in mind Munday's practice of gathering in view of the examples from the romances

⁷⁸ Neil Rhodes, 'The Controversial Plot: Declamation and the Concept of the "Problem Play"', *Modern Language Review* 95 (2000), 609-22.

⁷⁹ Rhodes, p.615.

which follow. Tracey Hill is perhaps euphemistic in her description of Munday as ‘unabashedly pragmatic’ in his writing career, not averse to using the texts and techniques of other in his texts. This approach is much in evidence in the paratexts of his romance translations.

As Donna Hamilton notes, in 1580, Munday announced in the dedication of *Zelauto* to the Earl of Oxford that his translation of *Palmerin of England* was underway. This enterprise lasted nearly forty years and involved most major Iberian romances, with printing and reprinting taking place during 1588-92, 1598, 1602, 1609, 1615-1, and, after Munday’s death, in 1637 and 1639.⁸⁰ Munday was in the habit of announcing his forthcoming translations in his various dedications and prefaces to the readers; for example, in *Palmerin d’Oliva*, Munday writes in his dedicatory epistle to Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, that the text is a ‘New yeeres gift’, and that the second instalment will follow shortly: ‘the second part, now on the presse, and well neere finished, I will shortly present my worthie Patrone.’⁸¹, and in his preface, ‘To the courteous Readers’, he reminds the reader, ‘When I finished my seconde parte of *Palmerin of England*, I promised this worke of *Palmerin d’Oliva*’.⁸²

The paratexts protest that the pleasure that reading the romance engenders is linked to the humanist mode, after Horace, of teaching through delight. The edition of *Palmerin of England* published in 1602 contains a commendatory poem by John Webster which makes explicit the fantastic nature of the narrative: ‘The sighes of Ladies, and the spleene of Knights, / The force of Magicke, and the Map of fate: / Strange Pigmey-singlenes in Giant-fights’, and ends with the couplet: ‘Not for the fiction is the worke lesse fine: / Fables have truth and

⁸⁰ Hamilton, p.72.

⁸¹ Anthony Munday (trans.), *Palmerin d’Oliva* (London: John Charlewood, 1588), sig.*ii^v.

⁸² Munday, *Palmerin d’Oliva*, sig.*iii^r.

morall discipline'.⁸³ Webster recalls the humanist claim that fiction can instruct as well as a true or verisimilar narrative, although, as I have argued, the fiction that the humanists have in mind is very different from that of the Iberian romances. In this example, the confusion surrounding the value of fictive writing to humanists is once more exploited by romance defenders eager to promote their texts to a rapidly expanding reading public.

The pseudonymous translator of the second part of *Amadis de Gaule*, Lazarus Pyott, admits in his dedicatory epistle, 'To the Vertuous Yong Gentleman maister Gualter Borough', that: 'although it deserve no chiefe place in your studie, yet you may lay it up in some corner therof, vntill your best leasure afford you some idle time to peruse these abrupt lines of an unlearned *Souldior*',⁸⁴ adding in the epistle to the 'Curteous and friendly Reader': 'I freely confesse my labours might have been better employed in setting foorth some more serious matter'.⁸⁵ While such comments echo the modest rhetorical prefaces of many texts at the time, the particular circumstances of their printing alongside romance texts which were generally attacked for such idleness and frivolity lends them greater significance, functioning as an abdication of claims to humanist praxis.

Munday employs another highly distinctive and contrasting strategy in his prefatory materials, regularly camouflaging the romances as the more reputable modes of the exemplary life or historiography. When *Amadis* and *Palmerin* are translated into English, their front matter offers stock arguments

⁸³ Luis Hurtado and Francisco de Moraes, *Palmerin of England*, Part 3, trans. Anthony Munday (London: James Roberts, 1602), sig.A[iiii]^r.

⁸⁴ Herberay, *The Second Book of Amadis de Gaule*, trans. Lazarus Pyott (London: Cuthbert Burbie, 1595), sig.Aiii^r.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. Aiii^v.

attesting to the moral worth of their narratives. In the First Book of *Amadis of Gaule*, Anthony Munday writes in his Epistle to Sir Philip Herbert:

Right honourable, according to the saying of Cicero, writing in the commendation of Histories, he avoucheth them to be the Treasure of things past; the patterne of those that are to come, and the picture of mans life; the touchstone of our actions, and the full perfecter of our honour. And Marcus Varro saith: They are the witnesses of Times, the light of Truth; the life of Memorie; the Mistresse of life; and the Messenger of Antiquitie. And in very deede (Noble Lord) Histories cause us to see those things without danger, which millions of men have experimented with losse of their lives, honour and goods, making many wise by others peril and exciting imitation of precedent mens virtues, only to reach the like height of their unconquerable happinesse.⁸⁶

Munday is aware of the benefit of classical citations in conferring high status on his translation, citing Cicero and Varro as exemplary authorities for his epistle. All that he writes is familiar to the reader aware of the instructive or corrective function of poetry advanced by the humanists. The first part of this passage reflects on the uses of history as a spur to worldly honour, through the performing of good deeds imitated from texts. In the second part, there is a reiteration of Erasmus's argument, in *The Education of a Christian Prince*, that reading valuable texts is a shortcut to knowledge without arduous or dangerous, practical experience. In *Palmerin of England's* dedicatory epistle to Frances Young, Munday writes:

I must needs thus confesse with Aristotle, that History is the schoolemistresse of Princes, and the onely Trumpet that soundeth in the eares of all noble personages, the famous deedes of their worthy progenitors [...] Plato likewise affirmeth, that the name of History was given to this end, that by recording matters of antiquity, our fleeting

⁸⁶ Nicholas de Herberay, *The Ancient, Famous and Honourable History of Amadis de Gaule*, Book Two, trans. Anthony Munday (London: Nicholas Okes, 1618-19), sig.Aii.

memories might be stayed, which otherwise would soone be lost and retaine little.⁸⁷

With this extract, as with his defence of *Amadis* in my previous quotation, one would be forgiven for thinking that the text which it accompanies is a 'matter of antiquity' recorded to be relevant to 'the learned sort'. However, what is significant about the extracts I have just quoted is that they bear virtually no relation to the texts they accompany. The humanist commonplaces they contain could have been written for any history aiming to persuade the reader of its worth. There is no reference to the texts which the prefatory material accompanies, and its romance mode and fictiveness are not acknowledged at all. However it seems unlikely that any reader would be unaware of the subject matter and mode of the text, given the popularity of the romances at this time; therefore, the common humanist insistence on instruction through fruitful engagement with the text conceivably becomes an ironic enticement to the narrative due to the disjunction between the goals of reading set out and the well-known, anticipated narrative.

I now come to my prime example of Munday's jesting approach to the defence of the Iberian romance, involving his pseudonymous role as the translator of the second part of *Palmerin of England*, bound and sold with the first, which states it was translated by Munday, in 1596. Much critical attention has been paid to his use of the pseudonym, Lazarus Pyott; Celeste Turner Wright broke with the tradition in scholarship for most of the early twentieth century to identify Munday and Pyott as the same person in her article, "Lazarus Pyott"

⁸⁷ Luis Hurtado and Francisco de Moraes, *Palmerin of England*, Parts 1-2, trans. Anthony Munday (London: Thomas Creede, 1596), sig. Aiii^r.

and Other Inventions of Anthony Mundy' in 1963.⁸⁸ Since the publication of this highly convincing argument, academics have followed her lead in accepting that Munday and Pyott are the same person. More recently, there has been a renewed interest in Munday's use of the pseudonym in critical works which focus on the network of print relations in which Munday was involved, alongside his role in the Martin Marprelate controversy and his romance translations as models of Protestant militancy.⁸⁹ Jowett, Hamilton and Rhodes, in particular, advance the work done by Turner Wright in focusing on the significance of the working relationship between Munday and his contemporaries, Henry Chettle, Thomas Nashe, and John Wolfe. While these critical views do much to enhance our understanding of Munday's relationship with his fellow employees in the printing trade⁹⁰ and his approach to his romance paratexts, I believe there is a further dimension to this use of the pseudonym which must be explored, and which does much to corroborate my analysis of the complex intertextual expectations which are placed on the educated reader of the romance.

Turner Wright describes Munday's use of the pseudonym in his translation of *Amadis*, Book Two, as 'a most necessary cloak', since he was working on it for the printers Cuthbert Burby and Adam Islip, instead of for his usual associate, John Wolfe.⁹¹ In her important recent study, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics 1560-1633*, Donna B. Hamilton does much to situate Munday's Iberian romance translations in their early modern political and

⁸⁸ Turner Wright, pp. 532-41. For a brief summary of the history of the debate on the identification of Lazarus Pyott as Anthony Munday, see p.532.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Turner Wright(1963), Hill, Rhodes (2000), Hamilton, and John Jowett, 'Henry Chettle: "Your Old Compositor"', *TEXT*, 15 (2003),141-62.

⁹⁰ Jowett's description of Chettle's engagement with the production of his own work as 'transprofessional' seems particularly apt to be applied to Munday in this case too. See Jowett, p.155.

⁹¹ Turner Wright, p.535.

historical contexts. Drawing out the relationship between Munday, Henry Chettle, and Thomas Nashe, Hamilton argues that the romances were problematic in England since, although Munday eliminated much of the Catholic material, the plots remained 'unifyingly Catholic'.⁹²

Where friendship begins in fellow-apprenticeship, matters of trade and friendship are intertwined and identities mingle. 'H. C.' becomes 'T. N.', Munday bifurcates into the good friend and the invented Piot, and the supposedly good stationer is radically distinguished from the supposedly bad. These epistles are indirectly but really directed at the unknown book-buyer; they are a form of publicity.⁹³

John Jowett discusses the meaning of the name, and its less than serious uses; he observes that in the prefatory poem to Munday's translation of *Il Primaleon*, in the line, 'Peace chattring *Py*, be still poore *Lazarus*', 'Chettle publicizes the joke behind the name, that the supposed rival is a chattering magpie and a corpse risen from the dead'.⁹⁴ I wish to extend this idea of punning playfulness in the paratexts to note its significance to a crucial moment in my argument. 'Piot' or 'piou' was a diminutive of the early modern French word, 'pie', meaning 'magpie'. It is Munday's magpie-like skills in appropriating a passage from another text which are relevant to my discussion of his jesting camouflage of romances.⁹⁵

The dedicatory epistle to Frances and Susan Young which precedes the Second Book of *Palmerin of England* begins with the following anecdote:

⁹² Donna B. Hamilton, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics 1560-1633* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.78.

⁹³ Jowett, p.159.

⁹⁴ Jowett, p.158.

⁹⁵ I am very grateful to Professor Rhodes for drawing my attention to the punning French meaning of 'Pyott/piot' as 'magpie' which is so crucial to my understanding of Munday's strategy in his paratexts to the Iberian romances. See also Turner Wright (1963).

Alfonsus King of Naples, (right worshipfull) a King renowned in sundrie volumes of antiquitie, for his wisdom, bountie, and affabilitie of nature, lying verie sore sicke in the Citie of Capua, having tried the very uttermost cunning his Phisitians could use on him, yet all would not helpe to recover his health; determined with himselfe to take no more medicines, but for his recreation caused the Storie of Quintus Curtius (concerning the deeds of Alexander the great) to be read before him, at the hearing whereof he conceived such wonderfull pleasure, as nature gathered strength by it, and chased away the frowardnesse of his disease. Whereupon, having soone recovered his health, hee discharged his Phisitians, with these wordes: *Feast me no more with Galene, and Hippocrates sith all their skill would not serve to asswage my sicknesse: but well fare Quintus Curtius that holpe mee so soone to my health.*⁹⁶

This example is a literalised metaphor of the benefit that can be gained from reading. Alfonsus is healed by the pleasure and profit engendered by hearing the exemplary history of Alexander. The example of Alphonsus being healed by the story of Quintus Curtius appears to have been common in historiography in the early modern period; Sir Edward Hoby's translation of 1586 from Matthieu Coignet's *Politique discourses upon trueth and lying* mentions, in a section on the use of classical historiographers as exemplars for battle, 'For this cause *Alphonsus* sayd of *Qu. Cursius*, that he was soner healed by his history, then his Phisitians.'⁹⁷ Munday's use of the example at first seem to be an example of the disingenuous paratextual claim to classical authority I have been citing, but in fact its significance is much more specific. While Munday is, as usual, able to exploit the generic nature of humanist exemplary discourse and highlight its ironic disjunction with the romance narratives it accompanies, this passage is in fact lifted straight from the pages of a translation of one of the Iberian romances' most prominent detractors, Jacques Amyot.

⁹⁶ Hurtado and Moraes, *The Second Part of [...] Palmerin of England*, sig.A3^r.

⁹⁷ Matthieu Coignet, *Politique Discourses upon trueth and Lying*, trans. Sir Edward Hoby. (London: Rafe Newberie, 1586), p.70. Quoted in Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.7.

The passage quoted above from Munday's dedication reproduces almost exactly the following passage from Sir Thomas North's translation of Amyot's preface to the readers at the front of his translation of Plutarch's *Lives*:

Also it is seene that the reading of histories doth so holde and allure good wits, that divers times it not only maketh them to forget all other pleasures, but also serveth very fittely to turne away their griefes, and sometimes also to remedie their diseases. As for example, we find it written of Alphonsus King of Naples, that Prince so greatly renowned in Chronicles for his wisdom and goodnesse, that being sore sicke in the citie of Capua, when his Phisitions had spent all the cunning that they had to recover him his health, and he saw that nothing prevailed: he determined with him selfe to take no mo medicines, but for his recreation caused the storie of Quintus Curties, concerning the deedes of Alexander the great to be red before him: at the hearing whereof he tooke so wonderfull pleasure, that nature gathered strength by it, and overcame the waywardnesse of his disease. Whereupon having soone recovered his helth, he discharged his Phisitions with such words as these: Feast me no more with your Hippocrates and Galene, sith they can no skill to helpe me to recover my helth: but well fare Quintus Curtius that could so good skill to helpe me to recover my helth.⁹⁸

In the paratexts to the romances *Amadis* and *Palmerin*, a conflicting range of arguments is offered, variously defending the utility or eloquence of the texts they accompany, or ironically distancing the paratext from the chivalric narrative, recasting it as an exemplary fable steeped in classical learning and humanist commonplaces. Munday pushes this logic to its furthest extent, deploying the humanist techniques of commonplacing and humanist reading to turn Amyot's words against themselves. This ironic technique of Munday was taken up by Sir John Harington and Edmund Spenser in their naturalised romances, the subject of my next chapter.

⁹⁸ Sir Thomas North (trans.), 'Amiot to the Readers', in *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (London: Thomas Vautroullier and John Wight, 1579), sig.*v'.

CHAPTER 3

**'BEGUYLED THUS WITH DELIGHT OF NOUVELTIES': HARINGTON,
SPENSER, AND READING FOR PLEASURE IN COURTLY ROMANCE**

When Guyon and Arthur find and read the chronicles of their own lineages in the Castle of Alma in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, the canto concludes with the claim that they were '[b]eguyled thus with delight of nouelties' (II.x.77.1)¹ and lost track of the time while reading about their personal histories. Guyon reads the 'Antiquitee of Faerie lond', an analogical representation of Elizabeth's Tudor line, while Arthur reads 'Briton moniments', a version of the British History taken from a number of sources including Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*, and the chronicles of Hardyng, Grafton, and Stow. As I discussed in my first chapter, the veracity of this version of the British History, which was cited in defence of the Tudor line, came under scrutiny in the sixteenth century thanks to continental humanist historiographical methods arriving in Britain, and was generally regarded as a fiction by the late 1580s. Therefore, the first readers of *The Faerie Queene* would read a romance of Arthur reading a newly-classified romance which leaves him 'quite ravisht with delight' (II.x.69.1). Apprehensions about good reading practices are found throughout the poem;² as I argue in this chapter, the treatments of reading in the texts and paratexts of *The Faerie Queene* are not always earnest; while Spenser engages with humanist and Reformist ideas of good reading practice, the poem displays a marked playfulness in its treatment of

¹ All quotations from *The Faerie Queene* are taken from the following edition: Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, text ed. Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Suzuki (Harlow: Longman, 2001).

² For a discussion of these apprehensions, see, for example, Hester Lees-Jeffries, 'From the Fountain to the Well: Redcrosse Learns to Read', *Studies in Philology* 100 (2003), 135-76; Debra Belt, 'Hostile Audiences and the Courteous Reader in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI', *Spenser Studies* 9 (1988), 107-35.

the romance mode, particularly when considered in the social context of its courtly readers.

In my previous chapter, I discussed the ways in which Iberian romances were transformed into humanist manuals and justified as reading matter by their somewhat incongruous humanistic paratexts. These texts were read by all levels of literate society and their narratives, and adaptations of those narratives, were positioned as humanist texts in the marketplace. In this chapter, I turn to discuss texts which ostensibly employ the romance mode to more profitable ends and which have significantly more circumscribed readerships. I am concerned not only with Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, but also with Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and Sir John Harington's English translation of it, as Harington's translation and paratexts present a highly ambiguous defence of the allegorical poem, and encourage a less than serious engagement with the text. Furthering my study of humanistic paratextual claims of instruction in romances, I focus on the ways in which the texts of Harington and Spenser, intended for a courtly readership, negotiate the thorny subject of romance and its attendant pleasures in their paratexts.

These paratexts direct the Elizabethan readers towards allegorical readings of the texts while, at the same time, undercutting this profitable reading with a covert admission of the pleasure to be had in reading these seemingly instructive texts. At a time when both the number of romances in print and the reading public for these romances were rapidly expanding, the allegorical romance written for an educated readership flatters its readers, not only with an abundance of allusive and allegorical meanings, the full extent of which would be unintelligible to all but the most educated, but also with a format and

paratextual apparatus which refer their Elizabethan readers to arguments levelled against romances and construct intelligent readers and intelligent readings which allow for pleasure in such exercises.

I tend towards the view that these poems are romances rather than epics since as well as incorporating vast amounts of romance narratives and motifs, they correspond to Patricia A. Parker's always helpful definition of romance as 'a form which simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective, or object'.³ Barbara Fuchs extends Parker's formulation to define the romance as:

a literary strategy of pleasurable multiplicity, opposed to the single-mindedness and political instrumentality of epic. That is, whereas epic is most often associated with stories of effective quests, corporate achievement, and the heroic birth of nations, romance challenges these narratives by privileging instead the wandering hero, the erotic interlude, or the dangerous delay.⁴

Fuchs identifies the open-ended and less 'effective' form of the romance in oppositional relation to the epic. It is precisely this attempt to arrest the wandering of the romance hero and construct less fragmented narratives and moral readings, which I address in my account of the romances. I argue that the paratexts of these romances represent an attempt to impose 'effectiveness' on the narrative, yet the strategies they employ draw attention to the often contrived relations between such claims of morally purposeful reading and romance texts; in this way, they present the educated reader with the pleasure of recognising and negotiating the potential incongruities between the promise of instruction and the

³ Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p.4.

⁴ Barbara Fuchs, *Romance* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.66. See also David Quint, 'The Boat of Romance and Renaissance Epic', in Kevin Brownlee and Marina Scordilis Brownlee (eds), *Romance: Generic Transformations from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985), 178-202, pp.178-9.

romance mode. The romances I discuss in this chapter are advertised to their contemporary readers as allegorical texts, providing instruction for the reader by this 'veiled'⁵ strategy; I wish to argue that this strategy, which foregrounds the importance of a reader's 'correct' interpretation of a text, provides a means by which the writers and translators can address the controversy of reading for pleasure which is prevalent at this time.

The courtly texts of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Harington's translation of *Orlando Furioso* present paratexts to their restricted readerships which deal ironically with the contemporary concerns about romance reading by the uneducated; moreover, they suggest that their romance material is a rich source of instruction if read correctly, or that it is material which will be disregarded by the humanistically-educated reader while, either surreptitiously or explicitly, directing the reader towards the pleasurable content. I aim to qualify the commonly-held view of Spenser and Harington as defenders of poetry who straightforwardly advocate the allegorical romance mode as a vehicle for instruction. While Spenser and, to a lesser extent, Ariosto are often cited as writers who transform the use of the romance mode, elevating its status by merging it with epic and allegory to produce a more esteemed mode of fiction, I show that such writers were rather engaged in producing highly self-conscious and oblique apologies for romance.

I focus on two particular aspects of the mode which illuminate the argument of my thesis: that restricted readerships of romances are presented with arguments familiar to them through their education, and that these arguments are not entirely serious about the prominence which they afford to the profit to be

⁵ For a full discussion of allegory in the Spenser, see Michael Murrin, *The veil of allegory: some notes towards a theory of allegorical rhetoric in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

had from the text. In concentrating on Spenser's incorporation of material from the 'British History' and from popular continental romances, I will argue that in his approach to the romance material he betrays a deep awareness of the contemporary objections to producing and reading romance texts and performs a flagrant flouting of those same objections.

I begin by discussing the specific objections to the romances written by Ariosto and Spenser, which are somewhat different from those I presented earlier in my thesis. I next describe the constructed and actual readership of such texts, in order to situate my argument in relation to specific communities of readers. Moving briefly away from the texts' English reception, I will briefly state the arguments that relate to the writing and reception of *Orlando furioso* in Italy, in order to detail the critical environment of which Harington is aware when translating and presenting his text. I then go on to discuss the treatment of humanist and Reformist texts and reading in *The Faerie Queene*, before concluding with a discussion of a paratextual jest in the 'Letter to Raleigh' which has, I believe, been overlooked by Spenserian critics and which provides an understanding of the vexed contexts of fiction in which the romance is situated.

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is a fascinating example of a poem newly composed in the late sixteenth century but adopting material, arguments, and forms from other texts, both classical and modern. Unlike the *Amadis* and *Palmerin* cycles and their associated texts, it does not set down in print stories which had been told orally in preceding centuries, but makes much use of textual sources both national and international, crossing boundaries both temporal, in terms of the antique, medieval and sixteenth-century sources, and spatial, in terms of native and continental sources. As I noted in my previous chapter, the

presentation of the romance cycles in France was accompanied by arguments from the Pléiade that the eloquence of the language used in the translation could be separated from the content as a focus for the reader's admiration and instruction; Spenser drew on the defensive paratexts of continental romance as he drew on the romances themselves.

It has become something of a truism in Spenser studies to concentrate on the divided nature of Spenser the poet and/or his poetry. Richard McCabe describes the poet, in his *Complaints*, as having 'adopted the conflicting, if oddly complementary, *personae* of satirist and eulogist, elegist and lover, polemicist and prophet'⁶; Bart Van Es comments that Spenser's self-styling as 'Poet historical' stems from his 'instincts...for inclusiveness'⁷; Andrew King focuses on Spenser's position in the heart of a debate on the 'complex and ambivalent values'⁸ of Middle English romance to sixteenth-century readers. My own observations chime with these views, as I argue that Spenser's attitudes to the inclusion of historical and pleasurable material in *The Faerie Queene* represent a mercurial account of the pleasures and pitfalls of reading and a strong awareness of the constructed functions of romance texts at the time.

While I would not dare to contradict the wealth of critical material which deals with the self-evident fact that Spenser's text contains moral allegories which are to be recognised by his contemporary reader, I aim to draw attention to a previously unexplored aspect of the text: that is, that the synthesis of so much popular romance material, both British and continental,⁹ functions in direct

⁶ Richard McCabe (ed.), *The Shorter Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), p.xi.

⁷ Bart Van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.20.

⁸ King, p.vii.

⁹ In using the term 'British', I mean Arthurian and other medieval romances which remained popular reading material in the sixteenth century; these include widely-known romances such as *Bevis of Hamtoun* and *Guy of Warwick*, which were written before 1350, first printed by early

contrast to the general movement of popular material which characteristically proceeds downwards through the reading ranks in both social and material, textual forms. Instead, in the instance of the whole of *The Faerie Queene* and in Harington's paratextual material, the tales of popular romances, widely transmitted orally from the fourteenth century and in print from the late fifteenth, are incorporated in texts which are intended for a readership which would have substantially greater familiarity with the arguments against supposedly corrupting texts than the wider readership who enjoyed them.

In stating, in the 'Letter to Raleigh', that his poem is 'coloured with an historical fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter, then for profite of the ensample',¹⁰ it is surely crucial to recognise that Spenser, like Harington, presents his poem not for 'the most part of men' but for a limited court readership.¹¹ Nonetheless, they contain material which would have been understood and enjoyed by most people at that time, whether literate or not. Many critics have noted that recognisable episodes from such popular 'matter of England' romances as *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* are invested with allegorical significance in *The Faerie Queene*. The most well-known instance is Redcrosse's fight with Error in Book I Canto i, a transformation of the earlier episode in which Bevis fights a dragon;¹² and, as

Tudor publishers such as Wynkyn de Worde and Copeland and then reprinted many times afterwards. While these romances were Anglo-Norman or French in origin, they may be designated 'British' in that they deal with the mythic history of Britain and, in Tudor times, were used in propagandist terms to shore up Tudor claims to the throne. For a detailed account of the transmission of early continental romances in early modern England, see Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. pp.22-40.

¹⁰ Spenser, 'Letter to Raleigh', p.715.

¹¹ Spenser's text is, however, a plain quarto. Jason Scott-Warren suggests that '[o]ne might argue that the *Faerie Queene* espoused a Protestant aesthetic, or was more attuned to the economics of print', *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.34-35.

¹² See, for example, Cooper, p.31; Davis, p.5.

Helen Cooper points out, Book II's hero, Guyon, takes his name, his palmer, and his political significance from *Guy of Warwick*.¹³ Such texts, although they are not explicitly named, would undoubtedly be recognisable even to the illiterate, but the overlaying of allegorical meanings transforms these aspects into intellectually engaging and improving material for the well-read.

i. 'such like friuolous stories': reading *Orlando Furioso* in England and Italy

As I noted in my introduction, Roger Ascham's characterisation of Arthurian romances as providing pleasure through the representation of 'open manslaughter and bold bawdry' has been the most ubiquitously cited expression of hostility towards the chivalric romance in recent years. To cite this quotation as the sole reason for concern serves to obscure the range of objections to romance and ignores the much more vilified European romances in translation which, as we have seen, were at once widely censured and widely read in sixteenth-century England. Discussing contemporary Protestant concerns about printing and textual interpretation and their relation to the Error episode, Lawrence F. Rhu cites a sermon of Richard Bancroft, in which the Archbishop of Canterbury, as Rhu puts it, 'complains of text-torturing Protestant expositors.'¹⁴ He goes on to quote Bancroft, who invokes Gregory of Nazianzus, in his assertion that '[i]t falleth not within the compas of everie mans understanding to determine and judge in matters of religion: *Sed exercitatorum*: but of those that

¹³ Cooper, p.31.

¹⁴ Lawrence F. Rhu, 'Romancing the Word: Pre-Texts and Contexts for the Error Episode', *Spenser Studies*, 11 (1994), 101-9, p.103.

are well experienced and exercised in them.’¹⁵ While Bancroft appears to want to leave it to those trained in Scriptural interpretation to do so, his point about the restriction of interpretation to those who are schooled and practiced in such skills is suggestive in the light of romances. While Spenser’s text offers allegorical representations of the attractions and consequent dangers of Catholic discourses, it simultaneously offers a text which requires the kind of active engagement with sources and contexts which could only be achieved by those with a high level of education and access to court circles. To appropriate Bancroft’s terms, the poem ‘falleth not within the compas of everie mans understanding’.

Evidence of the specific, circumscribed abilities and circumstances of readers of these new romances comes in the paratext of a contemporary lecture. In 1594, four years after the initial printing of *The Faerie Queene*, John King gave a series of lectures at York which attacked the enticing and ornamented fictions of certain romances; the lectures were gathered together and printed in 1597. In the dedicatory epistle to Sir Thomas Egerton, King writes:

I haue hearde the descriptions both of auncient Poets, and of those in our latter daies, Tassus, Ariostus, and the like so highly extoleld as if wisdome had liued and died with them alone. And it may be *the sinne of Samaria*, the sin of this lande and age of ours (perhappes the mother of our atheisme) to commit idolatry with such bookes, that instead of the writings of Moses and the prophets, and Evangelists, which were wont to lie in our windowes as principall ornaments, & to sit in the uppermost rouses as the best guests in our houses, now we haue Arcadia, & the Faëry Queene, and Orlando Furioso, with such like friuolous stories:¹⁶

King’s list of texts he thinks have supplanted the godly books which ought to grace houses is perhaps a little surprising, since it is made up exclusively of texts

¹⁵ Rhu, p.103.

¹⁶ John King, *Lectures vpon Ionas, Delivered at Yorke / In the yeare of our Lorde, 1594* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1597), sig. Z2^r, cited briefly in Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp.4-5.

that were owned and read by those with money and education. In citing a list of unacceptable texts, it emulates the humanist and Reformist lists of acceptable or unacceptable reading which I cited in my earlier chapters; however, it differs greatly from those lists by citing romances composed and printed in the sixteenth century which do not have a previous life in European oral and manuscript traditions. Such lists typically objected to the narratives and motifs which would lead astray the highly educated to the illiterate. The titles to which King refers imply a concern with the ownership and reading of romances among those in society who had sufficient means and literacy to do so. This kind of concern is unusual, and suggests that the debate on romance reading was beginning to adapt itself to new literary and social landscapes.

While the Iberian romance texts were broken into commonplaces and models of discourse in humanist manuals, and while their paratexts suggested ways in which the text could be fragmented into humanistic examples, the allegorical narratives which are the focus of this chapter depend on a more sustained reading of an episode in order to convey their supposed moral teaching. As Rebecca Bushnell writes:

Humanist reading addressed the parts in great detail but was little concerned with seeing them as a whole. The point of reading a book was not to provide an “anatomy” or an understanding of its argument or structure; rather, the end was a harvesting or mining of the book for its functional parts – useful to borrow for the reader’s own writing or to serve as practical conduct rules or stylistic models.¹⁷

However, the fragmentary and episodic nature of the romance narrative demands a mode of reading which is dependent on an active and virtuous engagement with

¹⁷ Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.129.

the narrative.¹⁸ As Scott-Warren notes, the story of Astolfo and Jocondo was extracted from *Orlando Furioso* and circulated as a discrete short narrative,¹⁹ a rather different practice from the decontextualisation and reinterpretation of short passages in the practice of compiling commonplaces; *The Faerie Queene* does not appear to have been printed in any abridged or extracted form at that time.

These romances and romance extracts have in common highly specific original readerships. Harington's text, for example, was commissioned by Elizabeth I. The story of Astolfo and Jocondo which he circulated among the ladies-in-waiting at Elizabeth's court before he had translated the whole of *Orlando Furioso* was a particularly scurrilous tale.²⁰ Scott-Warren goes on to argue that the short text both insulted the honour of Elizabeth and her ladies-in-waiting even as it participated in patronage negotiations for the time and money to translate the whole text.²¹ He provides further evidence of the readership Harington had in mind, noting that '[t]he surviving presentation copies show that he intended his book to be read by the sort of noteworthy courtiers who assisted the literary productions of the Italian poet.'²² Spenser's text secured him a pension from Elizabeth and contains the famous 'Letter to Raleigh', along with an extended series of dedicatory sonnets addressing prominent courtiers, which show that it was positioned for a very select readership.

It is, therefore, perhaps surprising that, in his *Orlando Furioso*, Harington presents a model of the stratification of readers' abilities. In a playful passage in 'A preface, or rather a briefe apologie of poetrie, and of the Author and translator

¹⁸ For a full discussion of *The Faerie Queene* as a fragmented text, see Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

¹⁹ Scott-Warren, p.26.

²⁰ See Scott-Warren, pp.25-32.

²¹ Scott-Warren, p.26.

²² Scott-Warren, p.49.

of this Poem', he writes that different readers will understand the text to a greater or lesser extent:

These & infinit places full of Christen exhortation, doctrine & example I could quote out of the booke saue that I hasten to an end, and it would be needles to those that will not read them in the booke it selfe, and superfluous to those that will: but most manifest it is & not to be denyed, that in this point my author is to be preferred before all the auncient Poets, in which are mentioned so many false Gods, and of them so many fowle deeds, their contencions, their adulteries, their incest, as were both obscenous in recitall & hurtfull in example.²³

Harington ostensibly refuses to cater to an audience that requires marginal guidance to track his alleged multiplicity of scriptural and religious allusions. His explanation for his omission of textual commentary is shot through with witty obfuscations which work against the reader's expectations of the tone and content of such a preface. The 'infinit places full of Christen exhortation, doctrine & example' on which Harington declines to elaborate are quickly replaced by a more sustained description of the passages on which the reader ought not to dwell; he explains of Ariosto that 'although he write Christianly in some places, yet in other some, he is too lasciuious,'²⁴ and proceeds to detail those passages which the reader might find alluring, admonishing the reader for itching to turn to those particular places, and counselling them to 'read them as my author ment them, to breed detestation and not delectation'.²⁵

Admittedly, Harington does offer ostensibly instructive readings of particular episodes, attaching to some of them a sententious significance; for example, he notes that the story of Richardetto will cause the reader to conclude that 'sweet meate will haue sowre sawce.' He then recommends that, on arriving

²³ Sir John Harington, 'A preface, or rather a briefe apologie of poetrie', in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. Sir John Harington (London: Richard Field, 1591), sig. ¶vii^r.

²⁴ Harington, sig. ¶vii^r.

²⁵ Harington, sig. ¶vii^r.

at 'the host's tale', in canto 28, the reader should 'turn ouer the leafe and let it alone' while at the same time conceding with his tongue in his cheek that 'euen that lewd tale may bring some men profit, and I haue heard that it is already (and perhaps not unfitly) termed the comfort of cuckolds'.²⁶ Having drawn the reader's attention to the available reading strategies for these 'lasciuious' passages, Harington compares Ariosto's inclusion of such material to Virgil's. He quotes a passage from *Dido and Æneas* in Latin, without translation, writing: 'I hope they that vnderstand Latin will confesse this is plaine enough'.²⁷ The implication is that Ariosto's lewdness is validated by the parallel in classical literature; a parallel whose light-hearted scurrility is only available to the educated reader.

Such directions to the profitable reading of texts address the distinctions between readers' abilities at a time of burgeoning literacy while flattering the suggested courtly or wealthy readership with candid authorial admissions; they also direct the reader to the episodes in the text which contain little in the way of moral instruction but which are supplied with nominal moral glosses in Harington's preface and printed marginalia. Scott-Warren observes that Harington's playfulness is evident both in his listing of the lewd material in the preface and in the table at the end of the book which allows such material to be located as it sets out 'The principal tales in Orlando Furioso that may be read by themselves'. Moreover:

Harington's tolerant tone bespeaks his awareness of the way in which moral censure can work to promote immoral pleasure. Like those early modern Europeans who used the papal *Index librorum prohibitorum* as a

²⁶ Harington, sig. ¶vii^r.

²⁷ Harington, sig. ¶vii^r.

reading-list, this writer knows that censorship highlights that which it seeks to obliterate.²⁸

While it is unlikely that a reader unfamiliar with Latin and unable to interpret the text as Christian teaching would read *Orlando Furioso* or, for that matter, *The Faerie Queene*, it also seems reasonable to think that a skilful reader would be able to detect the ironic tone of Harington's address and see that the paratextual materials are less than helpful in steering the reader to a culturally sanctioned reading of the text. Harington's notes at the end of the forty-third book assert that a moral reading can be achieved from the most unpromising of material:

In the tale of the Mantua knight may be gathered this good morall, that it is no wisdome to search for that a man would not find: and how the first breach commonly of the sweet concord of matrimonie groweth of iealousie, I must confesse, these be two knauish tales that be here in this booke, and yet the Bee will picke hony out of the worst of them. For mine owne part I haue euer bene of opinion, that this tale of the Mantuan knight, is simply the worst against women in all the booke, or rather indeed that euer was written.²⁹

Harington goes on to cite Spenser's narrative of the Squire of Dames as a corollary to this tale. In this way, he makes Spenser's text complicit in his project.

While he professes not to have time to recount the many good examples which the reading of the text will afford and, moreover, that there will be some who do not read these morals in the text, he finds no such constraints in pointing out the less profitable, or as he puts it 'too lasciuious', episodes. As Scott-Warren observes, Harington's method is prompted by Ariosto's habit of ironically drawing the reader's attention to passages by asking the reader to skip over them:

²⁸ Scott-Warren, p.29.

²⁹ Sir John Harington, *Orlando furioso in English heroical uerse* (London: John Norton and Simon Waterson, 1607), p.373.

By listing the poem's obscene stories in his preface, Harington developed the poem's playfulness. For although he claimed not to have 'made some directions' for those hunting out risqué material, in fact he had. A table at the end of the book details 'The principal tales in Orlando Furioso that may be read by themselves',³⁰

The practice of printed marginalia directing the reader to further reading is ironised in the text itself, with Harington directing the reader to the resumption of the broken-off narratives later in the text. This is further underscored by the table at the back of the book which, as Scott-Warren notes, directs the reader to the lascivious matters.

Harington begins his 'A Preface, or rather a Briefe Apologie' in a seemingly familiar fashion, with an example from 'The learned *Plutarch*' of a 'Sophister' whose 'long and tedious Oration in praise of *Hercules*' was met with a less than enthusiastic reception since the crowd were seemingly familiar with this example and complained that there was nothing new in praising Hercules. Harington wittily applies this particular example to his apology for poetry, with the qualification that, since no man should dispraise poetry, no apology should therefore be necessary; yet he continues, 'we liue in such a time, in which nothing can escape the enuious tooth, and backbiting tongue of an impure mouth'.³¹ His method of defending poetry is somewhat ironic: attempting to prove that poetry should not be censured, he advances the familiar humanist argument that poetry is a repository of educational material for 'famous kings & captaines', explaining:

For who would once dare to oppose himselfe against so many *Alexanders, Cæsars, Scipios*, (to omit infinite other princes, both of

³⁰ Scott-Warren, p.28.

³¹ Harington, sig.¶ii^v.

former and later ages, and of forraine and nearer countries) that with fauour, with studie, with practise, with example, with honors, with giftes, with preferments, with great and magnificent cost, haue encoraged and aduanced Poets, & Poetry?³²

In a move reminiscent of the defenders of the Iberian romance translations, Harington goes on to elide different modes of poetry in the same term:

my meaning is plainly and *bona fide*, confessing all the abuses that can truly be objected against some kinds of Poets, to shew you what good vse there is of Poetrie. Neither do I suppose it to be greatly behoofull for this purpose, to trouble you with the curious definitions of a Poet & Poesie, & with the subtill distinctions of their sundrie kinds;³³

In not seeing fit to ‘trouble’ the reader ‘with curious definitions of a Poet & Poesie’, Harington appears to benevolently spare the reader from ‘the subtill distinctions’ between poets and poetry; however, as my thesis makes clear, the subtle distinctions between types of poetry in the sixteenth century result in the relegation of romance to a mode which is viewed as unsuitable. Harington goes on in the same paragraph to refer the reader to Sir Philip Sidney’s *Apology for Poetry* to find out the differences between poetry and history. Harington’s neat solution is to efface the distinctions between the modes of writing and, in doing so, to conclude the argument on relative merits. The differences between Harington’s and Sidney’s apologies are striking: while Sidney’s writing is full of divisions, subdivisions and categorisations, Harington chooses to group together all poets and poetry with no pretence of making distinctions. The intertextuality of Harington’s paratexts is clear, as is the subtle humour with which he repeatedly offers his reader opportunity for a moral, religious, or humanist

³² Harington, sig.¶ii^v.

³³ Harington, sig.¶ii^v.

reading only to substitute racy and lewd passages and allusions for the 'good moralls' he claims to be self-evident.

In discussing Harington's subtle use of humour in his apology, I do not wish to contradict the profusion of valuable criticism which calls attention to the complexity of the allegory of *The Faerie Queene* and the translation of *Orlando Furioso*. I will concentrate on the fictive level of the text to argue that Spenser and Harington's Ariosto subtly accentuate the pleasure of romance reading through a markedly playful treatment of their sources and a series of allusions which indicate to the early modern reader that the texts were participating in the debate on the educational value of poetry. My particular reading of the poems does not deny the presence of multiple political, historical, religious, and numerous other allegories; in fact, it is the multiplicity of the readings which the texts invite which points to the instability or inadequacy of the guides to interpretation in the paratexts to these poems. In promoting a mode of reading which both advertises the moral formation of the reader through the reading of the text and presents a bewildering array of ways to read it, these romances contribute to the sense that, for educated readers at least, reading for pleasure might become as attractive an option as reading for instruction.

In order to contextualise my reading of Harington's and Spenser's romances, it is important to consider the Italian literary heritage of their texts, which is detectable in their conceptions of the function of poetry and of the possibilities of romance. Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, a literary successor to Matteo Boiardo's unfinished *Orlando Innamorato*, printed in 1483

and 1494, was printed in its initial form in 1516.³⁴ Its second version, first published in 1521, became a popular success, reprinted at least fifteen times before the appearance of the final version of the *Furioso* in 1532. This final version had been reprinted sixteen times by 1540 and its popularity persisted; Javitch reports that between 1540 and 1580 at least 113 editions of the poem had been printed. In much the same way as the popularity of *Amadis de Gaule* in sixteenth-century France spawned numerous imitations and continuations, the unprecedented popularity of *Orlando Furioso* in Italy produced imitations from its first appearance in 1521 and these became more frequent after the 1532 edition, published a year before Ariosto's death.

From its first appearance, *Orlando Furioso* was subject, in much the same way as the Iberian romances discussed in my previous chapter, to debates on its possible merits or dangers. From the time of its initial appearance, it became a subject of much discussion in the many Italian texts on literary composition which were being composed at that time. While these texts debated the acceptability of the stylistic and thematic features of *Orlando Furioso*, its later editions in turn incorporated some of these discussions and up-to-the-minute thinking on acceptable poetic style; the 1521 edition was influenced by Pietro Bembo's writing on the subject, and hailed the poem as the first long Italian vernacular poem to equal classical epics.³⁵

The paratexts of the various editions of *Orlando Furioso* testify to the high esteem in which it was held by educated readers whilst affirming its appeal

³⁴ These and the following publication details are taken from Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of Orlando Furioso* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp.10-11. Javitch includes details of the printers and dates of publication for the many editions of *Orlando Furioso*. Another important, and highly detailed, discussion appears in Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp.954-1073.

³⁵ Javitch, pp.15-16.

to readers of different abilities.³⁶ While Javitch is comprehensive in his inclusion of comments testifying to the unanimous popularity of the text with its first Italian readers, it is surely the case that this presentation of the poem as enjoyed by all is only part of the story. A greater distinction needs to be made between the indisputable popularity of the poem in print and the rhetoric of the paratextual observations which accompany its various editions.

Comin da Trino's dedicatory letter to the 1567 edition states that 'pleasing though it is to the common people, [it] nonetheless manages with its loftiness to make wise men ponder';³⁷ the preface of Domenico Guerra's edition of 1568 notes that 'all day long one sees every sort of person reading his lovely poem: and one sees each one enjoying it according to their individual capacity'.³⁸ In these remarks there is a clear understanding that different readers understand the text in different ways. Moreover, the explicit directions that *Orlando Furioso* was to be elevated above popular romance texts circulating at this time, and that Ariosto the poet was better than 'poeti plebeij', suggest that the text was seen as superior to other popular romances.

However, there were many detractors of the romance, too. Bernard Weinberg speculates that the publication in 1549 of a long commentary on *Orlando Furioso* by Simone Fornari which was headed by an 'Apologia breve sopra tutto l'Orlando Furioso' was responding to a body of objections to the text to which we no longer have access.³⁹ The 'Apologia' aims to set out an argument for the moral usefulness of the romance. Furthermore, the proems to the cantos

³⁶ Javitch, pp.10-14, includes many examples of the comments which accompany the text, which testify to the wide and sustained popularity of *Orlando Furioso* throughout sixteenth-century. I reproduce those most pertinent to my argument above.

³⁷ Translated by Javitch, p.12.

³⁸ Translated by Javitch, p.12.

³⁹ Weinberg, p.954.

of Ariosto's romance, which offer limited moralisations of characters and episodes, first appeared in the edition of 1542 and appear to be an attempt to stave off the criticism that *Orlando Furioso* did not contain enough in the way of moral instruction. However, as Peter V. Marinelli notes, they 'failed signally to show how it established its meaning and values through laughter.'⁴⁰

Sir John Harington was aware of the Italian debates surrounding Ariosto's poem at the time that he undertook its translation. His English version of the *Furioso* is, as a consequence, self-conscious in its attempts to dress the pleasurable reading material as profitable. As noted above, Harington's paratextual apparatus affords its educated reader a seemingly straightforward explanation of the translator's strategy of directing the reader to profitable passages, giving directions on the way in which to take instruction from the text; yet there is something decidedly ambiguous about his means of engaging the reader.

ii. *The Faerie Queene*, allegory, and pleasurable history

Among their countless sources, both Spenser and Harington are concerned with the formation of texts from romances current in popular forms from previous centuries. This adaptation of such material involves imbuing it with allegorical significance. In this section, I will discuss the vexed matter of allegorical reading in the sixteenth century, and account for the concerns continually evident in

⁴⁰ Peter V. Marinelli, 'Ariosto, Ludovico', in A. C. Hamilton (ed.), *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1990), 56-57, p.57. Rhu, and Judith Lee, 'The English Ariosto: The Elizabethan Poet and the Marvelous', *Studies in Philology* 80 (1983), 277-99, both treat the paratexts as unambiguously serious in their directions to the reader.

Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* that the capacity of language and narrative to lead the reader astray is a constant threat.

The point to which I return throughout my thesis is that pleasure derived from reading was a vexed subject for the early modern humanist or religious commentator. The Horatian view that the text should teach and delight was figured so that delight was merely necessary to facilitate the understanding of the text's instruction. Delight for its own sake was to be countered as this was something without the ultimate end of instruction, and attained chiefly from romance, a mode which was particularly appealing to postlapsarian, corruptible human nature. The humanist concern was with the material presented for reading, since the reader was schooled to respond in a particular way so responses could theoretically be anticipated. When faced with allegorical texts, however, attitudes became more complicated.

Allegorical interpretation had been an acceptable mode in the medieval period but in the light of the Reformation, it became readily associated with the apparent obfuscations and deceptions of Catholic teaching. In a discussion of the relationship of allegory to religious teaching, Jennifer Summit observes that Augustine likened the letter covering the spirit to chaff covering the grain; beasts of burden ate the chaff, while humans ate the grain due to their human reason. She writes:

Following Augustine, medieval literature preserved the fabulous as an exterior level through which attentive reading passed in order to arrive at the hidden meaning; thus the author of the *Ovid moralisé* asserts, "sous la fable gist couverte / la sentence plus profitable" ("beneath the fable, the most profitable meaning lies hidden").⁴¹

⁴¹ Jennifer Summit, 'Monuments and Ruins: Spenser and the Problem of the English Library', *ELH* 70 (2003), 1-34, p.11.

Although the status of allegory had been contentious in the medieval period, Erasmus's comments on allegory are more positive, or they are at least not unfavourable towards the ambiguities in interpretation which can result from its employment. In *De copia*, allegory is listed under 'Variety of expression' as a means of enriching one's quality of writing, alongside such terms as 'metaphor', 'onomatopoeia', and 'metonymy'. Erasmus defines it as 'nothing more than a metaphor carried on beyond the bounds of a single word'.⁴² Here the 'nothing more' seems to imply that the use of allegory is harmless, as well perhaps that the term's interpretation is contested; he goes on to list a number of examples in which allegorical descriptions function as synonyms. He then notes that allegory is frequently employed in proverbs and proverbial sayings, such as 'smoke is not far from flame' for 'one should start taking precautions against danger in good time'. He admits:

In proverbs of this sort allegory often results in enigma. This is no bad thing if you are speaking or writing for an educated audience, and not even if you are writing for the general public, for one should not write so that everyone can understand everything, but so that people should be compelled to investigate and learn some things themselves.⁴³

Harington and Spenser are ostensibly writing for an educated audience, so there would seem to be a diminished sense of the problems of inadvertent misreadings.

Since an important quality of a text for humanists was its ability to be rendered morally profitable, the choice of 'continued allegory' stated in Spenser's 'Letter to Raleigh' is potentially awkward as it signifies a division of

⁴² Desiderius Erasmus, *De copia; foundations of the abundant style*, in Craig R. Thompson (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus*, trans. Betty I. Knott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 284-659, p.336.

⁴³ Erasmus, p.336.

form and content. Spenser anticipates this, and attempts to marry the form to its historical purpose:

To some I know this Methode will seeme displeasaunt, which had rather haue good discipline deliuered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they vse, then thus clowdily enwrapped in Allegoricall deuises. But such, me seeme, should be satisfied with the vse of these dayes, seeing all things accounted by their showes, and nothing esteemed of, that is not delightfull and pleasing to commune sence. For this cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one in the exquisite depth of his iudgement, formed a Commune welth such as it should be, but the other in the person of Cyrus and the Persians fashioned a gouernement such as might best be: So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule.⁴⁴

Spenser constructs a reader who favours 'good discipline' to be gathered from precepts or from sermons; moreover, this good discipline is delivered 'plainly', that is, without the 'colouring' or ornament associated with humanist eloquence.

The use of allegory is justified as being practically a necessity 'with the vse of these dayes, seeing all things accounted by their showes'; however, Spenser's passage is significantly more complicated than this. His contorted comparison of Plato and Xenophon, situated immediately after his complaint that all things are 'accounted by their showes', suggests a frustration with the privileging of the exemplary mode of which Xenophon is representative, in place of the more abstract Plato. This uneasy passage in the 'Letter to Raleigh' insinuates that Spenser's choice of 'Allegoricall deuises' is governed by common reading practices, yet his restricted readership suggests otherwise.

As I noted in my introduction, Erasmus was concerned to point out that an audience was susceptible to being attracted by profitless tales, and that a churchgoer who dozed through a serious sermon would be immediately

⁴⁴ Spenser, 'Letter to Raleigh', pp.716-17. For a useful discussion of this passage, see Wayne E. Erickson, 'Spenser's Letter to Raleigh and the Literary Politics of *The Faerie Queene's* 1590 Publication', *Spenser Studies* 10 (1989), 139-74, pp.147-8.

captivated by a preacher ‘ranting’ on ‘some old wives’ talke’.⁴⁵ Concerns with reading, textual interpretation, and enthralling tales recur throughout *The Faerie Queene*. In Book Two, the harm which may be sustained by listening to an unsuitable text is counteracted by the capacity for good which profitable words possess. As Arthur assures the Palmer, ‘Words well dispost / Haue secret power, t’appease inflamed rage:’ (II.viii.26.7-8). Words are put to the active service of temperance, but their malicious deployment is also figured as leading to the moral corruption of the individual; this happens when the words are merely appealing and carry no moral weight. Phaedria can calm her idle lake with ‘pleasing words’ (II.vi.36.5).

Words which corrupt by leading the reader astray are inevitably the most frequent targets for humanist polemic against the chivalric romance. Fears about the corrupting influence of the romance rested on its perceived capacity to inspire evil thoughts in its audience. Anxiety about the seductive power of such texts is evident in Spenser’s character, Phaedria, who proves adept in leading both Cymochles and Guyon from their course with her tales. Phaedria proves a skilled manipulator of romance discourse:

And all the way, the wanton Damzell found
 New mirth, her passenger to entertaine:
 For she in pleasant purpose did abound,
 And greatly ioyed merry tales to faine,
 Of which a store-house did with her remaine,
 Yet seemed, nothing well they her became;
 For all her words she drownd with laughter vaine,
 And wanted grace in vt’ring of the same,
 That turned all her pleasance to a scoffing game. (II.vi.6.1-9)

⁴⁵ Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. Betty Radice, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, rpt 1993), p.71.

Phaedria's entertaining and 'pleasant' words identify her as a manipulator, deliberately leading her audience astray with entertainment lacking instructive value. She is an allegory of the unprofitable performance of 'merry tales', and goes on to seduce Guyon's 'flamed mind' with 'light behaiour, and loose dalliaunce' and 'sensual delight' (II.vi.8). At the same time, she lacks the courtly grace and skill in speaking which allows her to present romance matter as dignified and appropriate.

In shaping his ideas on allegory, Spenser drew on the writing of the Italian poet, Torquato Tasso. Tasso's narrative poem, *Gerusalemme liberata*, published in Italy in 1581, provides much material for Spenser; most notably, Armida's garden in Canto Sixteen inspires Spenser's Bower of Bliss (II.12). Tasso's 'Allegory of the Poem' attached to *Jerusalem Delivered* discusses the idea of profit and delight in his epic poem:

Heroic poetry, like an animal in which two separate natures are joined, is composed of Imitation and Allegory. With the former it attracts the souls and ears of men and brings them wondrous delight, while with the latter it instructs men in virtue or knowledge or both.

The allegorical mode chosen by Spenser for *The Faerie Queene* presents interesting challenges for the writer who seeks to educate and delight. In the extract above, Tasso seeks to justify his incorporation of allegory by separating it from imitation, because imitation entertains while allegory instructs. It appears that imitation without an allegorical underpinning holds the greatest potential for corruption; since its prime function is to 'attract [...] the souls and ears of men and bring [...] them in wondrous delight', its capacity to mislead is latent in this description. Therefore, in order that the text in which it plays a part 'instructs men in virtue or knowledge or both', imitation must be coupled with allegory.

Having set out the context of Spenser's allegorical strategy, I now return to my opening example of Guyon and Arthur reading their genealogies in Eumnestes' chamber. Andrew King observes that the faculties represented allegorically by the rooms of Phantastes and Eumnestes are both vital to a 'Poet historical'.⁴⁶ While Eumnestes, or memory, provides the supposedly stable and true records of history, Phantastes' chamber holds the hazardous but appealing workings of the imagination.

Bart Van Es identifies six different 'forms' of history employed by Spenser in writing *The Faerie Queene*.⁴⁷ His thesis concentrates on the significance of the interplay between the various forms through which Spenser 'explored and manipulated available means of approaching the past'.⁴⁸ In the context of this chapter, the most significant ways of approaching the past concern Spenser's juxtaposition of the historical past and the fictional past in the chronicle readings in Book II of *The Faerie Queene*. As my first chapter argues, in the sixteenth century, Arthur is available to writers simultaneously as an historical figure and a romance hero, although his standing as an historical figure diminishes greatly in the light of the adoption of humanist historiography. Since Arthur's historical status was under sustained attack by humanist historiographers, the focus shifts to the advancement of Arthur as an exemplary hero. The mode of romance in particular emphasises Arthur's exemplarity; however, this did not eradicate problems surrounding the incredibility of Arthur's exploits chronicled in the historiographical texts.

⁴⁶ King, p.165.

⁴⁷ Van Es, p.vi.

⁴⁸ Van Es, p.vi.

When Guyon and Arthur enter the first of the three chambers of the mind in the Castle of Alma, they encounter a room full of the familiar devices of romance:

His chamber was dispaigned all with in,
With sondry colours, in the which were writ
Infinite shapes of things dispersed thin;
Some such as in the world were neuer yit,
Ne can deuized be of mortall wit;
Some daily seene, and knowen by their names,
Such as in idle fantasies doe flit:
Infernall Hags, *Centaur*s, feendes, *Hippodames*,
Apes, Lyons, Aegles, Owles, fooles, louers, children, Dames. (II.ix.50.1-9)

The references to 'sondry colours' 'dispaigned' perhaps links back to Spenser's identification of things 'delightfull and pleasing to commune sence' in his 'Letter to Raleigh'. Spenser's reference to 'Some such as in the world were neuer yit, / Ne can deuized be of mortall wit;' clearly relates to his conceit in the Proem to Book II in which he argues that faery land exists although it has not yet been discovered (II.Proem.2-4.). The captivating quality of the chamber is undercut by the description in the following stanza of a swarm of flies:

...idle thoughts and fantasies,
Deuices, dreames, opinions vnsound,
Shewes, visions, sooth-sayes, and prophesies;
And all that fained is, as leasings, tales and lies. (II.ix.51.6-9)

These lines mark out the reader's attraction to false narratives, corresponding to the humanist attack on romance. Against this first room, Spenser sets the predominantly humanistic chamber which details the intellectual workings of a common weal. Alongside scenes of magistrates courts, states, policy, laws, arts, science and philosophy, this room has walls which are painted with 'memorable

gestes, / Of famous wisards' (II.ix.53.3-4), and is strikingly similar to the kind of room which hermetic scholars asked their readers to construct as a mnemonic technique. The role of exemplarity and memory in the health of a commonwealth is clear. These two chambers appear to set out the differences between the romance and the exemplary text as early humanist educators saw them. Nonetheless, a third mode of writing is present which posed specific problems to the early modern humanist canon in its tendency to embrace both romance and humanistic elements.

In the third chamber Arthur and Guyon are most clearly confronted with the implications of Elizabethan historiography. It is the room of Eumnestes, or 'good memory'. Eumnestes is a man 'of infinite remembrance' (II.ix.56.1) who has set down the history of the world from the beginning of recorded history, and writes the definitive version of events from a number of sources stored in his shrine for safekeeping, 'where they for euer incorrupted dweld' (II.ix.56.7). They are also scattered around the chamber, 'Some made in books, some in long parchment scrolles, / That were all worme-eaten, and full of canker holes.' (II.ix.57.8-9). The depiction of Eumnestes' practices in compiling his chronicle owe much to the humanist writing of histories, written using assimilated evidence from a number of preferably contemporary or eye-witness sources.

However, the history being gathered by Eumnestes, and which is figured as definitive given the decaying state of the sources, is dependent on the works of vernacular authors who were excluded from the humanist canon due to their insistence on the mythical origins of England. Given the century of polemic against the chivalric romance which preceded the publication of *The Faerie Queene*, its chivalric and romance elements, which owe a great deal to

contemporary continental traditions, should not be underestimated. The text necessarily betrays a certain amount of self-consciousness in light of the humanist attack on the chivalric romance. When Spenser writes to Raleigh:

I chose the historye of king Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many mens former workes, and also furthest from the daunger of enuy, and suspition of present time.⁴⁹

I believe that Elizabethan readers of *The Faerie Queene* would have recognised this to be a disingenuous statement; as my first chapter shows, Arthur was a highly controversial figure in early modern historiographical debates. The existence of Arthur was a matter of great importance to writers who wished to defend the vernacular historiographical tradition; however, Spenser writes that he is interested in the Arthur who has been ‘made famous by many mens former workes’, neatly sidestepping the war of words between such writers as Polydore Vergil and John Leland.

According to humanist reading practice, the true, instructive history represented by Eumnestes would be conveyed memorably with the aid of a pleasing covering of eloquent words. While Arthur reads a comprehensive, action-packed chronicle of his land’s history, Guyon’s own national chronicle is given little narrative space in the canto. Although Spenser ostensibly shies away from repeating the material he has already set out in *Briton monuments*, it seems that his fantastic chronicle may prove too pleasurable and obscure for the reader. Arthur is described as deriving ‘secret pleasure’ (II.x.68.8) from his chronicle, as well as being ‘quite rauisht with delight, to heare / The royall Ofspring of his natie land’ (II.x.69.1-2). His chronicle has fulfilled its function of

⁴⁹ Spenser, ‘Letter to Raleigh’, p.715.

communicating profitable history through delightful fiction; Guyon's chronicle is abridged with the comment:

That were too long their infinite contents
Here to record, ne much materiall:
Yet should they be most famous monuments,
And braue ensample, both of martiall,
And ciuil rule to kinges and states imperiall. (II.x.74.5-9)

Most of the examples Guyon's text affords are hidden from the reader but we are told that both the knights are 'Beguyled thus with delight of nouelties' (II.x.77.1).

In a fascinating article which situates Spenser's depiction of Eumnestes' library directly in the tradition of Leland and Bale's attempts to recover a canon of native authors in the wake of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Jennifer Summit argues that 'Spenser creates what we might call a poetics of wreckage, an extended meditation on the project of cultural recovery that accompanied England's long Reformation.'⁵⁰ She states that, '[t]he emergence of a post-Reformation reading practice that aimed to distinguish (Protestant) "plain truth" from (Catholic) "feigned fable" underlies the defensiveness with which Spenser explains his decision to make allegory the mode of *The Faerie Queene*.'⁵¹ While Summit's argument is compelling, and certainly holds true for the text of the poem, I will go on, in my final section, to discuss the distinct discourse in the 'Letter to Raleigh' which ironically calls attention to the feigned and fabulous aspects of the text, and argue that, just as Harington attracted attention to the lewd episodes in *Orlando Furioso* by asking the reader to ignore them, Spenser

⁵⁰ Summit, p.6.

⁵¹ Summit, p.15.

admits in the 'Letter to Raleigh' to the potentially unprofitable pleasure to be found in reading his romance.

iii. Spenser's 'Letter to Raleigh' and the problematic plausibility of romance

It is perhaps fitting that I end my thesis with a paratext which occupied a perplexing and much-discussed space at the end of the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene*: Spenser's 'A Letter of the Authors expounding his *whole intention in the course of this worke: which for that it giueth great light to the Reader, for the better vnderstanding is hereunto annexed*', otherwise known as the 'Letter to Raleigh'. This paratext takes the form of a preliminary address to a reader but is placed at the end of the 1590 edition of the poem. In this, Spenser, or his printer, perhaps follows the model of his Italian predecessors, Ariosto and Tasso, in whose texts the allegory of the poem is always placed at the end of the narrative. Nonetheless, the address of the letter to a prominent named individual, and its detailed engagement with modes of interpretation, remind the reader that he or she is gaining access to a restricted mode of reading and a tightly circumscribed social context. My specific concern is with the defence of pleasure in reading allegorical fiction which Spenser covertly adopts in his epistle. In this section, I argue that Spenser's use of the term 'plausible' carries great significance in the Protestant, humanist tradition since it was a contentious term at the time.

Robert Matz does a valuable job in bringing out the dissonances and equivocations in Spenser's 'Letter to Raleigh' in his book, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England*.⁵² He dwells on the oxymoron of 'gentle discipline', noting that the two words belong to different codes: the courtly ('gentle') and the Protestant humanist ('discipline').⁵³ Focusing solely on these two words, however, prohibits the inclusion in the discussion of the word 'vertuous' which appears in the same sentence. Spenser's much-quoted aim in writing the text is, he says, 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline'. The prospect of becoming virtuous is distinct from that of becoming gentle; it leans toward the Protestant humanist idea of acquiring and maintaining a virtuous life from the correct reading of suitable texts.

Gordon Teskey considers the vexed matter of the 'Letter's' inclusion at the end of the text in his article, 'Positioning Spenser's "Letter to Raleigh"'. He argues that Spenser's inclusion of the preordained scheme for his first three books which is no longer accurate in relation to the printed poem alerts the reader to the inconsistencies between the 'Letter' and the narrative. He attributes this strategy to Spenser's desire to impose a sense of authority over his poem by implying that he must have devised the 'Letter' before the three books were written.⁵⁴ Teskey's ahistorical construction of the reader and reading practices is problematic, and ignores the centrality of humanist and Reformist teaching to the understanding of the paratext.

⁵² Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁵³ Matz, p.88.

⁵⁴ Gordon Teskey, 'Positioning Spenser's "Letter to Raleigh"', in H. B. de Groot and Alexander Leggatt (eds), *Craft and Tradition: Essays in Honour of William Blissett* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990), 35-46, p.40.

Wayne Erickson's article, 'Spenser's Letter to Raleigh and the Literary Politics of *The Faerie Queene's* 1590 Publication', provides an unparalleled, painstaking account of the 'Letter's' relationship to illustrate the public persona which Spenser wished to project.⁵⁵ Crucially to my argument, however, I believe Erickson misreads an important word in Spenser's 'Letter'. He writes:

But whomever Spenser regards as the members of his audience, he treats them with some measure of condescension, for they demand a poetry that Spenser's public voice apparently disdains. Assuming that the only way to attract an audience is to make his subject both "plausible and pleasing," Spenser colors his poem with "an historical fiction," the historical portion supplying the plausibility (and thus the applause of those who distrust fiction) and the fiction supplying the pleasure.⁵⁶

Erickson punning on 'plausibility' and 'applause' betrays a crucial misinterpretation of the early modern meanings of 'plausibility' which, I think, offer a vital insight into Spenser's mischievousness with regard to his romance material and his readership. Erickson implies that the term 'plausibility' refers to the 'historical' and therefore actual, referential parts of the narrative, and so appeals to those who would be wary of its fictiveness. However, in the sixteenth century, the term 'plausible' was subject to a variety of inflections, highly sensitive to Reformist teaching and debates on the nature and uses of poetry; some of these inflections were distinctly pejorative and highly relevant to the debate on the role of fictional narratives in education.

When Spenser writes 'that I conceiued [the book] should be most plausible and pleasing'⁵⁷, he is referring the reader to a highly conflicted term in early modern writing on history, religion and the ends of fiction. Taken in the most prominent and the most anodyne Elizabethan sense, 'plausible' means

⁵⁵ Erickson, p.142.

⁵⁶ Erickson, p.158.

⁵⁷ Spenser, 'Letter to Raleigh', p.715.

‘pleasing’, ‘winning public approval, popular’ from the Latin, *plausibilis*, meaning ‘deserving applause, commendable’.⁵⁸ Spenser’s phrase would seem rather tautological if this were its primary meaning. Nonetheless, variations on this phrase did occur. In *The Palace of Pleasure, beautified, adorned and well furnished, with pleasaunt histories and excellent nouvelles, selected out of diuers good and commendable authors*, William Painter writes in his preface, ‘To the Reader’:

Nothing in mine opinion ca[n] be more acceptable vnto thee (friendly Reader), than ofte reading & dailye perusing of varietie of Histories, which as they be for diuersitie of matter pleasaunt and plausible, euen so for example and imitation right good and commendable. The one doth reioyce the wearie and tedious minde, may times inuolued with ordinarie cares, the other prescribeth a direct path to tread the trace of this present lyfe.⁵⁹

Painter’s construction of ‘pleasaunt and plausible’ prefigures Spenser’s very similar phrase, and also cites the familiar claim that the text is ‘for example and imitation right good and commendable.’ Spenser’s old friend and associate, Gabriel Harvey, uses the term in a related sense, meaning ‘praiseworthy’⁶⁰ in a letter in which he writes of ‘The plausible examples of [...] diuers such vertuous Romanes, and sundry excellent Greekes.’ This appears to be the usual sense in which Harvey uses the term. He also employs it in his second ‘proper, and wittie, familiar’ letter to Spenser, praising the latter’s writing for ‘the finenesse of plausible Elocution, [and] the rarenesse of Poetical Inuention.’⁶¹

⁵⁸ OED A. 1. a. Obs.

⁵⁹ William Painter, *The palace of pleasure, beautified, adorned and well furnished, with pleasaunt histories and excellent nouvelles, selected out of diuers good and commendable authors* (London: Richard Tottell and William Iones, 1566), sig.¶¶iiʳ.

⁶⁰ OED 3. Obs.

⁶¹ Gabriel Harvey, *Three proper, and wittie, familiar letters* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1580), p.50.

The sense of the word ‘plausible’ with which we are most familiar today, meaning ‘seeming reasonable, probable, or truthful; convincing, believable’⁶² is certainly contained within Spenser’s use of the word, yet it carries a particular early modern nuance in that it can be applied to something ‘having a false appearance of reason or veracity; specious.’⁶³ A glance at the many occurrences of the word in the sixteenth century proves interesting reading. The term is used most frequently in polemical religious texts, indicating that it was regarded as synonymous with ‘specious’, and was employed very often in reference to a preacher or text peddling persuasive lies to a gullible readership or audience. William Jewel, in his textual spat with John Rastell, writes, in a discussion on Protestant preachers’ citations of Augustine, Jerome, and even Christ himself, that ‘For right wel thei know, that ther is nothing more plausible vnto the people, the[n] these names, or better accepted of ye common sortes of men’;⁶⁴ and in *A defence of the Apologie of the Churche of Englande*, he comments that such people as ‘malepert Prentises, pleasante Courtiers, discoursinge Parleme[n]te Machiauellistes, [...] Mercha[n]tes [and] idle artificers’ are drawn to Harding’s gospel as it is ‘plausible to the Worlde, and pleasant to the Fleashe’.⁶⁵ Rastell responds in *A confutation of a sermon, pronou[n]ced by M. Iuell* that Jewel, ‘to serue his audience, [...] could not leaue of, so plausible a matter.’⁶⁶ These

⁶² OED 4.a.

⁶³ OED 4.a.

⁶⁴ John Jewel, *An apologie, or aunswer in defence of the Church of England concerninge the state of religion vsed in the same. Newly set forth in Latin, and nowe translated into Englishe* (London: [Reginald Wolfe], 1562), sig. Li^r.

⁶⁵ John Jewel, *A defence of the Apologie of the Churche of Englande conteininge an answeare to a certaine booke lately set foorth by M. Hardinge, and entituled, A confutation of &c.* (London: Henry Wykes, 1567), sig. Gvi^r.

⁶⁶ John Rastell, *A confutation of a sermon, pronou[n]ced by M. Iuell, at Paules crosse, the second Sondaie before Easter (which Catholikes doe call Passion Sondaie) Anno D[omi]ni .M.D.LX.* (Antwerp: Ægidius Diest, 1564), sig. Kii^v.

examples show the application of the word to the idea of effective yet harmful communication.

Stephen Gosson's *Playes confuted in fiue actions prouing that they are not to be suffred in a Christian common weale* contains a particularly telling reference with regard to my argument that plausibility is explicitly linked with Italian Catholic speciousness at this time. Writing in 'The first Action' that '[t]he Deuill [...] feeling such a terrible push, giuen to his breast by the chaunge of religion, and by the happy entrau[n]ce of her Maiestie to the crowne, hath played [...] beguilie euer since', he continues:

First hee sente ouer many wanton Italian bookes, which being tra[n]slated into english, haue poysoned the olde maners of our Country with foreine delights, they haue so hardned the readers harts [that] seuerer writers are trode vnder foote, none are so pleasaunte or plausible as they, that sound some kinde of libertie in our eares. This contempt of good bookes hath breede a desire of fancies & toyes.⁶⁷

In *His Farewell to Militarie Profession*, printed in 1581, Barnaby Riche boldly claims, in his dedicatory epistle, 'To the Readers in generall', that his tales 'are but forged onely for delight, neither credible to be believed nor hurtfull to be perused.'⁶⁸ His daring assertion is uncommon in the sixteenth century, during which time texts tended to rely on claims of edification to justify their publication. Rich's 'neither...nor' construction is significant as it unites two opposing sentiments. For writers on education or religion in the sixteenth century, texts which were not 'credible to be believed' were emphatically 'hurtfull to be perused'. The only incredible texts to be sanctioned were those

⁶⁷ Stephen Gosson, *Playes confuted in fiue actions prouing that they are not to be suffred in a Christian common weale* (London: Thomas Gosson, 1582), sig.B4iii^r..

⁶⁸ Barnaby Rich, *His Farewell to Militarie Profession* (London: Robert Walley, 1581), sig.Cii^r.

which were deemed allegorical or exemplary, and certainly not those which protested that they had been 'forged onely for delight'.

This brief survey of the various uses of the term 'plausible' illustrates that Spenser's use of it is not clear-cut. Its contemporary associations with unprofitable pleasure and attractive Catholic lies show the ways in which it could be interpreted. Twinned with what I have shown to be the hotly contested notion of readerly pleasure, Spenser's description of his allegory as 'plausible' embodies in a single word the ongoing arguments over romance texts as, on the one hand, defensible pleasures could bring profit to the well-trained reader, and, on the other, as products of a dangerous mode which offered fantastic fables under a beguiling mask of apparent veracity, and threatened to seduce the ignorant reader into imitating impossible fictions rather than humanist truths. Where Harington repeatedly highlights the bawdy nature of his tales by asserting, but refusing to detail, their moral applicability, Spenser reproduces the ambivalent attitudes to romance that he claims to circumscribe by establishing his text as an instructive allegory. Like Munday, Spenser and Harington write attacks on the romance into the paratexts of their romances; like Munday, the two authors incorporate those attacks in a disingenuous manner that demands an educated reader to recognise their source and significance. The irony is that only the well-trained humanist reader, who is supposed to resolutely privilege profit over textual delight, has the readerly resources to identify the paratextual jokes and allusions that undermine the claim that the texts they accompany can and should be read for profit. The 'delight' of romance fiction is doubled: for the less well-educated reader it continues to inhere in the fantastic events and increasingly outdated chivalry offered by the romance plot; for the humanist

practitioner it lies in the recognition of a multiplicity of possible readings, and the ability to produce a defence of romance as profit that, at the same time, surreptitiously exposes and licences an appreciation of its pleasures.

AFTERWORD

In my thesis I have shown the diversity and complexity of responses to romance in the sixteenth century, and detailed the variety of attempts to fashion or legitimise a romance readership through paratextual and textual discourses. My starting point was the intensification of objections to the romance which occurred as humanist educationalists, including Erasmus and Vives, began to write texts describing methods of instruction which circumscribed the romances as unsuitable reading material due to their fabulous and immoral narratives which, it was supposed, would lead the reader into emulating the sinful episodes. As these pedagogical treatises were disseminated in print, at the same time as readerly literacy increased substantially, romance paratexts began to position their texts as suitable for the educated, who would bring a humanistically-trained eye to the text and fashion a reading which gave both profit and delight through the techniques of 'goal-oriented' reading. Romance texts and paratexts engaged directly with the criticisms levelled against them by humanist and Reformist critics, deflecting such criticism by fashioning themselves as profitable discourses rather than idle matter for idle readers. John Leland and John Bale's attempts to initiate a canon of valuable authors and texts for the nation excluded romances on the grounds of their irrelevance, and the chroniclers of King Arthur were admitted despite the concern that their texts were full of fables and old wives' tales. Richard Robinson's association with the Worshipful Society of Archers and his contemporary, Roger Ascham's, damning assessment of the Arthurian tales as 'bold bawdry and open mans slaughter', serve to emphasise the anachronism of the outworn medieval texts at the time that thrilling contemporary romances from the continent caught the reader's attention instead. These continental romance translations, with their elaborate paratextual

strategies, were maligned and praised in equal measure, and constructed intertextual jokes for their educated readers, turning the arguments of Amyot and other humanists on themselves by locating the text as a humanist exemplary narrative. Medieval and continental humanists were incorporated in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, which, along with Harington's translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, presented the court with romance narratives containing sophisticated references to the pleasures of reading.

As is clear from my thesis, and from this short summary of the competing views on romance in the sixteenth century, there was little consensus by the end of the century over romance reading; opinions on the profit or harm which would be brought about by the reading of romances were still circulating in texts and paratexts by the 1600s. However, a broad survey of opinions on romances in the seventeenth century shows that the debates in the sixteenth century had produced some lasting consequences, with a wide reading and playgoing public primed to enjoy the absurdities of romances, while humanist concerns remained rooted in suspicion of the romances' abilities to create unprofitable diversions, and, in a new development, paratexts of romance translations could contain remarks on the high status and authority of romances.

It has become customary to end studies on romance with an outline of the ways in which the topic contributes to a discussion of the 'rise of the novel'.¹ I resist this teleological view, in order to illustrate that the reception of romances in the seventeenth century remained various and resistant to categorisation and, is therefore, less easy to marshal into such an argument.

¹ See, for example, Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), and Michael McKeon *Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

Certainly, suspicions remained about the uses of incredible narratives which give pleasure. In *The history of the Royal-Society of London for the improving of natural knowledge*, Thomas Sprat writes of civil and natural history:

In the Civil, that way of Romance is to be exploded, which heightens all the characters, and actions of men, beyond all shadow of *probability*: yet this does not hinder, but the great, and eminent *virtues* of the extraordinary men of all Ages, may be related, and propos'd to our example. The same is to be affirm'd of *Natural History*. To make that only to consist of strange, and delightful Tales, is to render it nothing else but *vain*, and *ridiculous Knight-Errantry*. Yet we may avoid that extreme, and still leave room, to consider the singular, and irregular *effects*, and to imitate the unexpected, and monstrous *excesses*, which *Nature* does sometimes practise in her *works*. The first may be only compar'd to the Fables of *Amadis*, and the *Seven Champions*: the other to the real *Histories* of *Alexander*, *Hannibal*, *Scipio*, or *Caesar*.²

Sprat's analogy illustrates that, among scientific men at least, there was a disdain for the fabulous, beguiling elements of romance, whereas classical exemplary historiography was seen as admirable. Apart from the references to natural history and the Royal Society, there is little to distinguish this quotation from one of a century, or more, earlier.

In the private Blackfriars Theatre, however, Francis Beaumont's play, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, performed c.1607-08, satirised the appetite for romance of the citizens of London.³ The apprentice Rafe, much like Don Quixote, is a cautionary example of mistaking the world of the Iberian romance for reality; thus, he enacts Munday's extension of the logic of humanist reading

² Thomas Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society of London for the improving of natural knowledge* (London: J. Martyn and J. Allestry, 1667), pp.214-5.

³ For details of the extensive list of romances referenced in the play, see Michael Hattaway (ed.), 'Introduction', in Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (London: A. & C. Black, 1969, rpt 1986), pp.xv-xix.

practice, by attempting to read *Palmerin d'Oliva* as a guide to action in the real world. His misadventures provide a comic warning to the audience of indulging in too much romance, while asking them to recognise intertextually the popular romances it references.

While these two examples have palpable connections to the discourses I discussed in my thesis, a third example demonstrates the changes in opinion on romances which had been effected in literary quarters. In his translation of Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrea a romance*, printed in 1657, John Davies begins his preface, 'To the Reader', with the following commendation of the romance mode:

Of all the Books that Mankind hath convers'd with, since it was first refin'd by Letters, none hath contributed so much to the civilization thereof, or gaind that esteeme and *Authority* with it, as those of POETRY; by which terme I meane, FICTION, in the largest extent. Under this, are comprehended the highest & noblest productions of man's wit, ROMANCES⁴

While Davies' opening remarks may be prefatory rhetoric, they explicitly make the claim that romances are the highest form of fiction, a claim which would have been unprintable a century earlier. As my thesis has shown, romances were not classified as such in their prefatory matter, but were camouflaged as more prestigious modes, or left tacitly unclassified; in this example they are proudly and explicitly claimed as 'the highest & noblest productions of man's wit.'

This example suggests that romances had found a legitimate place in the readerly canon; this canon had shifted significantly since Leland's and Bale's attempts to exclude romances and other fictions from their lists of English

⁴ Honoré d'Urfé, *Astrea a romance*, trans. John Davies (London: H. Moseley, T. Dring, & H. Herringman, 1657), sig. A2^r. I am grateful to Dr Helen Smith for bringing this text to my attention.

authors. Nonetheless, such a triumphal narrative is only part of the story, since romances were still disparaged or satirised, as my two earlier examples show. While attitudes to the romance in the seventeenth century remained complex, they did now, at least, include defences of the romance narrative not just as legitimate reading matter but as the quintessence of civilised letters.

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