

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE AMADIS CYCLE

ELIZABETH SPEARING



D. PHIL.

THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND RELATED LITERATURE

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

ABSTRACT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ABBREVIATIONS AND SPELLING CONVENTIONS

The following abbreviations are used in footnote citations from primary texts¹:

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

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

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

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

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

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

In quoting from primary texts, my aim has been to reproduce exactly their spelling and punctuation, regardless of their own consistency or 'correctness'.² This means that names of persons and places will sometimes appear in quotations with more than one spelling; in particular French names may appear with or without accents. In the text of my thesis I have, where possible, chosen a single spelling for the name of each fictional character. However, a number of names of Amadisian characters are spelt differently by the Spanish and by the French authors, and in these cases I have used a Spanish form (e.g. 'Amadís', 'Lisuarte') when discussing Spanish books and a French form (e.g. 'Amadis', 'Lisuart') when discussing French books. In quotations from the *Amadis* cycle, I follow Place in using italics to indicate expansions of abbreviated forms.

2. I have, however, substituted 's' for 'long s'.

INTRODUCTION.

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

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

1. The *Amadis* Cycle

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Place has written that 'Montalvo, as a Renaissance "re-write" man, from a medieval tale evolved a masterpiece and thereby launched what was virtually a new genre.'⁵ Montalvo's prologue contains some interesting

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

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

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

Here the word *superfluas* suggests that revision is not just a matter of modernising vocabulary, but of pruning words as well, and indeed narratorial comment in the text itself indicates that the writer felt that *abbreviatio* was more to the purpose than *amplificatio*. An example is the remark that 'Pero porque seyendo más prolixa más enojosa de leer sería, se dexa de recontar'⁷. (This might be compared with Caxton's references to Malory's having 'drawn out briefly into English' and 'reduced...into English' his French sources for the Arthurian cycle;⁸ the late-medieval compilation of romance cycles went along with the abbreviation of individual sources.) But Montalvo is not merely anxious to avoid boring prolixity. He also has some sense of unity of action,

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

6. 11.

7. 1114.

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

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

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

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

9. 1321.

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

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

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

2. Choice of Material

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

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

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

Within this collection of fourteen books I observe a general movement towards a stronger emphasis on the roles of women, and I sometimes find it possible to draw useful distinctions, for example between Montalvo and his successors or between Spanish authors and French translators. More commonly, however, I treat the fourteen books as a loosely circumscribed whole, forming a single fictional world about which some degree of generalisation is possible. I do this first because that is how the cycle is likely to have been received in the period of its widest readership; there are many sixteenth-century references to it, but in general they simply mention *Amadis*, without distinguishing one part, author, or even language from another.¹¹ Secondly, for the purposes with which I am concerned, what the books have in common has turned out to be more important than the ways in which they differ, and, apart from the change that begins in Book V, it has not seemed helpful to attempt to trace out patterns of historical development within the cycle.

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

3. Method of Approach

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

phenomena that a more naïve reading brings to light. If an anthropological analogy is appropriate, then the work I offer here consists in the main of early field studies in a culture of great richness and variety, rather than of the more refined structural analyses that such studies may eventually make possible. I attempt to read the *Amadis* cycle from within, though in doing so I may seem to align myself with credulous contemporary readers such as the lady mentioned in Juan Arce de Otálora's *Coloquios de Palatino y Pinciano*: 'Y rezaremos una Ave Maria e un Pater Noster por su alma, como dezia una señora que presumia de devota, que todos los dias rezava por el anima de Amadis e Oriana'.¹² This means that I frequently adopt the cycle's own terminology, so that, for example, terms such as 'good' and 'bad', as in 'good women' and 'bad women', should be read as if enclosed in quotation marks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14. See Chapter V.

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

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

4. Romance and Reality

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

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

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

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

17. X.61r.

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

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

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

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

down the social scale, its main readership, like that of other romances of chivalry, was among 'the upper or noble class, and perhaps...a few particularly well-to-do members of the bourgeoisie'²⁰. The early editions of *Amadis* were expensive and heavy folios, but these were soon followed by small, easily handled editions which are likely to have been produced with a female readership in mind. That this was so in the case of the beautifully bound and printed edition of Books I-XV in the Cambridge University Library is indicated by the *Dixain* at the end of Book I, addressed by 'Le Petit Angevin [Jean Maugin] aus Dames Francoyses':

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

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

20. Eisenberg, *Romances of Chivalry*, p 105.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) They may represent their readers' reality in an idealised form. Tuve again puts this well when she writes: 'To be sure, romances were a genre that portrayed life idealistically, but on the assumption that it was a realistic portrayal of life'²⁵. This is so much the commonest situation in the *Amadis* cycle that no specific illustration seems necessary. The idealising and aestheticising tendencies that belong to the aristocratic way of life as it really existed in the Middle Ages and Renaissance are simply adopted as the norm for chivalric fiction.

(c) Romances can teach or encourage in their readers behaviour imitative of some of the actions they represent: they may teach them manners and other social conventions; they may, like epics, incite courageous actions. For instance, after defending a damsel's right of choice by routing six armed men, the young Amadís exclaims that: '...en parte donde las mugeres son maltratadas, que deuen andar seguras, no puede auer hombre que nada valga'.²⁶ The narrator is using his hero to teach both by example and by precept. An illustration of how the *Amadis* cycle was

23. 83-84.

24. 444-45.

25. *Allegorical Imagery*, p 342.

26. 51.

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

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

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

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

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

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

28. IX.99v-100v.

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

5. Romance and Doctrine

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

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

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

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

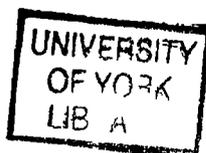
30. See *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, trans. P. M. Matarasso (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p 162 and n 44.

31. See Eisenberg, *Romances of Chivalry*, pp 45-46.

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

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

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



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

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

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

CHAPTER I

THE FEMININE: DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE.

A. TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF WOMEN

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

admits ranges of possibilities to both man and woman which may overlap'¹. Renaissance theology sticks to firm divisions, with little ambiguity or complexity; thus hermaphrodites were often seen as monstrous and unnatural creatures rather than representing a mid-point in a continuous gradation between male and female.²

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

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

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

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

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

differentiation without hierarchy.³ Apologists and moralists alike reiterated the same passive and privative virtues as peculiarly feminine: chastity, modesty and long-suffering. Erasmus, Agrippa, Vives and others believed that woman's position in society was divinely ordained and that she should practise different virtues from man, often complementary ones: silence/eloquence, obedience/command. The one exception to these generalizations arises in the case of women rulers, whose birth and status may be seen as making them honorary men.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. V.465.

7. V.506.

8. 1266.

and holy life, must be sure to keep away from temptation.⁹ Seeing a handsome man for one moment may prove too much for them. A damsel and her mother change their minds about the passionate suitor who had kidnapped the girl 'como las mugeres acostumbran fazer'¹⁰; female curiosity is said to be great, even in the newly widowed¹¹, and we are told that nothing is impossible to a woman once she has undertaken it, especially something wicked¹². Vanity comes high on the list of faults ascribed to female characters: the ladies at the court of Trebisonde are all eager to look their best when the famous beauty Niquee is about to arrive¹³, and Princess Silvie, in spite of an upbringing as rustic as Perdita's, no sooner sees a notice outside the prison of an enchanted prince stating that the most beautiful lady in the world is needed to break the enchantment than she assumes 'selon le naturel des Dames' that her own beauty is meant¹⁴.

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

9. 19-20.

10. 1302.

11. X.22r.

12. VIII.87r.

13. VIII.118r.

14. IX.9v.

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

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

15. VI.47v.

16. 394.

17. 392.

'feeble', says one knight¹⁸, 'deceitful', says another¹⁹, and in an important speech to all his knights on the Firm Island, Amadís himself pronounces that women 'were born to obey, with weak spirits, and their strongest arms [are] tears and sighs'.²⁰ Gandalín resents the unhappiness Oriana's jealousy has caused his lord, and a hermit would have a vested interest in chastity, but various characters throughout the first four books are given the occasional antifeminist cliché of a type still widely diffused in sixteenth-century misogynistic writings. In these earlier books great stress is laid on women's mental and physical weakness and vulnerability. Later books in the cycle contain less narratorial comment, though they still retain a number of brief, unflattering remarks from both narrator and characters. Such comments are revealed to be generally untrue when one considers the women presented in the romance, or to apply equally to both sexes.

B. WOMEN TOGETHER

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

18. 997.

19. 1000.

20. 907.

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

1. Sexual Segregation

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

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

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

21. 105.

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

23. 210.

24. V.519.

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

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

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

25. XIV.33r.

26. 173.

27. 1228.

28. XIII.51.

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

2. Female Amusements

Since they spend so much of their time together, women are dependent on each other for company and entertainment. Most of this entertainment is shown as being conventional in romance terms and somewhat limited. A great deal of time is spent in gardens, where female characters sing, dance, pick flowers to make garlands, occasionally sew and read love stories and very often sit talking round a beautiful fountain. Helene of Apolonie, with a terrible prophecy hanging over her, is a prisoner in the nunnery of which her aunt is abbess and she and her maidens seem to spend all their waking hours in the garden.³⁰ Diane is also a prisoner in a delightful palace and gardens, waiting until she is of an age to be used by her mother as an instrument of vengeance: she is to be the reward for any knight who murders her father. Her best friend describes the *folies* with which the damsels amused themselves while Diane was resting. They danced in their petticoats, bathed in the fountain, discussed which of them 'étoit la mieus garnie pour fille', and then when

29. XII.27r.

30. IX.63v.

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

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

31. XI.69v-70r.

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

32. XI.51r.

33. 515-16.

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

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

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

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

35. 43-49.

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

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

36. IX.56r-57r.

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

3. Female Solidarity

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

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

37. IX.111r.

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

38. 960, 896.

39. VII.29v.

40. 332.

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

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

41. IX.49v.

42. XIII.119.

43. V.510.

4. Female Friendship

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

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

45. 667-68.

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

A close friendship of a more equal kind, as there is no element of attendance, is that between Fortunie, daughter of Lisuart of Greece, and the Amazon princess Pentasilee. They are still very young when, with other ladies, they are imprisoned on 'l'isle Aventureuse', and as they are 'conformes en coustumes, manieres, & en beauté' they spend most of their time together. Once released they share a room and share confidences, talking about their knights and composing a joint letter to them. Amusement over the unwelcome but determined wooing of a pair of Tartar princes is also shared.⁴⁸ Though of equivalent rank, Pentasilee is depicted as much stronger both physically and psychologically. Even off the battlefield she shows herself as much more resolute and she often

46. 1066.

47. 981.

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

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

C. PASSIVE HEROINES

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

49. XIV.79r.

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

1. Onolorie

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

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

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

51. VI.18.

52. VI.45v-46v.

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

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

2. Lucelle

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

54. VI.79r.

55. V.180v-181r.

56. V.185r-188r.

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

57. VII.35r-36r.

58. VIII.74v; VII.69r.

59. VIII.105r.

60. VIII.120r-122v.

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

3. Helene

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

61. XI.89v-90v.

with thirty maidens as her companions, and when Prince Florisel of Niquee gets into the garden she feels like Shakespeare's Miranda that she has never seen anyone so beautiful and immediately falls in love.⁶² Within a relatively short time they have eloped together, but there is much sighing, weeping, fainting and suffering on both sides before this happens. Timbrie's tasks vary from the trivial business of picking up a tear-stained letter which the two girls discover beside the sleeping Florisel (Helene comments on her cousin being more *hardie*: nature should have made her a knight)⁶³ to coping when Helene is in a state of collapse after losing her virginity⁶⁴. Helene is represented as a spoilt and silly adolescent. She tells Florisel's attendant to be in the nunnery garden at night to hear her play her lute - obviously in full expectation of his master's accompanying him. Florisel duly hides under some trees, then when Helene walks away from Timbrie to lament her love he not unnaturally comes nearer, kneels at her feet and addresses her. She 'fût si troublée, qu'elle se leva en sursaut, & sans lui pouvoir répondre vn seul mot, fuit vers sa cousine & l'embrassa étroitement, come vne personne éprise d'vne poeur subite'. Timbrie is much braver; when Helene recovers sufficiently to say that, Alas, she fears the Knight of the Shepherdess is among those cherry trees, she will not be

62. IX.60v-63r.

63. IX.66r.

64. IX.134r.

deterred from going to find out.⁶⁵

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

65. IX.67v.

66. IX.111v-112v.

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

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

68. IX.128r-135r.

4. Oriana

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

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

69. 39.

que os seruirá'.⁷⁰ The two children take this literally and love each other from that moment. Oriana is warm in her friendship, especially with Amadís's cousin Mabilia. She and her mother, the Queen of Great Britain, have a close and loving relationship. Nor is this warmth limited to her closest connections: she is generous in her attitude to a grief-stricken lady who had been the emissary of her hated suitor, the Emperor of Rome⁷¹, and when in exile on the Firm Island and temporarily without money or status we are told that she is loved, honoured and served by everyone because she is 'la más noble y más comedida para onrrar a todos'⁷². When she lands she is dressed 'más conveniblemente a su fortuna y honestidad...que en acrescentimiento de su fermosura', and she is embarrassed when her beauty is praised, humbly speaking of 'vna donzella pobre desheredada como yo soy'.⁷³ Her shyness had already been apparent when her father had knighted her half-brother Norandel who asked that she should be the one to give him his sword; she did so 'con gran vergüença, como aquella que por muy estraño lo tenía'.⁷⁴ She shows similar diffidence before her triumph in the test of the Arch of Loyal Lovers. Only those who have been faithful in love can pass under the magic arch, and although Oriana has no doubts of her own fidelity, she

70. 40.

71. 960.

72. 1216-17.

73. 967.

74. 694.

is depicted as shy about this public test and turns to look back at her new husband, pausing and blushing before she advances. Flowers rain around her, music plays, and, successful in the first part of her ordeal, she now faces the test which will prove her the most beautiful woman of all and allow her to share the Forbidden Chamber with Amadís. He refers to her nervousness and she is unwilling to try as she cannot believe herself beautiful enough.⁷⁵ Oriana is also humble in her worldly aspirations and uninterested in the power and greatness which she is told that marriage to the Emperor of Rome will bring her.⁷⁶ Like other ladies in the cycle, she is shown as devout; during the fighting and subsequent peace negotiations between the forces of her father and those of her lover, she prays and goes on pilgrimages, thanking God when she finally hears that all is well; and she is devout and humble when the hermit Nasciano arrives on the Firm Island, wanting to consult him about her soul and her conscience and calling herself a sinner⁷⁷.

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

75. 1229.

76. 843-44.

77. 1120-21.

ret; as she rides through the night with Amadís 'ouo tan gran miedo, que el cuerpo le temblaua y no podía fablar'. Amadís turns the horses, but Oriana realises that she does want to go through with the ordeal and insists on continuing, asking Amadís not to consider the fear 'que yo como mujer tengo veyéndome en tan estraño lugar para mí'.⁷⁸ Another occasion finds her in a situation that might frighten anyone: she has just been rescued from the evil enchanter Arcaláus and his knights and clutches Amadís in horror at the sight of all the corpses which surround her.⁷⁹

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

78. 475-76.

79. 284.

80. 128-29.

81. 917, 969.

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

82. 568-69.

83. 700.

84. 297.

85. 895.

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

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

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

Intensity of feeling is a feature of romances in general and Oriana's feeling for Amadís is often shown as taking her beyond 'todo sentido'. Sometimes the cause of her affliction is imposed on her: Arcaláus deceives her father by a magic trick, then demands Oriana as his promised 'boon'; like Chaucer's Arveragus, Lisuarte believes that 'Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe'⁸⁸ and Oriana is carried off from the castle of Vindilísora *amortescida*⁸⁹. Another decision of her

86. 1065.

87. 1004.

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

89. 274.

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

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

90. 891; 911.

91. 42.

92. 370.

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

93. 400-02, 410.

94. 429-31.

95. 433.

96. 1231.

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

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

97. 1000.

D. FEMALE BEAUTY

On the title page of *The Progress of Romance through times, countries and manners*⁹⁸, Clara Reeve placed a stanza from *The Faerie Queene* that epitomizes the relationship between hero and heroine of a typical romance, a work which in Miss Reeve's words, 'describes what never happened nor is likely to happen'.

It hath bene through all ages euer seene,
 That with the praise of armes and cheualrie,
 The prize of beautie still hath ioyned beene;
 And that for reasons speciall priuitie:
 For either doth on other much relie.
 For he me seemes most fit the faire to serue,
 That can her best defend from villenie;
 And she most fit his seruice doth deserue,
 That fairest is and from her faith will neuer swerue.⁹⁹

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

98. (Colchester: W. Keymer, 1785).

99. *FQ* IV.v.1.

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

1. The Representation of Beauty

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

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

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

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

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

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

Presumably an ideal beauty would be always the same, however embodied. Such beauty stands apart from the ravages of time or daily life. When the realist Sancho Panza tells his master a story about a shepherdess, he says that when she set out on a journey she put a fragment of looking glass, a piece of a broken comb and a small pot of face cream in her bags.¹⁰³ The lovely Princess Lucelle needs no such beauty-aids on her travels; after long imprisonment by Cyclops she is snatched up under the arm of an enraged giantess who then runs with her into the adjacent lake. Dropped when the giantess is killed, Lucelle is completely submerged in the water and swallows a good deal of it. Far from appearing worn by imprisonment or bedraggled from total immersion, she is obviously as radiant as ever when Amadis of Greece rescues her; he immediately calls her 'la plus belle Princesse que viue aujourd'huy'¹⁰⁴. Nor does age wither these heroines: they are beautiful from the moment of their birth and grow through beautiful childhood into an endlessly beautiful adulthood. The Emperor of Constantinople is struck by Olinda when he first sees her; she is referred to as 'ieune Princesse', which she cannot possibly be, as a generation of infant princes has grown up into knights since her marriage.¹⁰⁵ This incident, in which Olinda's only function is to stand still and be looked at, is an example of the power

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

104. VII.28r-v.

105. VI.29.

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

2. Clothes

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

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

vétuë d'un satin violet decoupé sur vn fond de drap d'or, & les taillades reprinses avec boutons d'or subtilement faits en façon de trousse de flèches, liés de gros tortis de soye bleuë: sa robe étoit fori longue & ceinte, & les manches étroites près des épaules venoyent à s'élargir en bas: ses cheueus épars, sur lesquels vne couronne Royale étoit assise avec infinité de perles.¹⁰⁷

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

106. 965.

107. X.60r.

108. IX.54r.

3. Beauty and Admiration

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

109. 1003.

110. XII.117r.

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

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

111. VIII.22r, 75v.

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

112. X.42v.

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

114. XI.42r.

115. XII.131r.

116. VII.56v.

117. XIII.45r.

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

4. The Ranking of Beauty

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

118. XII.54r-55r.

119. XII.117r.

120. VIII.6lv.

others; it would be quite possible to show on a graph the levels reached by the various women in the cycle. Helisena, Amadís's mother, is 'en grand quantité mucho más hermosa' than her sister¹²¹, and when Queen Sidonie arrives in Constantinople, those who have never seen her before are 'grandement esbahis de sa beauté qui egalloit celle de Niquee, & surpassoit toutes les autres fors que de Fortunie, Leonide & Diane'¹²². Such precision has a bad effect on Timbrie's tendency to jealous resentment. Her cousin Helene has asked some messenger damsels about the appearance of Arlande, who is holding her knight prisoner. They reply that she is less beautiful than Helene herself, but as beautiful as that lady (pointing to Timbrie). Timbrie replies angrily and the damsels, embarrassed and ashamed, hastily apologize, but only make matters worse by assuring her that they have never seen anyone as beautiful as she is - except Alastraxeree, Helene and two other ladies.¹²³

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

121. 11.

122. XIII.45r.

123. IX.97r.

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

124. 829 (underlinings mine).

Each of those who fails is thrown out and left senseless, much like the defeated knight in a tournament.¹²⁵ There are a number of other such tests in the cycle, including one said to be devised by Medea to enhance her own glory¹²⁶. The Adventure of the Mirror of Love in Book IX is like various other tests in showing clearly and permanently the precise standard everyone had reached¹²⁷; sometimes there are inscriptions, sometimes shields or statues to mark the position attained.

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

125. 1229-31.

126. VI.72r-74r.

127. IX.23v.

128. 830.

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

5. Beauty and Virtue

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

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

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

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

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

131. XV.3r.

132. XI.87r.

133. 1288.

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

6. Beauty and Rank

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

134. XI.34v-35r.

group.¹³⁵ The childhood of a lost princess may have been spent keeping her sheep in all weathers on the green and flowery banks of the Nile, but by the time she is twelve or thirteen she is ravishingly beautiful¹³⁶. Like Perdita,

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

7. Beauty as Power

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

135. VII.15v.

136. IX.1v-2r.

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

138. XII.139r.

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

139. VIII.10r.

140. 62r-63v.

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

Further evidence that beauty is perceived as an abstract quality, an idea which is quite separate from the personality of its possessor, is that a picture can and often does have just the same effect as the sitter would have had. Like paper money, beauty can circulate even if the golden princess is safely locked into her tower. Niquee and Amadis of Greece fall in love with each other's portraits, Amadis being so overpowered that his squire has to stop him falling and supposes he has had an attack of apoplexy.¹⁴³ A portrait can cause as much death and destruction as the presence of the real lady. Many knights fall in love with Diane without having seen her; they carry her picture on their shields and go around killing each other, 'tellement que la beauté divine de cete dame se pouoit bien dire vne pestilence generale courant parmi les cheualiers de son tems'¹⁴⁴. A logical extension of this is the idea that such a portrait can become almost as dangerous as Medusa's

141. VIII.21v.

142. X.52r.

143. VIII.22r, 44v-45r.

144. XI.6v.

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

E. THE FEMALE CHARACTER AS SPECTATOR

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

145. VIII.85r.

146. VIII.51v.

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

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

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

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

149. 728-31.

ger sister Leonoreta and her ladies kneel, pray, scream, and tear their hair while Amadís is fighting the giant who is carrying them away in a cart as human sacrifices to his pagan idol.¹⁵⁰ The beautiful Briolanja watches the man she loves (hopelessly, as the reader knows and she does not) fighting for her kingdom.¹⁵¹ The degree of personal involvement can vary between the objective comment of an experienced spectator and the desperate response of a girl who vows not to outlive him who loved her more than himself, then throws herself down from her palfrey, seizes a piece of broken lance and dies by thrusting it into her breast¹⁵². A sudden strange noise is shown to separate the sexes immediately: all the ladies hurry to the top of a high seaside tower and are rewarded by the sight of a dwarf blowing a trumpet on a boat in the form of a sea-serpent; the knights, meanwhile, have gone down to the beach, prepared for action.¹⁵³ In another episode, two resolute but careful damsels have come to see the fight against the giant Albadán. They almost run away when they realise the challenger is only the young man who has been travelling with them, but decide that they must see what happens whatever the danger and place themselves on the edge of a wood in a strategic position for hasty retreat. 'Por Dios, Señor, él fizo en vos buena criança...', they say admiringly afterwards when the victorious Galaor

150. 462.

151. 340.

152. VI.62v.

153. 1219.

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

1. Ladies and their Knights

As we shall see, the sight of his lady may affect a knight's performance for better or worse, but the ladies in the first four books are presented as passive and helpless during the fighting and the same is true of many ladies in subsequent books. Sardinie in Book XIV is a typical example: watching helplessly while don Silves and Prince Lucendus fight, she weeps bitterly when she thinks them dead, then when they revive and continue their struggle she is horrified by the cruelty and desperate to stop them but realises that she can do nothing.¹⁵⁷ Ladies who are watching jousting are imagined as having a much pleasanter time. On the

154. 100.

155. 584.

156. 61.

157. XIV.35v.

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

158. VI.67v.

159. X.22r.

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

161. VI.23v-24r.

2. Ladies and Christian Soldiers

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

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

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

163. V.539.

Constantinople'.¹⁶⁴ Townswomen are depicted as somewhat more robust; at an earlier siege of that much besieged city, far from remaining as passive watchers, they carry oil, boiling water, stones, tiles, logs, sulphur and similar things 'pour endommager l'ennemy' at the point where they are trying to breach the walls¹⁶⁵. On Amadís's Firm Island they hurl missiles from the windows when el Rey Arávigo and Arcaláus have managed to get in to the town of Lubayna¹⁶⁶; on another occasion their only rôle is to be turned out of a besieged city at night as 'bouches inutiles'.¹⁶⁷

3. Ladies and Moral Dilemma

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

164. X.30r-v, 32r, 33v.

165. VI.25r.

166. 1155.

167. XI.105r.

168. 1064.

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

4. The Lady and the Reader

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

169. VIII.64.

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

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

170. VI.84r-85r.

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

5. Lamentation and Suffering

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

171. VII.41v-42r.

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

172. *Cymbeline* IV 2.

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

173. XII.99v-101v.

F. THE FEMALE VICTIM

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

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

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

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

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

175. XIV.52v.

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

CHAPTER II

SEX AND POWER.

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

A. FEMALE WEAKNESS AND POWER

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

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

1. VIII.3v.

2. X.70.

3. VIII.33r.

4. XII.155r.

5. XI.23r.

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

3. Weakness as Strength

In terms of physical power, then, the legal rights possessed by both sexes are usually sustained by men only. But how is male power shown as being brought into effect in particular cases? Not only by men's spontaneous perception of right. Women's only weapon may be tears and weeping, as the text states more than once, but this weapon is actually a very powerful one. Female sobbing, imperfectly heard across the water by night, is enough to send Amadis of Greece off from his ship in a little boat to investigate.¹⁹ In a later book the men are hunting while the ladies remain with the tents in a pleasant, grassy place by the seashore. Two giants hear the hackneys whinnying and kidnap Arlande, Lucelle and the Duchess Armide; it was pitiful to see them, we are told, wringing their hands and lifting tear-filled eyes to heaven as they prayed to God for help. But their cries alert a knight in another ship,

18. 1014.

19. VII.49.

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

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

20. X.76v-77v.

21. 134-35.

22. 208.

23. XI.92r.

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

24. 261.

25. 192.

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

4. The Boon

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

26. VII.69v.

27. XIV.63r-66r.

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

28. VIII.123v-124r.

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

5. Sexual Favours

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

29. IX.47r.

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

30. 746-50.

31. 111.

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

43. IX.62r-v.

44. XII.15r-v.

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

45. IX.124v-125r.

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

1. Legal Marriage

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

Secret or clandestine marriages were severely and repeatedly prohibited in the West by conciliar law and pontifical decrees. Nevertheless, there was no law requiring the presence of a priest for a valid marriage⁴⁸.

48. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, IX, pp 271-78.

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

2. The Nature of 'Honour'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

52. VIII.55.

53. V.486.

54. VIII.23r.

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

3. Virginity

If honour is extremely important and female honour depends on society perceiving a female to be chaste, virginity in unmarried girls might be expected to be precious. There are indeed a number of instances of evident concern with the subject, and passing remarks, as when the old Spartan laws of Dardanie 'tant vtilis & louables' are praised; there a girl has no dowry but her virtue, which has to be carefully preserved.⁵⁶ Yet in general there is surprisingly little emphasis on virginity as such. An occasional lady is represented as preferring death to dishonour, but these are always very minor characters and fail to make more than a brief impact. There is certainly no attempt to present

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

55. VII.59v-61r.

56. XI.14v-15r.

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

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

but she is less precipitate, hiding her reaction to his words and his beauty until she knows that he is of sufficiently good family to be an acceptable husband.⁵⁸ The juxtaposition of concern with preserving chastity and concern with preserving social rank is compatible with a scheme of thought in which public image is all-important, but less so with any 'sublime notion' of virginity.

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

58. VII.64r-65r.

59. XII.140v-141r.

60. XIII.44.

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

4. Chastity and Reputation: Diane

There is one heroine who is depicted as intensely concerned about her virginity; interestingly, she is also, I believe, the only one made to show internalized guilt along with concern for her reputation. I shall therefore give a more detailed account of her case. The aptly named Diane is daughter of the first, bigamous, marriage of Florisel of Niquee and Queen Sidonie of the Island of Guindaye. The reader first sees her as an exquisitely beautiful nine-year-old, who is already *auisee*.⁶¹ True to her name, she is not much older before she is declaring her intention to live chastely: 'je n'espere me rendre en ce cas comme le commun des femmes par lacheté & faute de coeur, puis qu'il ét en ma main de le faire ou non'. Her best friend, the young Duchess Lardenie, is sceptical and feels she is underestimating the power of love, as irresistible as death.⁶² Imprisoned by a revengeful but loving mother in a beautiful castle⁶³, Diane should not have been faced with any problems

61. XI.18.

62. XI.99r.

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

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

64. XII.15v.

65. XII.45r.

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

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

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

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

67. XII.147v-148r.

68. XII.169r.

69. XIII.13r.

5. Sexual Ethics in the Cycle

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

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

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

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

80. *Canterbury Tales* IV (E) 2421-22.

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

whereas a wicked wife is *aleuosa*⁸⁵, suggesting again, as in some of the comments of Montalvo already cited, that the intention or outcome of behaviour decides how moral it is. *Sotileza* seems to indicate mental powers being carried too far and used for bad ends; it is associated with enchantresses or witches.

8. Secrecy

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

85. 46.

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

89. VI.74r.

90. VI.80r.

91. 686.

9. Wit in the Service of Secrecy

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

92. VIII.12v.

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

10. Engineering Meetings

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

93. XI.66r.

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

94. X.59r.

95. 206-07.

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

11. The Morality of Deception

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

12. Tricks and Traps

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

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

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

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

98. 737-39.

99. XI.57r.

100. XIV.4v; XI.80v-81r.

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

13. Morality and Religion

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

101. XIV.93r-v.

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

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

108. VIII.15r.

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

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

109. IX.135r, 138v.

110. *Canterbury Tales* I (A) 1163-64.

111. IX.112r.

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

CHAPTER III

SEX AND LOVE.

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

A. SEXUAL LOVE

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

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

1. Love as a Pagan Religion

Far from considering sexual behaviour in Christian terms, in the books of the cycle which followed Montalvo's a pagan religion of love is repeatedly evoked instead, changing woman from the occasion of sin to the all-important object of a cult. This is quite often associated with blood, cruelty and suffering, and manifests itself in strange rites and pageants; sometimes these are unpleasant, as when three men are sacrificed to Cupid - the young women to whom they had illegally spoken of love kill them with an arrow through the heart, and the hearts are then removed and solemnly burned with perfumes on the altar.³ Such scenes can produce an oddly hypnotic and disorientating effect. There are

3. X.60r-v.

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. See pp 103-04 above.

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

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

Cupid is referred to several times; his power is here in keeping with the paganism regularly attributed to giants. Monstruofuron sees Love as

a god who can give rewards to whomever he pleases, but who is 'cruel et desagreable'. Every day the giant's entrails are lacerated anew, the reader is told, as he has to defend the entrance of the castle which contains so much anguish for him and is therefore defending it against anyone who might help him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, Book I, chapter VII.

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

2. Renaissance Platonism

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

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

9. IX.117rff.

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

10. VIII.4v.

11. IX.48v.

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

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

16. XII.145r.

17. VIII.107v.

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

20. XI.51r-v.

21. XI.79v-81r.

Liberna, Queen of Alexandria, has a sense of shame which stops her from making any such physical approach to Amadis of Greece. A dwarf has brought him, disguised as 'Le Cheualier sans Repos', to save her from an unwanted suitor. As she sits near him at supper, she is so powerfully affected by him that if 'honte ne l'eût mieus gardée que sa propre volonté, elle fût certes tombee au point blâmable, non seulement aus femmes, tant soyent elles impudiques, ains aus hommes propres, qui êt la force'. She is, however, quite prepared to declare her love and propose marriage.²² Such episodes may suggest that male writers enjoy the idea of a virginal female rapist, but, more important, they also help to consolidate the reader's impression of a fantasy world where many women are active and positive beings in the area of love and sex as much as in politics and warfare.

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

22. VIII.38v.

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

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

47. VII.56v.

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

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

48. XII.51v.

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

Popular stereotypes which demean or ridicule women do not apply in these romance relationships; just as there are no wicked folk-tale stepmothers, so there are no unloved mothers-in-law. Agesilan is so delighted and anxious to greet his mother-in-law when her ship sails unexpectedly into the harbour at Constantinople that he rides his horse into the water to reach her sooner.⁵¹ Nor are women presented as the natural rivals and enemies that imaginative works by men so often show them to be. Mothers- and daughters-in-law are consistently shown as having an affectionate relationship. Arlande, for example, the unmarried mother of an only child to whom she has devoted herself, is delighted when her son Florarlan wants to marry Queen Lucene of Thrace. She longs to meet and spend some time with her, to introduce her at the court of Constantinople; she is so happy when the lady arrives that she never wants to be

49. XII.7r.

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

51. XIII.44v.

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

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

54. 1244-45.

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

Other moments of great emotion occur in situations which lead heroines to bewail their lot. The lament already had a long literary tradition by the time these romances were written, and must have been a recognised formal literary representation of thoughts and feelings which in life would be confused, formless and not necessarily given any verbal expression at all. That the lament can be considered a formalisation is clear from the fact that a character is occasionally made to declaim a long and passionate monologue while immediately next to another character who is apparently oblivious. A lament given to Lucelle is a representative example of the formal expression of female grief.⁷⁸ She is a nun at the convent of Miraflores when she hears that Amadis of Greece is not dead, as she had supposed when she took the veil, but alive and married to Niquee. We are first told of her tears and weeping, which would have moved the hardest heart to pity. Then her own words take over from

78. VIII.120r-v.

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

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

80. XII.172r-v.

CHAPTER IV

STRONG WOMEN.

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

22. XIII.99v.

23. VI.32r-33v.

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

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

37. IX.107vff.

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

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

B. ENCHANTRESSES

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

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

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

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

distances to fight in important battles and tournaments.

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

estidad, así de su persona como de su marido, que pareciese ser cabeza y señor de todo', cannot resist begging to be allowed to take up arms again when one of their territories is threatened.⁷ The writer and the fictional husband then permit a martial woman to embark on a successful campaign.

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

7. V.560-61.

2. Masculine Sins

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

The two deadly sins most often associated with the male characters are pride and anger. Macrobius, a popular source for writing and teaching about ethics for many centuries, defines four levels of virtue, the first of them being civic or political virtue and consisting of the control of the passions by reason.⁸ This type of virtue is considered as proper to the active life, and might therefore be deemed particularly necessary for a good knight. It is here that all bad knights and nearly all giants fail. Their failure to control their passions leads them into pride, selfishness and hatred; and these in their turn lead to violence, cruelty, disorder and destruction. It is noticeable that Montalvo only uses the words *saña* and *sañudo* about men, and that when the word 'passion' is used about men it usually means 'anger', whereas

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

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

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

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

10. 789.

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

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

11. 108-09.

12. XIV.98r-v.

13. X.74r.

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

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

14. 1166.

15. 1029-30.

16. 1282.

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

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

17. VIII.123v-124r.

3. Giants

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

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

19. 1270.

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

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

20. VIII.114v-115r.

21. XI.37r.

22. 793ff.

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

23. XI.37.

24. 523-24; 539.

25. IX.26.

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

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

4. 'Feminine' Heroes

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

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

27. Cf above, p 30, n 2.

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

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

5. Male Weakness

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

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

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

30. VIII.2r.

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

31. VIII.10r.

32. VIII.10v.

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

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

33. VIII.34r.

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

34. IX.122v-123v.

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

6. Lachrymose and Self-Pitying Heroes

Such scenes, placing knightly heroes in distinctly unmilitary surroundings and endowing them with physical and emotional fragility, help to blur still further the strong/weak polarity with which the sexes had usually been associated. And there are many such scenes. Afflicted by love, heroes may weep, faint, writhe on the ground in agony or go into an open-eyed trance, speechless, senseless and with thundering heart, only revived by having icy hands rubbed and scented water sprinkled on the face.³⁵ Nor is it only love that can reduce a hero to a lachrymose state: when Esplendian sees an infinite number of kings and their subjects who have come to fight for him, instead of dealing with the practical problems involved or even delivering a rousing speech, his immediate response is to remember the fragility of human life; he tells himself that they will all be dead in a hundred years and '*commença à larmoyer*'.³⁶ Heroes' tears may also be of self-pity; they seem to be imagined as at least as prone to this sensation as heroines, so that the

35. XI.26v, for example.

36. VI.32r.

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

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

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

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

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

38. VIII.44v-45r.

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

7. Inconstancy

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

40. XI.74r.

9. Modesty and Gentleness

The dauntless heroes of these romances when no longer facing an enemy, sword in hand, are usually as diffident as girls were supposed to be. They are depicted as finding praise particularly embarrassing. Amadis of Greece blushes when he hears the King of Jerusalem praising him⁴⁸; Florisel, when told that Arlande has sought him out because of the fame of his prowess and beauty replies that she must have heard exaggerated accounts - rumour always exaggerates⁴⁹. Lucendus presents his lady with the prizes of his adventure (a hideous beast and equally ugly witch) and when the other princes express praise and admiration, '...il estoit tout honteux de s'oïr si hautement louer'⁵⁰. Nor does the ideal prince look or sound fierce. One of the most detailed descriptions is that of Prince Falanges d'Astre, chivalric and matrimonial partner of the redoubtable warrior Alastraxeree. He is described as having laughing green eyes, fair, curly hair and a gentle, kindly expression. Furthermore, he thinks before he speaks, gains more by subtlety than by brute force in battle and spills as little blood as possible.⁵¹ Like earlier heroes of romance, these characters also sing, play and write poetry: Amadis of Greece was one of the best lutenists of his time, the reader

48. VII.11r.

49. IX.33r.

50. XIV.89r.

51. XI.116.

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

10. Gender and Clothing

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

52. VIII.84v.

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

essarily revert immediately to masculine costume. Agesilan and Arlanges had abandoned the pursuit of learning in favour of the pursuit of love and adventure; then, after a considerable period during which none of their royal friends and relations had heard anything about them, they returned home having won both royal brides and fame for knightly prowess. They had achieved all this while disguised as Amazons, and decided to retain female dress for their triumphal entry into Constantinople. Nor does their costume for the occasion make any gesture towards the practical garments that form a normal part of the Renaissance iconography of the Amazon. The two young princes dress with particular and explicitly feminine magnificence. Their gowns are of white satin cut and pulled into little squares over cloth of gold, each square with pearls and pointed gold buttons enamelled with green leaves. They have very long trains, and sleeves which are narrow at the top and hanging from their hands down to the ground, lined with silk shot in peacock colours. Both have a beautiful jewelled bracelet at each wrist. Their hair is spread out over their shoulders and divided into twelve sections, each section finished with a true-love knot and a rich ruby jewel. Their crowns are of carbuncles and sapphires with 'piropes flamboyans', all exquisitely carved into the shape of carnations ('giroflees') and attached to their hair at each side by large diamonds.⁵⁷ There are a number of such descriptions; indeed, there is perhaps more emphasis on female clothing when worn by boys than when worn by women.

57. XII.53.

portrait of Princess Diane on his shield, and they tease and flirt unmercifully, enjoying themselves and amusing the reader in a way that would not be possible without their disguise. The scene has something of the atmosphere of an Elizabethan comedy. Garaye says the knight is ugly and the latter is very indignant - a number of ladies have wished him well, he says. He proceeds to cast doubt on the beauty of the veiled Garaye and she claims that she is very beautiful indeed. There is a great deal of laughter from the 'ladies' in the course of these exchanges, but though the knight has to join in at some points, he eventually rides off in a very bad temper after defeat in a fight and more teasing.⁵⁹ It is not the two young men in feminine clothes and playing female rôles who are weak or ridiculous; they only gain extra power. It is the man whose appearance is purely masculine who is at a disadvantage. Male characters are beautiful and successful in their trans-sexual rôles while retaining male strength and fighting skills, and this certainly undermines rather than reinforcing the masculine/feminine categories.

The beauty of the princely 'Amazons' already referred to is greatly admired by various chance-met damsels on their travels, and on other occasions their disguise enables the young men to tease a man in a feminine way while still showing masculine boldness and confidence. Such episodes can appeal to the reader in a number of different ways. Trans-

59. XI.21.

Italian and Books XXII-XXIV are from German. Some books are duplicated by different translators.

Popularity of French Translations

Maximilian Pfeiffer, *Amadisstudien* (Mainz: J. Falk, 1905), records the following numbers of editions, not counting different issues of the same editions by different publishers. These lists are representative rather than complete.

Book I	14 (1540-77)
Book II	12 (1541-77)
Book III	11 (1542-77)
Book IV	12 (1543-88)
Book V	11 (1544-77)
Book VI	12 (1545-77)
Book VII	10 (1546-77)
Book VIII	9 (1548-77)
Book IX	9 (1551-77)
Book X	10 (1553-77)
Book XI	9 (1554-77)
Book XII	7 (1556-77)
Book XIII	7 (1571-77)
Book XIV	4 (1574-77)

English Translations

French Book I: *The First Book of Amadis of Gaule*, translated by Anthony Munday (London: John Wolfe, 1590?).

French Book II: *The Second Booke of Amadis de Gaule*, translated by Lazarus Pyott (= Anthony Munday) (London: J. Wolfe for C. Burbie, 1595).

French Books I-IV: *The Ancient, Famous and Honourable History of Amadis de Gaule*, translated by Anthony Munday (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1619); four parts, Books III and IV dated 1618.

French Book V: *The Fift Booke of the Most Pleasant and Delectable Historie of Amadis de Gaule*, anonymous translation (London: Adam Islip, sold by Hugh Iackson, 1598).

French Book VI: *The Famous and Renowned History of Amadis de Gaule*, translated by Francis Kirkman (London: Jane Bell, 1652).

French Book VII: *The Most Excellent and Famous History of the Most Renowned Knight, Amadis of Greece*, anonymous translation (London: J. Deacon and J. Blare, 1694).

APPENDIX III: GENEALOGY OF *AMADIS* CHARACTERS

The chart on the following page is included as a reader's aid for the narrative of the books of the *Amadis* cycle discussed in this thesis. It is enlarged and corrected from the chart provided by John J. O'Connor, *Amadis de Gaule and its Influence on Elizabethan Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), but many minor characters still remain unmentioned. Thick horizontal lines indicate legitimate unions; wavy lines indicate illegitimate unions. Amadis de Grèce (marked *) and Léonide (marked **) each appear twice.

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