



Stacey Triplette

Chivalry, Reading, and Women's Culture in Early Modern Spain

*From Amadís de Gaula
to Don Quixote*

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Chivalry, Reading, and Women's Culture in Early Modern Spain

Gendering the Late Medieval and Early Modern World

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Note to the Reader

In this book I cite primary sources in both the original language and in the English translation wherever possible. I have translated citations from secondary sources into English. In all cases, translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Many of the primary sources I cite reflect medieval and early modern conventions for spelling and punctuation. When I cite from a critical edition, I follow the editor's version of the text, including any modernizations. When I cite directly from an early modern book, I modernize capitalization, punctuation, the division and separation of words, and the distribution of letters i, u, v, j, and y.

Introduction

Mi ravisosa quexa acompañada de sobrada razón da lugar a que la flaca mano declare lo que el triste corazón encubrir no puede contra vos el falso y desleal cavallero Amadís de Gaula, pues ya es conocida la deslealtad y poca firmeza que contra mí, la más desdichada y menguada de ventura sobre todas las del mundo, havéis mostrado

(My furious complaint accompanied by more than enough reason causes my weak hand to declare what the heart cannot conceal to you, most false and disloyal knight Amadis of Gaul; it is now well known what disloyalty and little constancy you have shown to me, the most wretched and least fortunate woman in the world)

– Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Amadís de Gaula*¹

In Book II of *Amadís de Gaula* (1508), Oriana, the princess of Britain, writes an angry letter to her lover, Amadís, telling him never to come near her again. Oriana's famous letter, from which I drew the epigraph, reveals the unexpected role women's literacy plays in the plot of *Amadís* and the other early modern Spanish texts that imitated it. While men do almost all the fighting in early modern Iberian romance, women do much of the writing. Battles occupy many pages, but letters and prophecies, both of which tend to originate with women, flow between and around them. Interpolated texts attributed to women link characters across distance and open a space for personality, interiority, and emotion in the narratives. In this book, I contend that the interior worlds of Iberian chivalry and the women characters who shape them create a ripple effect that can be felt, even to the present day, in works of fiction that borrow from Iberian romance.

The literary fortunes of Oriana and her letter encapsulate in miniature the power and the ambivalence of Iberian chivalry's fictionalized women. Oriana is a hybrid creation, part medieval *señora* of courtly love and part early modern queen in the style of Isabel la Católica.² Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, the editor-compiler of the early modern *Amadís*, characterizes her as cruel at some moments and admirable at others. Yet it is precisely

1 Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Amadís de Gaula*, I: 676–77. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

2 For the connections between Oriana and Isabel, see Cuesta Torre, 'Realidad histórica', 106; Labato Osorio, 'El auxilio a Oriana', 130; Triplette, 'From Guinevere to Isabel'.

Oriana's complexity, her combination of virtues and flaws, that renders her worthy of sustained consideration. A beautiful aristocrat with an adoring lover, seemingly impervious to the predations of giants, enchanters, and Roman emperors, Oriana wields power in her own right and acts on her world through the written word. She commits repeated infractions against chastity and good sense, but her affair of the heart leads to triumph, not shame.

Negative commentary about Oriana in the conduct tradition suggests that she had considerable appeal for readers. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar warned in 1546 that women readers of the romance would want to become 'otra Oriana [...] servida de otro Amadís (another Oriana ... served by another Amadís)'.³ Though Salazar worried primarily about women's chastity, I argue in this book that many found chivalric romance to be a threat because the genre suggested strategies through which literate women might subvert social norms. While it would be impossible to know exactly how each reader responded to the literate female characters of Iberian chivalry, the long history of these characters in imitation, translation, and adaptation, both in Spain and in other countries, suggests their potency and influence.

This book collects many moments like Oriana's letter and uses them to re-evaluate the place of women in Iberian chivalric fiction. Because the female characters of Iberian romance are less numerous and more confined than male characters, it has been relatively easy to miss their contributions to the genre, especially in previous centuries, when misogynist readings could be presented without question. Though the obvious lessons of Iberian chivalry are directed at men and masculinity, the romances issue a call to women as well. Early modern Spanish chivalric narratives teach their male audience that if they serve God, king, and country according to an archaic but compelling chivalric code, social mobility will be their reward.⁴ In turn, the romances show female readers how to use literacy as a lever of resistance. Though the authors who represented the female characters discussed in these pages were predominantly male and often echoed misogynist discourse, they do not subject female characters uniformly to the dominion of men. Female chivalric characters continually flaunt social norms and escape punishment, and even if the author protests in an aside, the genre suggests that the rules can be broken. Indeed, the early modern female writer Beatriz Bernal was able to find inspiration for egalitarian views on

3 Cervantes de Salazar, 'Introducción y camino para la sabiduría', f. 14r; qtd in Gagliardi, *Urdiendo ficciones*, 210.

4 Rodríguez Velasco, 'Fábula caballeresca', 357.

gender in *Amadís* and other male-authored chivalric texts. In gathering a series of exceptions to the stereotypes about Iberian romance, I show how literate female characters offered a relatively progressive perspective on women and, in doing so, contributed to the development of trends in fiction that would later become associated with the modern novel.

In the texts I discuss, female characters are insistently literate, and their literacy serves as an index—if an equivocal one—for the degree of agency they are able to exercise. Many of the cherished tropes of chivalry, including its famous erotic plots, require the participation of women. Chivalric romance does not require women's silence, and thus, to a degree, the genre enables women's agency. Though the literate women of chivalry offer limited resistance to gendered codes of behavior, there is a degree of subversion involved in their choices: writing is always less circumspect than refusing to communicate. Oriana's missive, for example, is one such act of rebellion, and it took on a life of its own, both within *Amadís* and in the hands of historical readers. Amadís the character receives a quasi-physical blow to the heart when he reads the letter, and other characters, the intrusive author Montalvo, and even literary critics must scramble to prove his innocence. Oriana's messenger soon reports that Amadís has passed through the magical Arch of Loyal Lovers, so he must have been faithful after all. Oriana's jealousy, therefore, must be irrational. Most critics, even today, accept that view, and some forcefully reaffirm it.⁵ Yet Oriana's jealousy could be thought of as logical considering the information she received, and in fact, some medieval versions of the story attest to Amadís's guilt.⁶

As *Amadís* traveled through the European literary market, readers imitated, interpreted, and rewrote Oriana's letter as they pondered the concepts of gender and power. In Beatriz Bernal's 1545 *Cristalián de España*, the character Penamundi channels Oriana's ire when she writes to Cristalián, even though his crime—concealing his identity from a new acquaintance—is minor. By citing Oriana, Penamundi declares her dominion over her suitor. In Part I of *Don Quixote* (1605), Oriana's diction and tone surface in Cardenio's unsent letter to Luscinda. The citation reverses the gender polarities of the episode, drawing into question misogynist readings of Oriana. Cervantes places Cardenio in the pose of the irrationally jealous

5 See Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Amadís de Gaula*, I: 670; Eisenberg, *Romances of Chivalry*, 78; Aguilar Perdomo, 'La penitencia de amor caballeresca', 191; Lucía Megías, 'Los cuatro libros', 98.

6 For versions of the story in which the knight succumbed to rival queen Briolanja's lewd advances, see Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Amadís de Gaula*, I: 612–13; Avallé-Arce, *El Amadís primitivo y el de Montalvo*, 163.

lover, emphasizing that being mistaken is not the exclusive province of women. Nicolas de Herberay's 1540 French translation, which is otherwise free in its relationship to the source text, produces a version of the letter faithful to Oriana's words. It contains recognizably the same content as in Montalvo's edition, with cognates for the Spanish diction and no embellishments, changes of tone, or omissions. Herberay's printer Janot likewise considers Oriana's missive special, as he distinguishes it from the surrounding romance with margins and white space of a kind twenty-first-century readers take for granted but which were not present in previous printings of the letter. In 1590, Anthony Munday published an English translation of Herberay's *Amadís* in which he reproduces Oriana's letter nearly word for word.⁷ The digest *Le Trésor des Amadis* (*The Treasury of the Amadis*, 1560), with a contrasting technique, characterizes Oriana's words as a formulary for wounding others, thereby reducing their meaning to an act of cruelty.⁸ The *Trésor* follows Oriana's missive with an apocryphal complaint letter from Amadís to his father in an attempt to reassert gender polarities. The *Trésor* thus seeks to contain Oriana's ability to command. Other versions of this episode take the *Trésor*'s technique one step further and omit the text of Oriana's letter entirely. Both Gil Vicente's 1533 *Amadís* play and Jean-Baptiste Lully's 1684 opera dramatize the sadness Amadís feels upon receiving the missive, without adapting any of the letter's words.⁹ The public watches Amadís suffer without learning the cause, and the effect is hollow. The different strategies imitators and translators used in their adaptations of Oriana's letter point to the gendered question at the heart of the romance of chivalry: To whom do the romances belong—men, women, or both?

This book argues that the romances indeed belonged to readers of both genders in the early modern period, in part because their structure allowed multiple viewpoints on gender to coexist. All Iberian chivalric romances demonstrate inconsistencies that arise from their interlaced structure, and *Amadís*—written at different times by different writers—is an extreme example. Moments structured around women offer a set of significant exceptions to the masculine-oriented rules of Iberian romance. This study classifies such interludes as instances of women's culture. I adapt this term from Elaine Showalter, who proposes a culturally based feminist theory that 'incorporates ideas about women's body, language, and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which

7 Herberay des Essarts, *Le second livre de Amadis de Gaule*.

8 *Le Trésor des Amadis: contenant les épîtres*.

9 Vicente, *Tragicomedia de Amadís de Gaula*; Lully and Quinault, *Amadis: Tragédie en musique*.

they occur'. Showalter, citing Gerda Lerner, emphasizes 'experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space'.¹⁰ For the purposes of this book, I define women's culture as the life stories of women, the spaces they inhabit, and the texts they create. These moments, ruled by interpolated texts, allow glimpses into the interior and family lives of female characters—concerns that will become important in the modern novel for both genders.

Chivalry, Reading, and Women's Culture tracks literate female characters within *Amadís de Gaula* and then follows their legacy in other works of Spanish literature. The objects I study span the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries, with a gap corresponding to the decline in *Amadís's* reputation that has been noted by Daniel Eisenberg and others.¹¹ The authors treated in these pages, however, are not the only writers who have responded to *Amadís* throughout its long textual history; indeed, the adaptations and imitations, both in Spain and beyond, are too numerous to be accounted for under a single framework. I have chosen to focus on those Spanish authors who celebrate literate female characters, but throughout the book, I mention in passing others who took a more normative view of women. In addition, it must be said that *Amadís* is not the only influential or popular Iberian romance that featured capable women; a parallel story could be told through *Tirant lo Blanch* or *Palmerín*. *Amadís de Gaula*, however, is a fitting central object for this study, as it was the most-reprinted and most-cited of the early modern Iberian romances. For Don Quixote, *Amadís* was 'el norte, el lucero, el sol de los valientes y enamorados caballeros (the polestar, the morning star, the sun to valiant, enamored knights)'. The fact that much of the early modern audience perceived *Amadís* in this exemplary manner was key to its market appeal and its imitation and adaptation.¹² Although over the course of the sixteenth century, Spanish intellectuals advocated ever-greater restriction of women's behavior, *Amadís*, which dates from an earlier cultural moment, survives as a counter-narrative in which women are visible, numerous, intellectually equal to men, and capable of changing their circumstances via the written word.¹³

10 Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', 197.

11 Eisenberg, *Romances of Chivalry*, 48.

12 Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quijote*, I, 25; 303; Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*, 193.

13 Emilie Bergmann, 'The Exclusion of the Feminine in the Cultural Discourse of the Golden Age', 125; Grieve, 'Mothers and Daughters in Fifteenth-Century Spanish Sentimental Romance: Implications for *Celestina*', 345.

The *Amadís* Phenomenon

Few texts in European literary history were as famous as *Amadís de Gaula* in their own era and as neglected thereafter. *Amadís*, the oldest version of which is thought to date to the fourteenth century, chronicles the entwined stories of a young knight of unknown parentage and his secret bride, the British princess Oriana. The couple's clandestine liaison produces a son, Esplandián, and the medieval legend concludes in tragedy, with *Amadís*'s accidental death at Esplandián's hands and Oriana's suicide.¹⁴ At the end of the early modern version, the lovers marry publicly and assume British rule in Oriana's father's stead. In the last decade of the fifteenth century, Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo, a nobleman and city official from Medina del Campo, edited and compiled the romance as we know it today. Yet *Amadís* remains, quite evidently, a multi-author text, as Montalvo's commentary draws attention to episodes he changed or added.

Soon after its first publication, *Amadís* became one of the most dramatic success stories of the emergent print market in Europe. At least eighteen editions of the romance were published in Spain between 1508 and 1650, and translations soon followed in Italian, French, Portuguese, English, Dutch, and Hebrew.¹⁵ *Amadís* enjoyed three distinct early modern vogues in which citations, imitations, translations, and adaptations proliferated. The first of these waves tracks to the mid-sixteenth century in the Iberian Peninsula, France, and Italy. In addition to inspiring nine sequels by five writers in Castilian, *Amadís* gave rise to Portuguese playwright Gil Vicente's 1533 *Amadís de Gaula*, a 1540 French translation by Nicolas de Herberay that reached an even wider audience than Montalvo's text, and an epic poem, *Amadigi di Gaula* (1560), by Torquato Tasso's father, Bernardo.¹⁶ *Amadís* fell out of fashion in Spain during the reign of Felipe II (1556–1598), and in France the popularity of Herberay's translation declined after the 1559 death of Henri II in a chivalry-inspired tournament.¹⁷ *Amadís* enjoyed a revival in English translation in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and at the same time it resurfaced in Spain via Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, if only as a subject of mockery. *Amadís*-related texts became relevant again during the reign of Louis XIV in France, lending metaphorical support to

14 Lida de Malkiel, *Estudios*, 151.

15 Chevalier, *Lectura y lectores*, 69.

16 Marian Rothstein gives what she terms a conservative estimate of 500,000 readers of the French *Amadis de Gaule*, rendering it the king of literary works in translation for its century. See Rothstein, *Reading in the Renaissance*, v.

17 La Noue, *Discours politiques et militaires*, 134.

the absolutist rule of the Sun King in not one but two royally commissioned operas.¹⁸ Each time *Amadís* declined, it re-emerged later in a different language, genre, or context. It might be argued that *Amadís* has recently begun to enjoy yet another afterlife, just past its five-hundredth year, as it has become a subject of renewed scholarly interest, both in connection with and independent of *Don Quixote*.

During its periods of popularity, *Amadís* took hold of its readers' imaginations in ways that overspilled the printed page. In the sixteenth century, *Amadís* impacted courtly behavior, aristocratic letter-writing conventions, and even the study of French as a second language.¹⁹ Editions of the work ranged from luxurious folio volumes that mimicked illuminated manuscripts to the tiny Belgian edition of the *Trésor des Amadís* (1560), a digest small enough to fit inside a sleeve cuff. Owning an *Amadís*, especially in France, could be a point of pride, signaling the possessor's wealth, good taste, and opportunities for leisure.²⁰ *Amadís* appeared on both sides of the Pyrenees as a character in tournaments and masques, and courtiers used names from *Amadís*-themed romances as pseudonyms in their love letters and as names for their pets.²¹ The territory of California in the New World took its name from *Las sergas de Esplandián*, a sequel to *Amadís*, and one intrepid Spanish ambassador even dared to compare Queen Elizabeth I to *Amadís*'s lover, Oriana.²² The readership of *Amadís* included women as well as men and crossed class boundaries. Though the world represented in the text was aristocratic, its high degree of abstraction from Castilian history and politics enabled a broad, international appeal.²³

Yet even in the sixteenth century, some readers objected to *Amadís* on moral and aesthetic grounds. To properly understand the women of *Amadís*, it is essential to grasp the ambivalence of the work's reception from its first publication to the present day. *Amadís* has often been celebrated for its excellence and condemned for its bad style, sometimes by the same writer, and it is among the more polarizing works of Iberian literature. One of the reasons for this uneven reception is that the text already seemed archaic to its earliest print audiences. The *libro de caballerías* ('book of

18 The first, by Jean-Baptiste Lully, was performed at the Paris Opera and at Versailles in 1684. The king commissioned a second *Amadís*-themed opera by André Cardinal Destouches in 1699.

19 Marín Pina, *Páginas*, 85; Rothstein, *Reading in the Renaissance*, 41.

20 Rothstein, *Reading in the Renaissance*, 40; Krause, *Idle Pursuits*, 121.

21 Chevalier, *Lectura y lectores*, 80–83.

22 Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Las sergas de Esplandián*, 728; Vogeley, 'How Chivalry Formed the Myth of California', 165; Avalle-Arce, *El Amadís primitivo y el de Montalvo*, 60.

23 Chevalier, *Lectura y lectores*, 70–98.

chivalry') in Spain was primarily an early modern phenomenon, but the texts' language, customs, and politics felt medieval.²⁴ *Amadís's* twelfth- and thirteenth-century French antecedents reached the Iberian Peninsula via troubadour poetry and the pilgrim's road to Santiago de Compostela, and the text presents itself as a prequel to the stories of King Arthur.²⁵ Though the romance reflects the influence of the prose *Lancelot* at the level of structure and motif, its plot is unique and likely of Castilian origin.²⁶ Some sixteenth-century readers appreciated *Amadís's* medievalizing tendencies, but others lamented its hybrid of medieval and early modern language and frequent lapses of verisimilitude.

The medieval European romance of chivalry, of which *Amadís* is a clear descendant, contains subtypes in poetry and prose and organizes itself according to three overarching themes: the Arthurian matter of Britain, the Carolingian matter of France, and the classical matter of Rome. With some exceptions, individual chivalric volumes tend to focus on a hero related to one of these three broad genealogies, often promoting a previously minor character to a starring role. Romances are not strictly tied to the nation-states in which they were written; many of the oldest Arthurian texts were written in French, and Carolingian hero Roland took his most popular form in Italian poet Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (*The Frenzy of Orlando*, 1516). Early modern writers, including Sir Thomas Malory, Ariosto, and Montalvo, often rewrote medieval texts, and the most famous versions of a story are often the most belated. Chivalric romance distinguishes itself from other forms of narrative fiction in its nostalgic view of the past; its emphasis on courtesy, masculine honor, and ritual; and its favorable attitude toward magic and other non-verisimilar motifs. At times, however, it shades close to other genres: Italian varieties share much with epic, including poetic form, and the early modern Spanish romances resemble the sentimental novel except in their length. Women participate in chivalric romance as partners in love affairs, sorceresses wicked and benign, and equivocal emblems of power and weakness. Queens like Guinevere and Isolde are balanced with damsels in distress, named and unnamed, who exist to be the victims of the monsters who stalk a hostile landscape and, on occasion, of the knights who ride to their rescue.

24 Riquer, *Estudios sobre el Amadís de Gaula*, 13; Gutiérrez Trápaga, *Rewritings, Sequels, and Cycles*, 6.

25 Lida de Malkiel, 'Arthurian Literature', 405; Gil-Albarellos, *Amadís de Gaula y el género caballeresco en España*, 32.

26 Harney, 'Spanish Lancelot', 190; Sharrer, 'The Acclimatization of the Lancelot-Grail Cycle in Spain and Portugal', 186; Lida de Malkiel, 'Arthurian Literature', 415; Bamford, 'Fragment as Phenomenon', 50.

Though *Amadís* was among the most important books of the sixteenth century for those who lived it, the chivalric genre has largely been omitted from the history of the novel as it has been told in Spain. Beginning with the reign of Felipe II, elite cultural circles began to exclude medieval forms of narrative in favor of literary genres that presented themselves as historical, verisimilar, or grounded in classical allusion.²⁷ Until the late twentieth century, criticism of *Amadís* echoed the qualms of sixteenth-century moralists about entertainment-oriented literature in general and chivalry in particular. For example, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, writing at the turn of the twentieth century, considered chivalric romance an aberration in literary history rather than a fundamental link between medieval and modern fiction.²⁸ Menéndez y Pelayo provided a rich resource for other scholars by collecting disapproving sixteenth- and seventeenth-century critical commentary on *Amadís* and texts like it.²⁹ His citations of Juan Luis Vives, Melchor Cano, Alexio de Venegas, Fray Pedro Malón de Chaide, Pedro Mexía, Antonio de Guevara, Alonso de Fuentes, and Fray Luis de Granada make clear that even at the peak of *Amadís*'s popularity in Castile, prominent thinkers considered chivalric romance poor reading material for anyone and especially dangerous for women.³⁰

Menéndez y Pelayo's book also constrained later criticism on *Amadís* by reinforcing what Barbara Weissberger terms an arbitrary divide between the 'masculine' chivalric romance and the 'feminine' sentimental romance.³¹ Even in the mid-twentieth century, which saw renewed enthusiasm for *Amadís*, the romance was often assessed in isolation from other genres or national literatures. The new interest in *Amadís* in the twentieth century owed largely to Antonio Rodríguez Moñino's 1955 manuscript find, which uncovered fragments of a pre-Montalvo *Amadís* and indicated that the legend most likely originated in Castile.³² Translators and scholars of earlier centuries had often speculated, in earnest or in jest, that the romance might have a Portuguese or French origin. That *Amadís* could be said with some confidence to be Castilian encouraged the study of it in the national interest of Spain. Indeed, much of the best twentieth-century work on

27 Gutiérrez Trápaga writes that of the 87 unique romances of chivalry published in sixteenth-century Spain, two thirds appeared before 1551. See Gutiérrez Trápaga, *Rewritings, Sequels, and Cycles*, 4.

28 Menéndez y Pelayo, *Orígenes de la novela*, 1: 275.

29 *Ibid.*, 1:266–70.

30 *Ibid.*

31 Weissberger, 'The Gendered Taxonomy of Spanish Romance', 211–12.

32 Rodríguez-Moñino, *El primer manuscrito del Amadís de Gaula*, 15–24.

Amadís situates the text within Spanish history. Martín de Riquer identified mentions of *Amadís* in Castilian poetry dating to as early as 1350.³³ Other critics, including Frank Pierce and Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce, used textual clues to distinguish the 'primitive' text from the contributions of Montalvo.³⁴ While the lost medieval *Amadís* is not the focus of this book, these studies offer an interesting counterpoint for this project as they propose theories about how and why chivalric fiction changes over time. By contrast, *Chivalry, Reading, and Women's Culture* takes a forward-looking approach, emphasizing *Amadís*'s impact on the subset of Spanish readers who reinterpreted its women.

This book's attention to *Amadís* and its afterlives also seeks to revise the longstanding line of criticism connecting the romances of chivalry to *Don Quixote*. To study Cervantes's novel is to study *Amadís de Gaula*, either directly or indirectly. René Girard writes that for Don Quixote, 'chivalric existence is the imitation of *Amadís* in the same way that the Christian's existence is the imitation of Christ'.³⁵ Yet, with good reason, many scholars view Cervantes as categorically hostile to chivalry; after all, reading chivalry provokes such profound madness in the title character that death is the only remedy. Some critics read *Don Quixote* as the eulogy of *Amadís*, and others have constrained their treatment of chivalric romance to the volumes found in the mad *hidalgo*'s library.³⁶

Yet other studies of the connection between *Amadís* and *Quixote*, such as Edwin Williamson's *The Halfway House of Fiction: Don Quixote and Arthurian Romance* and Howard Mancing's *The Chivalric World of Don Quixote*, discuss the ways in which Cervantes's use of the romance of chivalry could be understood as an homage, if an equivocal one. As Williamson and Mancing have noticed, the notion that Cervantes would write to defeat the romance of chivalry does not entirely make sense.³⁷ Daniel Eisenberg observes that the popularity of chivalric romance had already declined so sharply by the time of *Don Quixote* that the phenomenon needed no additional support.³⁸ I argue in this book that Cervantes, writing at the turn of the seventeenth

33 Riquer, *Estudios sobre el Amadís de Gaula*, 13.

34 Pierce, *Amadís de Gaula*, 15–70; Avallé-Arce, *El Amadís primitivo y el de Montalvo*, 119–32.

35 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 3.

36 Entwistle, *The Arthurian Legend*, 231; Eisenberg, *Romances of Chivalry*, xvii.

37 In the prologue to Part I, the *amigo* of the fictionalized author persona advises: 'llevad la mira puesta a derribar la máquina mal fundada destes caballerescos libros, aborrecidos de tantos y alabados de muchos más'. I join other critics in reading this phrase as ironic. See Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quijote*, I: 58.

38 Eisenberg, *Romances of Chivalry*, 48.

century, transformed the motifs and character archetypes of the medieval genre in order to incorporate them into the hybrid literary form that would later come to be known as the novel. *Don Quixote* thus inaugurated the literary lineage that guaranteed *Amadís* its longest and most flexible afterlife.

Recent scholars, following Eisenberg's call to revive the study of the genre, have worked to broaden the context in which readers understand Iberian chivalric romance.³⁹ Michael Harney has analyzed the family groups of *Amadís* and other Iberian romances, and Diana de Armas Wilson has shown how the mindset of chivalric romance influenced the conquest of the Americas.⁴⁰ In keeping with that trend, Jesús Rodríguez Velasco has examined literary chivalry in dialogue with the historical tension among social classes, and Simone Pinet has discussed European concepts of cartography and geography in connection with the allegorical spaces of both *Amadís* and *Don Quixote*.⁴¹ Marian Rothstein and Elizabeth Spiller, meanwhile, have explored the fate of *Amadís* in France and England.⁴² Rothstein's and Spiller's studies share with this book the notion that *Amadís* offers an extraordinary opportunity to study the relationships among texts and readers in the early modern period.⁴³ Cervantes, the most prominent reader of chivalry in my list, has always been a major player in Spanish literary history, but Beatriz Bernal and Rosa Montero are rarely connected to the story of the novel in Spain at all. Yet Cervantes, Bernal, and Montero all have one important factor in common: their literary works prove them to be readers, if not always fond readers, of the romance of chivalry, and they adapt female chivalric characters in ways that expand upon their literacy and agency.

Women Readers of Chivalry

Though moralists contemporary to *Amadís* observed that women read romances, most scholars up to the present day have assumed that chivalry's primary readers were men. This book highlights the presence of female readers of romance—historical and fictionalized—who respond to specific features of *Amadís*. This is not the first study, however, to discuss female characters in chivalric romances or female writers of chivalric texts. María

39 Ibid., 87–88.

40 Harney, *Kinship*; Wilson, *Cervantes, the Novel, and the New World*.

41 Rodríguez Velasco, *Order and Chivalry*; Pinet, *Archipelagoes*.

42 Marian Rothstein, *Reading in the Renaissance*; Spiller, *Reading*; Spiller, 'Cervantes'.

43 Rothstein, *Reading in the Renaissance*; Spiller, *Reading*, 114.

Carmen Marín Pina's *Páginas de sueños* contains a chapter on the intra-diegetic letters attributed to women in Iberian romances, and Donatella Gagliardi's *Urdiendo ficciones* introduces sixteenth-century chivalric writer Beatriz Bernal to modern audiences.⁴⁴ Marian Rothstein's *Reading in the Renaissance*, meanwhile, describes the popularity of the translated *Amadis de Gaule* among French women, and Elizabeth Spiller's *Reading and the History of Race in the Renaissance* includes female characters among its objects of study. While my book draws on work by these critics, the focus here is different. I use fictional representations of women and instances of intertextuality to explore the possibilities of romance reading among a female public in Spain. By following a single influential romance, *Amadís de Gaula*, on the pathways it traveled through other works, I am able to make inferences about the related trajectories of women's readership.

In sixteenth-century Spain, many women were readers, writers, and book owners, yet as Anne J. Cruz observes, women's literacy rates in the early modern period are less visible to us than men's.⁴⁵ Concrete estimates of women's literacy, based on such evidence as wills and library inventories, vary significantly. Pedro Cátedra and Anastasio Rojo estimate in their study of wills and library inventories in sixteenth-century Valladolid that some 24 percent of women in the lower-middle to upper classes in that city could read, judged by their ability to sign their names.⁴⁶ Ángel Weruaga-Prieto's study on documents from Salamanca yields numbers similar to Cátedra and Rojo's, but Nieves Baranda, in her work on educational institutions for women, cites studies with lower estimates.⁴⁷ Baranda highlights the significance of Serafín de Tapia's study of St. Teresa's home city of Ávila, in which only 6.7 percent of women who made wills could sign their names in 1510, a rate that increased only to 24.5 percent by 1628. In Madrid, Baranda observes, literacy rates appear to have climbed a bit higher, achieving, according to Claude Larquié's study, some 35 percent by 1650.⁴⁸ Though scholars disagree on precise literacy rates, it remains clear that sixteenth-century women faced significant barriers to access to literary culture. Even carefully conducted analyses of civic records, moreover, cannot produce reliable estimates for literacy as we have come to understand it in the twenty-first century. As Cruz and Lisa Vollendorf point out, in early modern Spain,

44 Gagliardi, *Urdiendo ficciones*; Marín Pina, *Páginas*.

45 Cruz, 'Reading over Men's Shoulders', 42.

46 Cátedra and Rojo Vega, *Bibliotecas y lecturas de mujeres*, 42.

47 Weruaga Prieto, 'La lectura femenina en la Salamanca moderna', 145.

48 Baranda Leturio, 'L'éducation des femmes dans l'Espagne post-tridentine', 30.

reading was often taught independently of writing.⁴⁹ A woman who could sign her name might have been able to read or write little else, and a woman might have been a fluent reader without knowing how to write. Yet in the aggregate, the studies suggest that female literacy, while not widespread except in the most aristocratic families, was an emerging and significant phenomenon in the Spanish Golden Age.⁵⁰

Furthermore, the available evidence points to chivalric romance as one of the genres that most appealed to women. According to Marín Pina, chivalry was a particular draw for this audience because it projected a gratifying image of the literate woman.⁵¹ José María Paz Gago points out that books of chivalry were documented in many women's library inventories.⁵² Isabel la Católica's library, for example, contained several romances, most of them translations from the French.⁵³ Chivalric romances, as Nieves Baranda points out, were also well represented among books dedicated to women.⁵⁴ While Baranda cautions that dedications are only approximate testimonies of reading, she finds that the idealized images of women in the dedications 'educate' the reading public about women's literacy.⁵⁵

Some women in Spain responded to the chivalric genre by recreating it, perhaps thereby imitating the literate women represented within the narratives and in the dedications. In the Spanish court, the French princess Isabel de Valois, wife of Felipe II, and her ladies staged masques and games inspired by Iberian romance, despite the fact that her husband was not fond of chivalry.⁵⁶ St. Teresa of Ávila read, acted out, and even wrote chivalric romance alongside her brother; in reading chivalry, moreover, the siblings appear to have followed the example of their mother.⁵⁷ Valladolid resident Beatriz Bernal, a notary's widow and avid

49 Cruz, 'Introduction', 1; Vollendorf, 'Cervantes and His Women Readers', 314.

50 Cruz, 'Introduction', 1; Baranda Leturio, 'L'éducation des femmes dans l'Espagne post-tridentine', 30.

51 Marín Pina, 'La mujer', 133; Marín Pina, *Páginas*, 196.

52 Paz Gago, 'La noble lectora', 176.

53 Chevalier lists Isabel's books of chivalry as the *Merlin*, *La demanda del Santo Grial*, *La historia de Lançarote*, and *El libro del caballero Cifar*. Chevalier also notes that library inventories are only an approximation of a reader's taste, and that those who read books of chivalry might not have had them in their possession when the inventory was taken. See *Lectura y lectores*, 75, 73.

54 Baranda Leturio, 'Women's Reading Habits: Book Dedications to Female Patrons in Early Modern Spain', 25.

55 *Ibid.*, 26.

56 Paz Gago notes that Isabel de Valois and her ladies imitated *Amadís de Gaula*, *Florisel de Niquea*, and *El caballero del Febo*. 'La noble lectora', 182.

57 Bernárdez-Robal, 'Las mujeres lectoras en el *Quijote*', 289; Marín Pina, 'La mujer', 129; Chevalier, *Lectura y lectores*, 75.

book collector who rented rooms to boarders, wrote a full-length romance of chivalry, *Cristalián de España*, in which she reworked motifs from *Tirant lo Blanch*, *Amadís*, *La crónica troyana*, and *Las sergas de Esplandián*.⁵⁸ The anonymous chivalric romance *Palmerín de Oliva* has on occasion been attributed to a female author, as the Latin verses appended to its conclusion describe the writer as a *docta puella* ('learned girl').⁵⁹ Even this small sample makes clear that it was possible for women of early modern Spain to read chivalry and to create their own versions of romance, and that access to the texts extended at the very least from the aristocracy to the urban bourgeoisie.

This is not to suggest, however, that women's literacy and access to chivalric texts were givens in early modern Castile. The vogues for *Amadís* span a period of dramatic change in publishing, literacy rates for men and women, and literary taste. *Amadís de Gaula* emerged in print in the 1490s, during Isabel's reign and the first flowering of print culture in Spain. It remained a widely known cultural artifact in Spain at least through the early seventeenth century. By the time of Lope de Vega's *La dama boba* in 1613, roughly contemporary with *Don Quixote*, an illiterate woman of the upper class could be played for laughs, but the same could not be said of the time period that produced *Amadís*, either the c. 1350 primitive romance or Montalvo's version from the 1490s.⁶⁰ In medieval romance, literacy is not guaranteed even for queens and princesses, and characters who send or read letters often use scribes and monks to help them. Reading and writing, especially in private contexts, mark modernizing trends within the pages of a sixteenth-century romance. Between Montalvo and Lope—and between Oriana and Cervantes's *Dorotea*—lies the print revolution and the democratization of literary culture it made possible. And yet, as the studies cited by Baranda and Cruz illustrate, many women of the early seventeenth century had not achieved what twenty-first-century scholars would consider full literacy. The stubbornly illiterate Finea of *La dama boba* is perhaps not as deviant from the norm as Lope's play makes her seem, and the changes inaugurated by the print era had not yet taken full effect for women during the time period when Cervantes imitated *Amadís*. Chivalry may be a minor player in the cultural shift toward full literacy for women, but it was an early innovator in imagining women doing things with the written word.

58 Piera and Shearn, 'Gendering Action', 85; Gagliardi, *Urdiendo ficciones*, 73–90.

59 Marín Pina, 'Introducción', ix.

60 Vega, *La dama boba*, I: 307–87.

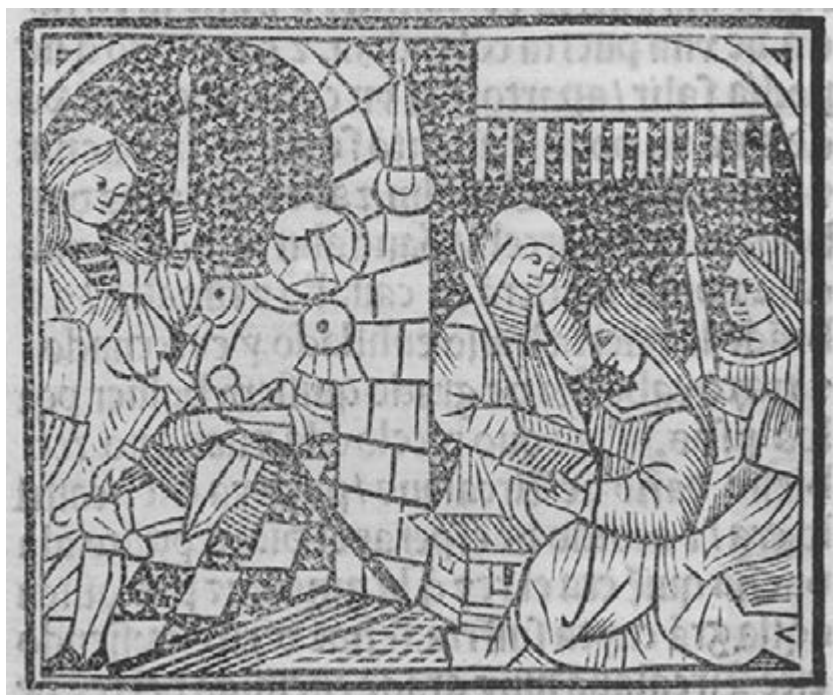
Women as Inscribed Readers

Authors and printers alike in the early modern era seem to have been aware that women were part of their audience, and they courted female readers through book dedications, illustrations, and in-text representations of women's literacy. The woodcuts accompanying early editions of *Amadís* indicate that women are among the imaginary consumers of the romances. Many of the illustrations heading chapters of *Amadís* feature ancillary female characters on the side or foreground of the image, observing the main characters and even reacting to them with gestures such as hands clasped over the heart. Some of these observer characters, moreover, have books in their hands, gendering the act of reading as feminine. The men of the woodblock illustrations, meanwhile, engage in active pursuits like hunting, fighting, or traveling by boat. These illustrations would have guided consumers of the texts—even, potentially, illiterate ones—toward understanding women both as a literate class and as appreciators of romance. As Francisco de Monzón wrote in his 1560 treatise *El norte de idiotas* (*The Compass of Idiots*), early modern woodcuts were thought to provide alternate visual texts that could be 'read' via their symbolism: 'Muchos provechos se siguen, generalmente de la vista y adoracion de las imagenes, y principalmente a las personas simples y sin letras, que segun se dize, son sus libros (Many advantages generally come from the viewing and adoration of images, principally to simple, illiterate people, for whom they are their books)'.⁶¹ Though Monzón wrote specifically about devotional images, his notion of the purpose of illustration could be applied to the *Amadís* woodcuts, which represent recognizable versions of well-known episodes. The presence within them of female observer-readers suggests that the phenomenon of female readership of romance was likewise well known.

Within the actual text of the romances, the episodes in which women read and write could be taken as a similar metafictional consideration of the audience. The romance of chivalry is not the only early modern Spanish literary genre to depict women, but it is among the most inclusive. Medical and conduct texts of the period treat women as an afterthought, while chronicles feature exceptional women like Isabel la Católica rather than ordinary women. The romance of chivalry, moreover, makes participation in the narrative a relatively low-stakes activity for its female characters. It stages some scenes within the domestic sphere and does not require women, either as characters or readers, to step entirely outside their expected gender

61 Monzón, *Norte de idiotas*, 5r.

Figure 1 Woodcut of Amadís fainting after entering Arcaláus's dungeons, surrounded by ladies, one of whom is reading a book. From the 1519 Rome edition published by Antonio de Salamanca.



roles. Indeed, the transgressions of chivalry are insidious, balanced against moments of conformity. As Teresa de Lauretis has argued, representations of gender archetypes, like the writing women featured in certain chivalric romances, have a twofold relationship with the formation of gender ideology. For de Lauretis, 'the construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation'.⁶² Though, as de Lauretis cautions, these relationships are not simple, representations document a society's current view of gender and suggest revisions to received ideas about gender. She argues that the concept of gender is itself, at its core, a representation: 'Gender is not sex, a state of nature, but the representation of each individual in terms of a particular social relation which pre-exists the individual and is predicated on the conceptual and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes'.⁶³

62 De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, 5.

63 *Ibid.*

Figure 2 Woodcut accompanying the chapter with Amadís's erotic liaison with Oriana. Amadís leads Oriana by the hand while her maid looks on, modeling the affective response the scene should elicit from its readers. From the 1533 Venice edition published by Juan Antonio de Sabia.



In agreement with de Lauretis, I would argue that some chivalric representations of literate women do merely inscribe gender norms as they existed in early modern Iberia. Others, however, including the depictions of women treated in this book, also make potential contributions to new practices, if at times ambivalent ones. Characters like Oriana make small steps toward independence through literary gestures that real readers could potentially imitate. As such, chivalric women contrast with the women of the exemplary tradition, including Amazons, Biblical heroines, and saints, who are represented favorably but who exist in a context very different from that of their readers. As Pamela Benson points out, texts like Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris* (*The Famous Women*, 1374), Álvaro de Luna's *Libro de las claras e virtuosas mugeres* (*Book of Famous and Virtuous Women*, 1446) and even Christine de Pizan's *La cité des dames* (*The City of Ladies*, 1405) are paradoxical in their praise of women; they only offer examples that would be inconvenient or impossible for their female readership to

follow.⁶⁴ Though defenses of women do introduce new ideas about female virtue, they also support old ideas of feminine inferiority through their very structure, as, in Benson's words, 'the need of praise suggests weakness'.⁶⁵ Chivalric narratives, in contrast, are more parsimonious in their praise of women, but they also integrate women seamlessly into the public and private spheres of the textual world. Reading and writing, despite their subversive potential, are everyday activities for women in these texts, just as gendered and nearly as common as embroidery.

The meta-discourse of female literacy in *Amadís* and the texts that imitated it offer a tool for reconstructing the relationships between early modern women readers and the texts they consumed. Roger Chartier writes that reading 'rarely leaves traces', and this study recognizes the difficulty of accessing real reading practices from the early modern period.⁶⁶ Marian Rothstein observes that metafictional moments can offer insight into historical reading practices when data is otherwise difficult to source, and much of the thinking about readers and readership in twentieth-century scholarship has depended on clues left by authors about the audiences they imagined for their work.⁶⁷ Martyn Lyons, writing of the difficulty of finding testimonies of readership, affirms the need to search for traces of reading 'in the text itself'.⁶⁸ This book, which is very much centered on textual detail, adapts models of readership from narratology and reception studies in two ways. First, I observe how the authors treated in this study seek to shape their own audiences through representations of reading and writing. Second, I trace these authors' own reading habits—their concrete testimonies of reading—through intertextual references.

Reception studies in the twentieth century offered literary scholars several terms with which to build models for the relationship between texts and their consumers. Of these, the 'ideal reader'—denoting a reader who is the product of authorial wishes—has perhaps the widest diffusion. Yet the 'ideal' reader has always presented difficulties: Louise Rosenblatt wrote in 1938 that there were no 'generic' readers, and Wayne Booth argued in 1961 that the ideal reader 'could never possibly exist'.⁶⁹ Martyn Lyons, writing in 2010, agrees with Rosenblatt and Booth, observing that 'readers are not passive or docile; they make texts their own, improvising personal

64 Benson, *Invention of the Renaissance Woman*, 2.

65 *Ibid.*, 15.

66 Chartier, *The Order of Books*, 2.

67 Rothstein, *Reading in the Renaissance*, 95–96.

68 Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing*, 9.

69 Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 24; Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 140.

meanings and making unexpected textual connections'.⁷⁰ Even if a reader of the exact background and mindset the author had in mind should consume a text, he or she might perceive the work in a way the author did not intend. Elizabeth Freund characterizes the reader as 'the text's natural companion', but it does not follow that this companion must be responsible or skilled in the business of interpretation.⁷¹ Lyons emphasizes how literary consumers 'select, interpret, re-work, and re-imagine what they read'.⁷² Michel de Certeau describes readers as 'travellers' and 'nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write'.⁷³ Reading, like writing, is an exercise in chaos.

However, that does not mean that reading has no rules, or that the forces that govern it are not sometimes deliberately created. Lyons observes that readers absorb habits from the cultures, communities, and markets in which they read, forming expectations about literary texts 'through shared social experience'.⁷⁴ Literary works themselves are important sites for creating and reinforcing this experience, and Wolfgang Iser uses the term 'implied reader', a revision of the 'ideal reader', to describe the hypothetical reader whose action is 'pre-structured' by the text.⁷⁵ For Iser, the author seeks to inculcate certain values in the 'implied reader', and, inevitably, influences real readers. Seymour Chatman emphasizes the gulf between the hypothetical implied reader and the inscrutable real reader, but Paul Ricœur calls the implied reader a correlate of the real reader, as real readers have a tendency to follow the author's 'instructions'.⁷⁶ In the formulations by Iser, Chatman, and Ricœur, the implied reader is singular and abstract. It must be said, however, that some implied readers, like dedicatees, are quite real, and that authors sometimes address their texts to many different readers, skilled and unskilled, friendly and hostile, from a variety of backgrounds. I would suggest that the fundamental problem of the 'implied reader' is one shared with the 'ideal reader'; the term does not address the diversity of readers—both in demographics and in ideology—who may approach a work, both in its author's time and centuries later.

70 Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing*, 4.

71 Freund, *The Return of the Reader*, 3.

72 Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing*, 3.

73 De Certeau, 'Reading as Poaching', 159.

74 Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing*, 5.

75 Iser, *The Implied Reader*, xii.

76 Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 149–50; Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, II: 170.

For me, the most helpful term reader-response theory uses to describe potential relationships between literary works and their audiences is the 'inscribed reader', which denotes *any* reader depicted within or projected by a text. Susan Suleiman points out that the key distinction between the implied reader and the inscribed reader is that while, especially in Iser's formulation, the implied reader is 'called upon to "agree" with the values of the implied author', the inscribed reader is an independent 'meaning-producing' element.⁷⁷ Romances of chivalry, as well as works in other literary genres, can point to a variety of inscribed readers. Marian Rothstein describes the French *Amadís* as a text that directly spoke to and sought to influence its inscribed readers in authorial asides, instructing them in their literary habits.⁷⁸ I would add that this feature is not exclusive to the French translation, as it was present in the Montalvo. For me, the romances speak to readers in a second way by mirroring the action of reading through depictions of literacy and citations of other texts. I understand the fictionalized literate women of chivalric romance as inscribed readers both of the texts they interact with on the page (letters, books of magic) and of chivalric fiction itself. These fictionalized readers are not ideal in any sense, and they often deliberately misread or use their readings for sinful purposes. The concept of the inscribed reader thus makes room for the ambivalence with which chivalry represents its women.

Reading exists on many levels in the texts I study, and to describe their relative positioning, I adapt Gérard Genette's layered model of narratology, with the diegesis or narrative as the primary element and all other features positioned in relation to it as intradiegetic elements (inside the narrative) or extradiegetic elements (outside the narrative).⁷⁹ The texts under examination in this study contain intradiegetic readers and writers of books, poems, and letters. Sometimes the content of interpolated texts is specified, and sometimes it is not. Characters, moreover, may make reference in their letters or dialogue to extradiegetic authors or texts, rendering these characters, in their turn, inscribed readers of those extradiegetic texts. For example, when Montalvo's Oriana adapts diction from *Heroides* or Cervantes's Luscinda tucks her letter inside a copy of *Amadís de Gaula*, the characters become inscribed readers of Ovid and Montalvo. The chain of references connecting intradiegetic and extradiegetic worlds creates a web of reading that perhaps even attempts to connect with real readers.

77 Suleiman, 'Introduction', 14.

78 Rothstein, *Reading in the Renaissance*, 95–96, 106–107.

79 Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 17–18, 84–93.

Early modern thinkers believed that reading stirred the passions and caused readers to imitate the texts they enjoyed, and those beliefs, in some measure, likely conditioned the responses of real readers to chivalric romance.⁸⁰

Negative responses to chivalry from the early modern period decried the genre's ability to produce feelings and behaviors, and perhaps ironically, they are among the most enduring traces of the reception of chivalry. One of the primary assumptions the didactic tradition made about women readers of chivalry was that they sought out the genre as a means of erotic instruction. Conduct books shared a common obsession with chastity, and reading was among the dozens of quotidian habits that could threaten it.⁸¹ Moralists considered the imitation of entertainment-oriented literature to be an unconscious process that inevitably caused harm to young or female readers.⁸² *Amadís* was particularly threatening because, in Spiller's words, the work 'was understood, by both its proponents and detractors, to have powerful effects on its readers'.⁸³ Part of the reason the text might have been perceived that way is that its intradiegetic readers, like the distraught *Amadís* with Oriana's letter in his hand, were themselves highly susceptible to the written word.

Humanist Juan Luis Vives's description of the dangers of chivalry in *Education of a Christian Woman* (1524) is the most famous condemnation of the genre, and it emphasizes the affective power chivalry could wield.⁸⁴ Vives's list of books to avoid includes *Amadís*, other chivalric works, and two works of fiction in other genres, *La Celestina* (1499) and *La cárcel de amor* (*The Prison of Love*, 1492).⁸⁵ He criticizes these texts for their lack of erudition and verisimilitude, but his main qualm is their ability to create such emotional responses as delight, fascination, and arousal:

I wonder what it is that delights us in these books unless it be that we are attracted by indecency. [...] What madness it is to be drawn and fascinated by these tales! There is nothing clever here except for some words taken from the secret archives of Venus that are spoken at the propitious moment to impress and arouse the woman you love if she shows some resistance.⁸⁶

80 Gagliardi, *Urdiendo ficciones*, 36; Spiller, 'Cervantes', 296.

81 Jehenson, 'Masochisma', 39.

82 Whitenack, 'Emphasis Added', 25.

83 Spiller, *Reading*, 113.

84 Spiller, 'Cervantes', 296.

85 I cite here books mentioned in the original Latin text. The list of works varied in translation.

86 Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, 76.

The diction of emotion Vives uses will be important to this study, as the interpolated texts attributed to women within the romances are likewise rich in feeling. For Vives, the texts seem almost to seduce readers, especially female readers: 'If a woman is so enthralled by the reading of these books that she will not put them down, they should not only be wrested from her hands, but if she shows unwillingness to peruse better books, her parents or friends should see to it that she read no books at all'.⁸⁷ Vives urges parents to force disobedient daughters to 'unlearn' the ability to read; in the early sixteenth century, illiteracy still seemed a possible remedy. Yet the popularity of *Celestina*, *Amadís*, and other morally questionable works of fiction in sixteenth-century Spain suggests that readers, including women, did not wish to break the habit.

While Vives is the most severe of the conduct writers on the question, other early modern Spanish intellectuals also decried chivalric reading. Fray Luis de León suggests in *La perfecta casada* (*The Perfect Wife*, 1583) that sewing might be a salutary alternative to reading, and Menéndez y Pelayo cites a 1555 petition presented to the Cortes de Valladolid asking that the printing of chivalric books be forbidden on account of the damage *Amadís* and its imitators have done to young men and women.⁸⁸ Donatella Gagliardi credits Beatriz Bernal, the author of a chivalric romance; Margaret Tyler, an English translator of Iberian chivalry; and other women who made contributions to the chivalric genre with 'prudent daring', a delicate balance between subversion and conformity.⁸⁹ Of Bernal, Judith Whitenack writes: 'It is [...] ironic that a woman chivalric author should emerge at the very time of so many attacks on the genre by clerics and moralists convinced of the harmful effect of chivalric romances on readers, especially young, impressionable women'.⁹⁰ Bernal was no doubt aware of the didactic tradition, as conduct books were inventoried in her daughter's library, but she does not appear to have been discouraged by it.

The concept of literacy and authorship that emerges from Bernal and the other women readers in this book, real and fictional, encompasses both refusal to adhere to cultural norms and capitulation to them. Montserrat Piera and Jodi Shearn write that Iberian chivalric romances habitually contain 'heroines who, in spite of the restrictions imposed on them, textually perform, and thus exhibit to the reader, the ambiguity and problematic

87 Ibid., 78.

88 Fray Luis de León, *La Perfecta Casada*, 80; Menéndez y Pelayo, *Orígenes de la novela*, 1:269.

89 Gagliardi, *Urdiendo ficciones*, 106.

90 Whitenack, 'Emphasis Added', 25.

nature of the female speaking subject'.⁹¹ This book treats many women who reflect what Piera and Shearn term a 'resistant double-voiced discourse'.⁹² Yet some of the female archetypes that oppose male-dominated hierarchies in the early modern era appear here only in passing. The specter of Queen Isabel, as Barbara Weissberger has persuasively argued, haunts Iberian cultural discourse at the turn of the sixteenth century, but she is not the preoccupation of this work.⁹³ Amazon-like warrior women, so memorable in the texts of Montalvo and others, make only a few appearances in these pages. I focus my attention on the female characters who read and write from within the domestic sphere and thus participate in a shadow version of the real literary market.

Intertextuality and Reading

Thus far I have primarily discussed reading in terms of the instructions texts leave for readers. This book also looks at reading through the citation and imitation of other texts, considering the networks of intertextuality in which early modern writers participate to be traces of the experiences of readers. Like the construction of the inscribed reader, these references signify in multiple ways and bridge intradiegetic and extradiegetic worlds. Though each of the chapters in this book focuses on a single author, the boundaries between the phenomena I discuss are porous, and pieces of the story I tell about the chivalric genre overlap and comeingle. For Michel Foucault, 'the frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network'.⁹⁴ Foucault's description is particularly apt for chivalric romance, with its tendency toward serialization, unattributed citation, and pastiche.

In the early modern period, chivalric texts incorporate material from their sources in a variety of ways, many of which are difficult for twenty-first-century readers to unravel. They continue a tradition of an earlier period, citing medieval texts piecemeal, and authors often obscure their own role in the creation of a text through such tropes as the apocryphal

91 Piera and Shearn, 'Gendering Action', 85.

92 Ibid.

93 Weissberger, *Isabel Rules*, xiv.

94 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 23.

found manuscript. Translations, working with real 'found' manuscripts, tend to obscure the origin and authorship of source works, even when they are known to the translator. Multiple authors tell the same story, as is the case with the sequels to *Amadís* in Spain. Adaptations of an earlier work can be respectful, parodic, or both. Chivalric writers interpolate not just chivalric romance, but also texts in other genres that blend well with the motifs of chivalry. Even though chivalric romance is not usually thought to express the values of the Renaissance, it does demonstrate the complex interweaving of citation and original material that typifies the humanist approach to citation.⁹⁵

To describe the complex relationships between the texts I study and their sources, I make use of the term *intertextuality*, coined by Julia Kristeva in response to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *heteroglossia*, which he used to describe the intermixing of different kinds of utterances in verbal or written speech.⁹⁶ For Kristeva, 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*'.⁹⁷ Kristeva argues that citation and imitation undermine the subjectivity of the author, which indeed they do, if one understands the author as the genius who exercises absolute control over all dimensions of a literary work. Roland Barthes replaces this unifying 'Author' with the term 'scriptor', which limits the control attributed to authors and allows for the flow of influence from sources outside the author's consciousness.⁹⁸ Barthes's scriptor possesses an 'immense dictionary' of material on which to draw, much of it absorbed through reading. The scriptor produces texts 'made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation'.⁹⁹ Barthes's famous declaration of the death of the 'Author' allowed the reader to be the person around whom the meanings of a literary text coalesce.¹⁰⁰ I agree with Barthes about the powers of the reader, but in this project, I emphasize the ways in which authors are also readers and thus enjoy a reader's capabilities. Judith Still and Michael Worton observe that 'imitation must [...] be seen as a theory not only of writing but also of reading as a performative act of

95 Quint, *Origin and Originality*, 5–7.

96 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 263.

97 Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, 37. Original emphasis.

98 Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 145.

99 *Ibid.*, 148.

100 *Ibid.*

criticism and interpretation'.¹⁰¹ As Daniel Gutiérrez Trápaga has argued, moreover, chivalric works in early modern Iberia engage in a high degree of intertextuality, perpetuating themselves through 'rewriting, continuation, and cycles'.¹⁰² The authors I study in this book adapt material from chivalric romance for their own purposes, exaggerating or diminishing aspects of the source material to suit new narrative situations.

Each work I mention in this book has in common a reading of *Amadís*, but the approach varies. Bernal expresses consistent enthusiasm for the tropes she adapts from the famous romance, while Cervantes exhibits greater critical distance. In Montero, the reading of *Amadís* is indirect, showing up in one clear citation and in a second-level reading via *Don Quixote*. Yet I do not confine my study of intertextuality to references to *Amadís*. Still and Worton argue that intertextuality enters the reading process in two ways. First, in the most familiar use of the term, authors incorporate multiple 'references, quotations, and influences' in their own literary works.¹⁰³ There is a secondary dimension of intertextuality, however, that arises on the reader's end, when a reader brings his or her set of intertextual references to bear on the interpretation of a text.¹⁰⁴ The authors studied here brought other sources into their reading of *Amadís*, and it is evident that they blended references to *Amadís* with other kinds of citations. Ovid and Iberian sentimental novels are mutual sources for Montalvo, Bernal, and Cervantes, and all these authors were likewise familiar with some version of the exemplary and conduct tradition. Rosa Montero, meanwhile, probably read *Amadís* through Cervantes, which would have tinged her chivalric borrowings with irony and nostalgia. This book points out moments where citations weave together to emphasize the complexity of reading as a contributor to the authorial process.

Writing, Agency, and Emotion

Though the association between women and literacy in the texts I study is fairly clear, the question of whether writing women, real and fictionalized, can be said to have agency is a matter of debate. For the purposes of this study, I define agency narrowly, as the capacity to act, decide, or choose,

101 Still and Worton, 'Introduction', 7.

102 Gutiérrez Trápaga, *Rewritings, Sequels, and Cycles*, 11.

103 Still and Worton, 'Introduction', 1.

104 *Ibid.*, 2.

whether or not that action is free of exterior constraint. Writing accompanies many of these choices. Cruz describes writing as a 'vital rhetorical and social tool' for early modern Spanish women.¹⁰⁵ James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, writing in the English context, discuss the letters of early modern women as 'tools[s] for investigating the exercise of agency across a number of spheres'. Daybell and Gordon find that women used letters 'as an instrument in public life' and employed 'sophisticated strategies' in doing so.¹⁰⁶ As Daybell and Gordon caution, historical women letter writers had to negotiate their ancillary social roles as submissive wives and daughters in order to use letters in this way. Indeed, women's texts, real and fictionalized, often play to stereotype, echoing or even supporting dominant notions of gendered behavior.

Michel Foucault famously argued that power and its discourses bring subjects into being, and in this study, women's texts engage, directly or indirectly, with the contradictory ideals of femininity circulating in Golden Age culture. For Foucault, power 'categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him'.¹⁰⁷ Judith Butler elaborates on Foucault's model of subject formation, arguing that 'power that first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity'.¹⁰⁸ If agency exists, it depends, paradoxically, on the discourses it seeks to resist. In the case of the real and fictionalized early modern women who are the subject of my study, discourses of gender shape the words and tropes they use to combat the pressures these notions bring to bear.

One might logically question whether the female characters or authors of chivalric fiction have any capacity for agency at all. Pierre Bourdieu writes in *Distinction* that what might appear to be free choices are always bounded by habitus, which he defines as 'the internalised form of class condition and of the conditioning it entails'.¹⁰⁹ For Bourdieu, the aggregate effects of socialization become 'embodied' cognitive structures that seem almost natural. Agency, then, cannot be understood as free of influence. However, as Butler observes, the fact that agency cannot exist except in response to

105 Cruz, 'Introduction', 2.

106 Daybell and Gordon, 'Living Letters', 21–22.

107 Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 781.

108 Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 3.

109 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 101.

discourses of power does not mean that resistance is impossible or that transgressions are not worthy of examination.¹¹⁰ Each instance of what I term women's agency in this book corresponds to a choice, usually between action and inaction. Though women express their perspectives in response to gender roles, literary tropes, and class-based expectations, they also defy these discourses, if in equivocal ways.

Even in those cases, however, where women's writing seems to reinforce gender norms, the fact that the writing exists or is represented fictionally constitutes a form of resistance. For Golden Age women, real and fictional, writing—especially writing a letter—was always a risk. Instances of women's literacy in chivalric romance and the imitations it inspired are more than mere convenience or passive reflections of a growing literacy rate; letters and books are among the least secure ways to transmit information, as any literate person may read them. Sending a messenger or keeping silent, indeed, would have seemed the safer or more expedient option in many of the instances I discuss. These fictionalized examples of women's writing, moreover, are doubly compromised, as many are examples of what Thomas Beebee terms 'male ventriloquism', or male-authored utterances attributed to women.¹¹¹ This study, however, finds these representations of women's literacy significant for two reasons: they reveal the limits of permissible behavior for women in early modern Spain, and they suggest a link between writing and emotion that points forward to the future of the novel.

Writing and reading tend to feature in chivalric episodes that involve sentimental and family ties. Personal letters announce pregnancies and births, reveal love and hate, and maintain relationships across distance. Books of magic, meanwhile, contain prophecies that connect characters across time and distance, giving them a way to have knowledge of loved ones, or even of the future, without direct contact. Writing tends to be a deeply private act for chivalric characters, especially women, and the interpolated letters allow glimpses of individual psychology to emerge in a genre that usually exteriorizes sentiment through displays of weeping, shouting, or fainting. Women's texts in chivalric romance, which tend to be rich in the diction of the body and to reference these externalizations of feeling, bridge the Galenic notion of emotion as the imbalance of bodily

110 Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 10–11.

111 Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction*, 106.

humors and more modern conceptions of emotion as the 'inward, intimate' expression of the mind.¹¹²

Emotion has an intimate relationship with agency, and, as Jan Plamper points out, a conflict remains both for scientists and for historians of emotion as to whether emotions are automatic or cognitive, innate or learned.¹¹³ Though it is beyond the scope of this study to offer an opinion on how feelings arise, it does seem clear that cultural factors influenced how emotions could be represented in literary texts. Discourses of gender and class impact the diction of emotion, and intertextuality informs how characters are said to think and feel. I find particularly interesting for this study the moments that combine women's writing, emotions, and agency; this is the case with Oriana's letter, the texts that imitate it, and many of the other instances of women's writing under discussion in this book.

Chivalry, Reading, and Women's Culture

The organization of *Chivalry, Reading, and Women's Culture in Early Modern Spain* is chronological, allowing the reader to track the reception over time of the female characters of *Amadís*. Chapter One discusses episodes in Montalvo's 1508 *Amadís de Gaula* associated with a network of female characters: Amadís's mother, Elisena; his lover, Oriana; her own mother, Brisena; and the enchantress Urganda la Desconocida. *Amadís* recounts the histories of two generations of women through two pregnancies, two childbirths, and many letter exchanges. This chapter pays particular attention to the embedded epistles written by female characters. I show how the letters of *Amadís* align themselves with existing models for correspondence, including the medieval *ars dictaminis*, Ovid's *Heroides*, and the sentimental novel. Female correspondents fuse the affective, embodied discourse of *Heroides* with the decorum-oriented structure of *ars dictaminis*. In *Amadís*, women's letters are a proxy for action, tracing a parallel plotline in which women contest male dominance of the romance world.

In Chapter Two, I turn to Beatriz Bernal's *Cristalián de España* (1545), a chivalric romance whose main business is reading. Bernal's text is rich in allusions to other works of Iberian chivalry, including *Amadís de Gaula*, *Tirant lo Blanch*, *Las sergas de Esplandián*, and *La crónica troyana*. Though

112 Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 28–33.

113 *Ibid.*, 5.

Bernal cites motifs and character archetypes from *Amadís de Gaula*, her work is not a direct sequel to Montalvo's romance. Bernal is nonetheless a more perceptive reader of gender in *Amadís* than her counterparts Feliciano de Silva, Ruy Páez de Ribera, Juan Díaz, and Pedro de Luján, who wrote continuations of the 1508 text. Bernal adapts motifs associated with women's learning, letters, and books from Montalvo's romances and uses them to ponder whether women can gain authority or agency through literary practices. While Bernal remains sympathetic toward her large cast of female characters, many incur social punishment as a consequence of their attempts to exercise agency through the written word. To the female reader of chivalry, Bernal offers hope, but also caution.

Miguel de Cervantes, like Bernal a reader of *Amadís* and other works of Iberian chivalry, also capitalizes on the literate potential of chivalric women. In Chapter Three, I show that in *Don Quixote* Part I, Cervantes appropriated *Amadís's* representation of literate women to explore how and why early modern women consumed literature. Among the readers and listeners of chivalry in Part I of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes includes several women: Maritornes, the innkeeper's daughter, Dorotea, and Luscinda. Luscinda and Dorotea are expert readers of chivalric romance who imitate the literate women of *Amadís* to find solutions for gender-related difficulties. In this chapter, I compare and contrast the reading practices of male and female inscribed readers, showing how Cervantes destabilizes the gender polarities established by other works. The letter exchange between Luscinda and Cardenio in *Don Quixote* Part I is a multifaceted imitation of *Amadís de Gaula*, Diego de San Pedro's *Arnalte y Lucenda* and *La cárcel de amor*, and Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*. Dorotea's life narrative and performance as the princess Micomicona, meanwhile, oppose the strictures of the conduct tradition to the ludic tropes of chivalric romance. Lucinda and Dorotea engage in tacit cooperation through their shared reading material, and their partnership ultimately saves both from ruin. In *Don Quixote* Part I, the practice of literacy enables women's triumphs in a context hostile to their needs and perspectives.

Chapter Four offers a counterpoint to Chapter Three by analyzing a more sinister group of female readers of chivalry in *Don Quixote*, the duchess and her handmaidens in Part II. A reading community comprised of women coalesces around the duchess, and the servants and their mistress engage in collective imitations of chivalry that entrap and victimize Don Quixote and Sancho. This reading community exists at a level of remove from *Amadís de Gaula*. The women imitate Don Quixote's imitations of *Amadís* from Part I, degrading the idealism of the quixotic

impulse. Cervantes illustrates through these women the chaos of the early modern literary market, pairing the rebellious servant girl Altisidora with the work of apocryphal sequel writer Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda in a vision of hell. Though the death of Altisidora represents the defeat of literate women, her swift resurrection signals women's continued participation in literary culture at the turn of the seventeenth century. In Part II, Cervantes intimates that *Amadís* and texts like it are flawed reading material, especially for women. However, rather than denying women access to literature, Cervantes guides readers like Altisidora to a set of authors that, for him, represent high culture: Virgil, Dante, Ariosto, and Garcilaso.

In the conclusion to the book, I move the story of imitation and adaptation of Iberian romance forward to the twenty-first century, showing that chivalric motifs oriented to literate women continue to have cultural currency in modern Spanish letters. Rosa Montero's 2005 novel *La historia del rey transparente* (*The Story of the Transparent King*) overtly cites *Don Quixote* and Arthurian legend in a novel about the coming of age of a girl knight, and it interpolates *Amadís* directly at one moment and indirectly at many others. Literacy is one of Montero's primary themes, and of the works treated in this book, her novel most clearly links writing, agency, and the emotions. Leola, a female version of an unknown knight like Lancelot or Amadís, builds a scholarly career alongside a military one, collapsing the figures of the warrior and the *sabia* into one. Though there is no explicit vogue for *Amadís* in twenty-first-century popular literature, Montero's quixotic, neo-Arthurian, neomedieval novel shows that Iberian chivalry continues to speak to literary audiences interested in the evolution of gender politics. Though Montero does not evoke *Amadís* by name, she engages with it at a distance, assuring *Amadís* one more afterlife in the modern novel.