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With the renewed interest in sixteenth-century prose fiction, this volume devoted to a Renaissance best-seller, is a particularly welcome contribution, especially for the modern reader who cannot quite dismiss Cervantes' indictment of the chivalric romance and to whom these tales of love and war seem musty if not trite.

Yet it is difficult to argue with success, and the popularity of the *Amadis* cycle, however inconceivable it may seem today, is indisputable. Despite contemporary warnings that the books would corrupt the young and that such sentimental effusion could appeal only to women, the successive volumes found an appreciative public for more than half a century. Indeed, as Sylvia Roubaud points out in « Mort(s) et résurrection(s) d'Amadis », the popularity was such that the public refused to brook any notion Amadis' mortality. Not only does Montalvo omit the episode found in the primitive version in which Amadis is killed by his son Esplandian ; he even disputes its veracity in Book V. And for his audacity in allowing Amadis to die in his *Lisuarte de Grecia*, Juan Días' Book VIII was limited to one edition in Spain and was not translated into French.

What accounts for such popularity ? Two essays address this intriguing question. While the tradition of the chivalric romance was still much in favor, Nicole Cazauran maintains that « *Amadis de Gaule* en 1540 » represented « un nouveau 'roman de chevalerie' » : the 1540 in-folio, replete with original woodcuts, and set in roman characters rather than in the gothic print of the Arthurian romances, was composed in a modern language that avoided the archaic style of its predecessors. Equally significant are narrative changes : the role of « le merveilleux » is greatly diminished in favor of coincidence ; the physical suffering of the hero is attenuated in favor of a more assertive hero who, even wounded, can fight valiantly ; and love is depicted not in terms of tragic separation but rather is romanticized and eroticized.

Jean-Marc Chatelain elaborates upon the novelty of the physical presentation of these volumes in « Illustration d'*Amadis de Gaule* dans les éditions françaises du XVI^e siècle ». Denis Janot broke with the traditions that had been established by Vérard not only in the choice of roman characters, but also by the use of the long line rather than two tight columns of text ; and, having commissioned engravings to correspond to the action, he established a link between text and image.

Most readers who have explored this particular chivalric world have been limited to *Le Premier Livre d'Amadis de Gaule*, available since 1918 when Hugues Vaganay published a modern edition, which was in turn updated and reedited by Yves Giraud in 1986. Much of the interest in the present collection of essays resides in the forays into the post1540 volumes. Christine de Buzon ventures bravely into the maze of Book II, which has over 110 characters and multiple plot lines. « La parole d'Amadis : Serments et secrets dans le *Second Livre d'Amadis de Gaule* » reveals that such complexity necessitated accommodations. Thus, at the beginning of the volume, the table of contents gives character and place names as well as a brief summary of the action. Narratively, the reader's memory is jogged by helpful intrusions by the narrator, who recalls earlier appearances of characters and picks up the thread of earlier plot developments. But more interestingly, the complexity of the narrative is due principally to the skilful exploitation of the ironic dimension of the text. Characters loath to reveal the full truth force others into misjudgements. Lies and deception create victims and bring about misfortune; secrets conceal true motives and bring about adversity. The narrative is sustained by the lack of correspondence between word and meaning, as hiding, concealment, and disguise, the *leitmotiv* of Book II, are skilfully exploited for narrative purpose.

Anne-Marie Capdeboscq confronts the same complexities, which she sees mirrored in Herberay's metaphor, « Le Labyrinthe d'amertume ». Ironically, the title is most apt for this piece, the complexity of which is at times far more challenging than Herberay's plot. The tenacious reader who fights his way through this frequently opaque prose will certainly glean some appreciation of the richness of the work, for the author has dissected the text, painstakingly compared it to Montalvo's version, and culled insights from her reading of Rodriguez des Padrón's *Siervo libre de amor* as well as other texts of the chivalric (*Libro del Caballero Zifar*) and sentimental traditions (Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor* and *Amalte y Lucenda*) in order to reveal aspects unique to the French version. There is material here for several articles ; what a shame these insights were compressed into one development.

Yves Giraud discusses the role of « Galaor le galant chevalier ». Like his older brother Amadis, Galaor conforms to the chivalric ideals of beauty, nobility, grace, goodness, and valor.

But in contrast to Amadis, the faithful lover of Oriane, Galaor is an irresistible womanizer whose amorous conquests punctuate the first three books. Lusty and lustful, Galaor is unique in the work and totally distinct from Montalvo's characterization. If Herberay can be credited with the creation of this « lointaine préfiguration d'un donjuanisme atténué » (108), he must assume as well a certain responsibility for inciting the cries of righteous indignation during the Counter Reformation.

After Amadis' brother, his son, Esplandian, whose adventures are related in Book V. In a lucid exposition, Véronique Duché appropriates the critical perspectives of narratology to genetticize the text. We learn that aside from the evaluative and ideological functions of the heterodiegetic narrator, his metanarrative role is especially important. Metalepsis is necessary to lead the reader through a complex fictional world, to alert him to the change of narrative direction or theme, while analepsis and prolepsis help to keep distinct the intricate lines of a narrative peopled by innumerable characters. Of particular interest is the portrait that Duché draws of the abstract reader : who has read the previous four books and will certainly read the subsequent volumes ; who is fond of courtly romances ; who willingly accepts the role of « le merveilleux » with its giants and dragons and fairies ; who has a marked preference for action narratives and little patience with long theoretical passages ; and who, staunch Christian, readily accepts the defense of Christian values. The portrait explains most persuasively why the concrete reader feels like such a foreigner in this heroic world.

The author of *Amadis XI* and *XIII* is fascinating in his own right : lawyer, translator of Machiavelli and Livy, herbalist, scientist drawn to alchemy and the occult in his on-going search across time and space for the secrets of nature, Jacques Gohory, in his contribution to the *Amadis* cycle, draws upon his wide knowledge of various disciplines to compose a complex work that defies comprehension. Rosanna Gorris accepts the hermeneutical challenge in an absorbing study, « Pour une lecture stéganographique des *Amadis* de Jacques Gohory ». Concentrating on the descriptions of the palace of Diana (XI.2, 37) and Mars (XI.55), she uncovers traces of Francesco Colonna (*Le Songe de Poliphile*), Paracelsus, ancient and medieval romances, astrology, alchemy, the mystical significance of numbers and colors, as well as reminiscences of descriptions of the palace of Apolidon (*Amadis IV*) and of Diane de Poitiers' château d'Anet, all of which combine, in a dense series of correspondences, to produce a work rich in resonance.

The continuing popularity of the *Amadis* cycle was due not only to the successive volumes that continued to appear right into the seventeenth century, but especially to the anthologized version that first appeared in 1559. In her detailed examination of « Les *Thresors* d'Amadis », Véronique Benhaïm suggests that the *Thresor*, unique to the French version of *Amadis*, maintained the public's interest in the romance especially during the hiatus of sixteen years between tomes XII and XIII, and its popularity may even have encouraged the resumption of the « translation » in 1571. The *Thresor d'Amadis* was the brain child of Vincent Sertenas, who had earlier sought to broaden the appeal of these volumes once the initial enthusiasm for the illustrated folio tomes had begun to wane by introducing more portable versions in octavo and sextodecimo formats. Then, to capitalize on the popularity of the cycle, he conceived of the idea of publishing a compendium of select passages, organized as a series of « harangues, concions, epistres et complaints ». Thanks to the rhetorical skill of Des Essarts, the selected passages quickly became norms of written and oral expression, models of refined courtly style. A veritable school of linguistic civility, the *Thresor* assumed a life and importance of its own, becoming a pedagogical genre that inspired, in that century of humanist compendia and florilegia, similar compilations such as the *Thresor des Vies de Plutarque* and the *Thresor des Histoires tragiques de Belleforest*.

Ultimately, the most unreserved praise is lavished upon the style of the *Amadis* cycle. Any manual will mention that the volumes by Des Essarts were admired in the sixteenth century as models of perfect prose. Praised for his « style fleuri, net et coulant », Des Essarts was hailed variously as the French Homer, the French Cicero, the French Demosthenes. Yet the question must be asked: In that century of bold experimentation in prose expression, what was so distinctive in these volumes that they earned the laudatory neologism, *amadiser*? Beginning with contemporary norms, Mireille Huchon moves beyond critical generalities in order to define the specific aspects that contributed to a style praised for its « naïve beauté ». « Amadis, 'Parfaicte Idée de nostre langue françoise' » is a most valuable essay and a fitting conclusion to this fine volume.

This is a stimulating collection. The articles are rich, suggestive, and, what is perhaps most significant, they make one anxious to (re)turn to the texts themselves, which will be read with new insights and appreciation. For convenient reference and further study, Michel Bideaux follows his eloquent summary of the essays with a useful bibliography that includes the original editions of the French translation of the Spanish *Amadis* (vol. I-XIV), as well as a generous selection of critical studies of both the Spanish and the French versions.