

Snippets of Spanish sentimental novels. Towards *La Princesse de Clèves*

The title of the novel by Madame de Villedieu, *Galanteries grenadines* (1672), brings to mind how the love between Abindarráez and Jarifa was seen by the authors of heroic and sentimental novels: by Mademoiselle de Scudéry in the eight tomes of her *Almahide* (1660-1663) and, especially, by none less than Madame de Lafayette, in her *Zaïde, histoire espagnole* (1670), the inaugural work of the skilled author of the exquisite *Princesse de Clèves* (1678).

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In this year devoted to the fourth centennial of *Don Quixote*, I propose a brief aside in honour of other Spanish contributions to the universal novel. Here I refer to sentimental narratives whose origins, like the sources of *Don Quixote*, are deeply rooted in recreational reading at the end of the 15th and well into the 16th century, but whose development in Europe has often been eclipsed by the legacy of Cervantes. On the other side of the Pyrenees, compulsory translations of pre-Cervantine novels like the *Cárcel de amor* (1492) by Diego de San Pedro, for instance, quickly left their mark on one of the *Heptameron's* stories, *Nouvelle IX* (1559), even though the anecdote is limited to its structure, the holy and profane hyperbole of Leriano's sacrifice disappears, and one of its courtly scenes of still rudimentary –though highly subtle– narrative strategy is disregarded because only the skilful pen of Mme de La Fayette will long afterwards know how to employ to its immense fictional potential, as we shall see. Not to be overlooked either is the influence of the 1536 translation by Maurice Scève (a poet from Margaret of Navarre's circle) of *Grimalte y Gradissa* (ca.1495) by Juan de Flores, given that the first part of the French sentimental novel, *Les angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* by Hélienne de Crenne, would appear only two years later. The novel, an "épistre dedicative... a toutes honnestes dames", starts from the beginning of the *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* (1344) by Boccaccio, whose protagonist was also recovered by Juan de Flores as another character from his fiction to be raised up at the end as an *ex contrario* example of the Spanish *Gradissa*. On the other hand, Hélienne de Crenne made use of it to begin her narration of how a well-married woman¹ grows fond of an ill-reputed young man and to provide an epistolary context within which to narrate her own adulterous infatuation.

¹ Like Mlle de Chartres, a fatherless child married at eleven years of age: both young girls are brought up by their mothers, who rush the weddings and soon fail because of the wedding in the case of Hélienne, and because of the wedding and her almost immediate death in *La Princesse*. In this way, they each confront the blows of passion from a position of extreme fragility.

Boccaccio, Juan de Flores, Hélienne de Crenne

It should not be surprising that the work of Juan de Flores, two centuries after it had first been published in Spain, provided an early precedent to the extraordinary decision made at the end of a masterpiece like the *Princesse de Clèves*² (1678), when the protagonist, finding herself widowed and in the flower of youth, rejects the man she loves so badly. To understand this self-sacrifice, which at the time created a stormy controversy published by the magazine *Mercurie galant*, one must necessarily retrace the steps in the sentimental education of this or any other refined woman of the time. The first milestone of this pedagogical process could have been *Grimalte's* failure to convince *Pamphilo* to return with *Fiometa*, because *Gradissa's* conscience has been shaken by that fact and now she does not hesitate to reject the advances of her suitor. No other physical obstacles to their love remain, only a spiritual one, which is the novel of love created by Boccaccio. Thus, the sentimental genre, through its own example, modifies the behaviour of its characters and, by reason of a strange paradox that keeps love at bay, substitutes first-hand experience with experience that is vicarious and literary. The path to the analytical novel is thus cleared by casting the feminine conscience down into the meanderings of relentlessly logical and refined reasoning itself, though guided by the most irrational terror.

A noteworthy intermediate link between the reluctance of *Gradissa* and that of Mme de Clèves had to be the unhappy experience of Hélienne de Crenne. In addition, an important difference between the Spanish model, which blends Boccaccian characters with its own, and the *Angoysses douloureuses* is clearly rooted in the suitor, inspired in the French novel by a seemingly real model³, that of the young Guenelic, whose moral condition is far unlike that of the brave Grimalte. One morning, looking idly out the window, Hélienne spotted an elegant gentleman who immediately attracted her attention. He seemed to her to be "de tresbelle forme & selon que ie pouoye coniecturer a sa phisonomie, ie l'estimoys, gracieux & amyable, il avoit le visage riant, le chevelure creppe, ung petit blonde, & sans avoir barbe qui estoit manifeste demonstrance, de sa gentile ieunesse." This description

² This has already been noted by Caridad Martínez (1992: 18-20).

³ As a result of the discoveries by L. Loviot and by V.-L. Saulnier, critics have agreed to accept the first part of the novel as very close to the truth. As can be deduced from a donated document, this initial part is the work of "Margueritte de Briet, femme de Philippe Fournel, esquier, seigneur de Crasnes, [from where she must have taken the surname for her pseudonym], et de luy separee quant aux biens, demourant à Saint Germain des Prez lez Paris", text cited by Paule Demats in his introductory study to the work (1968: 9). In this prologue it was also discussed whether the first name of the pseudonym was inspired by the mother of Amadís, which would not be strange at all given the extraordinary success of the novel in France and the uninhibited behaviour of the princess at the beginning of the novel, which Juan de Valdés did not hesitate to condemn in his *Diálogo de la lengua*.

fits exactly the profile attributed by Gregorio Marañón to the Don Juan type and completely antithetical to a “real man” who, from his point of view, was small, short legged, with a strong countenance, rough skin and hairy face: “Not at all similar, therefore, to the slim, elegant Don Juan, with smooth skin, wavy hair and a clean-shaven face ...”⁴ Guenelic is indeed a seducer, and despite his elegance, his depravity is of the lowest kind. Blinded by vanity, he is incapable of keeping his advances – although minimal – to himself, despite how they offend Hélienne’s dignity. In fact, these advances only increase her confusion, resulting in an awkward incapacity to hide her desire from him, which he discovers with joy and does not hesitate to expose it. The opportune literary examples of destructive love occurring to the anguished mind of Hélienne (Helen, Medea, Euryalus and Lucretia⁵, Lancelot du Lac and the *royne* Guinevere, Tristan and Isolde) are of no importance, having all been swept away by the “tresdur assault” of “l’appetit sensuel”. To further aggravate the situation and sink the narrator deeper and deeper into the whirlwind of craziness in which she is immersed, in no time at all the indiscretions of Guenelic reach the ears of Hélienne’s husband and he informs her of his friend’s cheap betrayal. But her husband’s fury does not calm her desire and in those rare moments when he takes pity on her illness he himself recognizes that her sensual appetite is responsible for her delirium, “par ce que ie cognois les premiers mouvements n’estre en nostre puissance.”⁶ Without needing any warnings, the Princess of Clèves senses also *first movements* in herself from the start, and although unable to conceal her embarrassment, it is precisely this conscience and the consequent strict constraint of her own passions which gives her a basis to pull herself together and take hold of the reins of her destiny.⁷

⁴ Marañón (1964: 74).

⁵ Vid. Ravasini (2003).

⁶ A text by Saint Augustine served as a starting point for doctrinal reflection about first impulses. In *De Trinitate*, (XII, 12), a parallel is established between the temptation of earthly paradise and every day temptations. As soon as the inferior appetite tries to lead reasoning towards a prohibited pleasure, temptation begins. Giving in to this demand is equivalent to tasting the forbidden fruit. If, however, consent does not go beyond illicit thoughts, it must be said that only the woman (the inferior reason) has succumbed. If, on the other hand, the act takes place, then also the man (the superior reason) has ceded to evil and the sin has been consummated. The pleasure had by only thinking about evil is already reprehensible; nevertheless, this lack of inferior reason is less serious than a lack of superior reason leading to the bad action. For Saint Augustine, then, sin begins with the intervention of reason, inferior or superior. The development of this passage of 12th century theological thought is aptly summarised by Couture (1962). This concept became so popular that secular literature is full of references to it; see, for example, the similarity between the quote from Crenne with the phrase we find, much later in *Don Quixote* (I, 20): “perdona lo pasado, pues eres discreto y sabes que los primeros movimientos no son en mano del hombre”.

⁷ “Quelque application qu’elle aût à éviter ses regards et à lui parler moins qu’à un autre, il lui échappait de certaines choses qui portaient d’un premier mouvement, qui faisaient juger à ce prince qu’il ne lui était pas indifférent.” And a few pages further on, “...elle fit réflexion à la violence de l’inclination qui l’entraînait vers M. de Nemours; elle trouva qu’elle n’était plus maîtresse de ses paroles et son visage...”, quoted from the edition by Émile Magne (1939: 298 y 303). In his notes to *La Quinta de Florencia*,

Deciding one's own destiny.⁸ That could be one of the main reasons why an intimate novel such as *La Princesse* is written in the third person: the narrator looks down on the pathetic 'I' of the Heroidian epistle, that feminine lament to which the *Lettres portugaises* (1669) had lent more validity in the years spanning the first drafts of the *Princesse*.⁹ Therefore according to the elegiac tone of the genre in which the first part – the most authentic and autobiographical – of the *Angoysses douloureuses* is written,¹⁰ it is not within Hélienne's power to rein in her outrageous desire, nor to stop herself from sinking further and further into the moral and physical misery of her obsession, interrupted only by failed attempts to kill herself. She ends up secluding herself in her chambers to convalesce from her deliria, and afterwards, on the orders of her jealous spouse, is imprisoned in *Cabassus*, one of the *châteaux*, where she decides to write her autobiography. Her aim – contradictory and yet credible – is to warn other ladies of the suffering that accompanies love, in the hope that her writings will reach the hands of Guenelic and that he will come to her rescue. Hélienne made such a *brutta figura*, her undisguised desire being subjected to public humiliation by the dandy, that it could have become an excellent example for other feminine consciences, such as that of the *Princesse*, created purposefully by another woman, this time a real one, to whom love seemed "une chose incommode"¹¹ and in perfect coherence with that desire for serenity, she lived entrenched in a peaceful marriage of convenience.¹²

Morros (1998: Parte II, n.1266) recalls a passage from la *Cárcel de amor*: the "primeros movimientos no se pueden en los hombres escusar" and another more significant passage from *Celestina*, VII, 1, where the option of controlling this first impulse is made plain: "Verdad es, pero del pecado lo peor es la perseverancia, que assi como el primer movimiento no es en mano del hombre, así el primer yerro." Recall that in the oldest version of the love between Abindarráez and Jarifa it is explained that "no hubo primeros movimientos que escusar porque el principio de nuestros amores fue un gusto y deleite fundado sobre l bien querer simplemente y sin cautela. Mas después no vino el mal poco a poco sino de golpe y todo junto."

⁸ Craveri reminds us of something similar from a different point of view: "Adelantándose a la *Princesse de Clèves*, el amable y escéptico Guilleragues enseñaba a las mujeres a usar la sinceridad como un arma y adueñarse de su propio destino. Sin embargo, a diferencia de la heroína de Madame de La Fayette, la monja portuguesa no renuncia a vivir el amor por miedo al desengaño..." (2003: 157).

⁹ On March 16, 1671 Mme de Sévigné writes to her daughter: "Je suis au désespoir que vous ayez eu Bajazet par d'autres que par moi. C'est ce chien de Barbin qui me hait parce que je ne fais pas des Princesses de Clèves et de Montpensier." This comment, plus a privilege document found by Émile Magne, confirms that shortly after the publication of *Zaïde* Mme de La Fayette worked on a new text (the first draft of the *Princesse de Clèves*) for which Barbin had secured, in advance, the profits from publication. Vid. the introduction of Magne (1939: 24).

¹⁰ Gustave Reynier offers a summary analysis of each part in his classic study (1971).

¹¹ For the more psychological rather than strictly literary reasons behind the rejection of the princess, see "Le refus de la Princesse" by Jean Cordelier (1975: 43-57). I have not, however, been able to consult Claude Vigée (1960: 723-754).

¹² Regarding her relationship with the sarcastic La Rochefoucauld, so fruitful from a literary point of view and progressing towards a deep intimacy maintained within the realm of friendship, Bernard Pingaud comments, among other things: "L'important est que cette liaison entre deux êtres qui ont beaucoup de goûts communs, beaucoup de dégoûts aussi, qui portent, à quelques nuances près, le même jugement

Historical background of the *Princesse de Clèves*

The lover of the Princess of Clèves is also based on a real-life celebrity: the Duke of Nemours, James of Savoy (1531-1585), son of Philip of Savoy and Charlotte of Orléans-Longueville and very famous in his time for his incomparable beauty and unrivalled attractiveness. He is not the only historical character who appears in the work of Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne. The novel has historical background and, thanks to testimonies offered by the memoirist tradition, it recreates the worldly atmosphere of the court of Henry II.¹³ The work begins with a hierarchical and static description of the French court, with the King at the head, and continuing down, like in the *ekphrasis* of a bas-relief, to a dominant figure such as the Duchess of Valentinois, distinguished by the title of nobility that her royal lover had bestowed upon her. Without doubt, passing immediately to the biographical sketch of this mature and beautiful lady is done with crystal-clear intention: it emphasizes the effective and cruel use she made of her direct access to the royal chambers. In a court divided between supporters of the House of Guise and those of the *connétable* of Montmorency, it is easier to understand how both parties feared her and vied for her favours. Only after mentioning Diane of Poitiers, and for the moment only in relation to her ("La présence de la reine autorisait la sienne"), does the pen of Marie-Madeleine linger on the *reine*, spouse of the king ("...la politique l'obligeait d'approcher cette duchesse de sa personne, afin d'en approcher aussi le roi"), requiring the reader to infer that this new female figure is Catherine of Medici. Except for the case of the lover of the king (and before that the favourite of her father, Francis I) the names of the characters are usually avoided and each one is known by the title he or she holds. The order of their appearance is determined by the web of power woven around the apex of the hierarchy. Next appears the King of Navarre (Anthony of Bourbon), *Madame* (who was the sister of the king, Margaret of France, *duchesse* of Berry), the *reine dauphine* (Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, married to Francis of Valois, *dauphin* of France), the *chevalier* of Guise (Francis of Lorraine, "était un prince aimé de tout le monde, bien fait, plein d'esprit, plein d'adresse, et d'une valeur célèbre par toute Europe"), and the *Prince of Condé* (Louis I of Bourbon, head of the protestant party). The second son of the *Duc*, the *Prince of Clèves*, is then dealt with in a pair of sentences: "il était digne de souvenir la gloire de son nom; il était brave et magnifique, et il avait une prudence qui ne se trouve guère avec la jeunesse." Standing out are his second-son status

sur la comédie du monde, sans pourtant cesser de se passionner pour elle, deux êtres malades, désabusés, tristes, qui aspirent à trouver la paix dans une intimité confiante, se place d'emblée sous le signe du repos.", (1997: 40).

¹³ Thanks to H. Chamard and G. Rudler, complete studies of the general historical scene and its sources can be found in "Les sources historiques" (1914 : 92-131, 289-321).

and one of his qualities, prudence, which in youth might be meritorious but one must admit it is not attractive always. The *Vidame* of Chartres, descendent of the House of Vendôme, was the only one who could be compared with the Duke of Nemours “si quelqu’un lui eût pu être comparable”, and after immersing ourselves in the intricacies of the novel we realise that he was a seducer through and through, capable of maintaining four lovers at a time. Without interruption – a very intentional recourse, I believe – the lengthy tribute of the Duke of Nemours follows.

Mais ce prince était un chef-d’oeuvre de la nature; ce qu’il avait de moins admirable, c’était d’être l’homme du monde le mieux fait et le plus beau. Ce qui le mettait au-dessus des autres était une valeur incomparable, et un agrément dans son esprit, dans son visage et dans ses actions que l’on n’a jamais vu qu’à lui seul; il avait un enjouement qui plaisait également aux hommes et aux femmes, *une adresse extraordinaire dans tous ses exercices, une manière de s’habiller qui était toujours suivie de tout le monde, sans pouvoir être imitée*, et en fin un air dans toute sa personne qui faisait qu’on ne pouvait regarder que lui dans tous les lieux où il paraissait. *Il n’y avait aucune dame dans la tour dont la gloire n’eût été flatée de le voir attaché à elle; peu de celles à qui il s’était attaché, se pouvaient vanter de lui avoir résisté, et même plusieurs à qui il n’avait point témoigné de passion, n’avaient pas laissé d’en avoir pour lui.* Il avait tant de douceur et tant de *disposition à la galanterie qu’il ne pouvait refuser quelques soins à celles qui tâchaient de lui plaire: ainsi il avait plusieurs maîtresses*, mais il était difficile de deviner celle qu’il aimait véritablement.¹⁴

As Lalanne had already pointed out in 1891, the source of this passage is *Vies des grands capitaines*, one of the works of Pierre Bordeille, *Sieur* of Brantôme, in which he dedicates long passages to describing the charms and activities of this illustrious character with such praise that a great lady, who detested the famous chronicler, unsurprisingly said of him that he was as perfumed as his horses.¹⁵ All the charms

¹⁴ *Princesse* (1939: 243-244).

¹⁵ Vid. Ludovic Lalanne (1891) : “Ce prince fut un des plus parfaitz et accomplys princes, seigneurs et gentilzhommes qui furent jamais. Qui l’a veu le peut dire comme moy. Il a esté un très beau prince et de très bonne grace, brave, vaillant, agreeable, aymable et accostable, *bien disant, bien escrivant, autant en rithme qu’en prose, s’habillant des mieux, si que tout la court en son temps (au moins la jeunesse) prenoit tout son patron de se bien habiller sur luy*; et quand on portoit un habillement sur sa façon, il n’y avoit non plus à redire que quand on se façonnoit en tous ses gestes et actions. Il estoit pourveu d’un grand sens et d’esprit, ses discourse beaux, ses opinions en un conseil belles et recepvables. De plus, tout ce qu’il faisoit il le faisoit bien, de si bonne grâce et de si belle adresse, sens autrement se contraindre (comme j’en ay veu qui le vouloient imiter, sans en approcher), mais si naïvement que l’on eust dict que tout cela estoit né avec luy. Il ayroit *toutes sortes d’exercices*, et si y estoit si universel qu’il estoit parfait en tous. Il estait très bon homme de cheval et très adroit et de belle grâce, fust on à picquer; et pour la guerre, bon homme de pied a combattre à la picque et à l’espée, à la barrière, les armes belles en la main. Il jouoit très bien à la paume, aussi disoit-on les revers de M. de Nemours, jouoit bien à la balle, au bollou; *sautoit, voltigoit, dançoit, et le tout avec si bonne grâce, qu’on pouvoit dire qu’il estoit très parfait en toutes sortes d’exercices cavalleresques*: si bien, qui n’a veu M. de

of Nemours make him irresistible: he lacks skills in neither sport nor chivalry, has a unique and inimitable way of dressing, dances with agility and, like a perfect Renaissance courtier, according to the rules of the art of pleasing which had been brought up to date by Faret (not so much for his intrinsic values, as we shall see later),¹⁶ his mastery of language is demonstrated in the verses and speeches he composes. It is noticeable how Mme de La Fayette's feminine writing amplifies amorous aspects, introducing the motif of the vanity of those women wooed by such a gallant knight, since there was no lady in the court whose fame was not increased by his having expressed an interest: "Il n'y avait aucune dame dans la tour dont la gloire n'eût été flatée de le voir attaché à elle; peu de celles à qui il s'était attaché, se pouvaient vanter de lui avoir résisté, et même plusieurs à qui il n'avait point témoigné de passion, n'avaient pas laissé d'en avoir pour lui." This amplified bit puts us on the trail of the tribute of the Abencerrajes inserted in the novella of the same title from the mid-16th century, with which Brantôme should have also been familiar, since his text structure followed the same stages of the panegyric of the Moorish noble caste.¹⁷ As this exceptional abbot knew the Spanish language and the Castilian court quite well, that is not strange. In the words of Abindarráez the text reads: "...la cortesía y servicio de las damas andaba en ellos en su verdadero punto: nunca Abencerraje sirvió dama de quien no fuese favorecido, ni dama se tuvo por digna deste nombre que no tuviese Abencerraje por servidor". I quote the complete tribute from the version of the *Abencerraje* included after 1561 in the editions of the *Diana*, as that is how it came to be known in France and the rest of Europe:

Soy de los Abencerrajes de Granada, en cuya desventura aprendí a ser desdichado; y porque sepas cuál fue la suya y de ahí vengas a entender lo que se puede esperar de la mía, sabrás que hubo en Granada un linaje de caballeros llamados Abencerrajes: sus hechos y sus personas, así en el esfuerzo para la guerra como en prudencia para la paz y gobierno de nuestra república, eran el espejo de aquél reino. Los viejos eran el consejo del rey, *los mozos ejercitaban sus personas en actos de caballería*, sirviendo a las damas y mostrando en sí la gentileza y valor de sus personas. Eran muy amados de la gente popular y no mal quistos entre la principal, aunque en todas las buenas partes que un caballero debe tener se aventajasen a todos los otros. Eran muy estimados del rey, nunca cometieron cosa en la guerra, ni

Nemours en ses années guayes, il n'a rien veu; et qui l'a veu, le peut baptiser par tout le monde la fleur de la chevalerie; et, *pour ce fort aymé de toute le monde et principalement des dames.*", (1895: 164-166).

¹⁶ See Faret (1925) and the summary of his contributions by Magendie (1993: 355-369). For a good comparative study of the avatars of the courtesan's manual in Europe, cf. Burke (1998).

¹⁷ A handwritten translation of the *Diana*, that included the *Abencerraje*, previous to the first translation printed by Nicolas Colin (1578), was dedicated to the "Tresventureuse Princesse Margueritte de France Royne de Navarre", later repudiated by the King of Beame, who Brantôme adored absolutely until his death. A few years ago I found this manuscript in the Albertine Library of Brussels and I attributed its authorship to Mme de Neuvfy, whose translation of the *Diana* praised Jean Bertaut in one of its sonnets. Vid. Fosalba (1999: 105 111).

en el consejo que la experiencia no correspondiese a lo que dellos se esperaba. En tanto grado era loada su valentía, liberalidad y gentileza, que se traía por ejemplo no haber Abencerraje cobarde, escaso, ni de mala disposición. *Eran maestros de los trajes, de las invenciones*¹⁸; *la cortesía y servicio de las damas andaba en ellos en su verdadero punto: nunca Abencerraje sirvió dama de quien no fuese favorecido, ni dama se tuvo por digna deste nombre que [no] tuviese Abencerraje por servidor.*¹⁹ (The italics are mine.)

Of course there is very little or nothing left of oriental fashion in the *Princesse de Clèves*. It is almost as invisible as the trace of our *Abencerraje* in the tribute of Nemours, but for that reason is no less relevant. In fact, with the *Princesse de Clèves* the purification process of the heroic tinsel from Granada, typical of endless works like *Almahide* (1660-63)²⁰, reaches its peak. The traces, though very light, are far from negligible. On the other hand, the mythical aura of the legendary Muslim lineage should have established itself solidly in French fantasy when a poet like Benserade, anxiously calling attention to himself, invoked the sound of his name to vainly boast of coming from such an illustrious family from Granada.²¹ Voiture, the "Rey Chiquito" ("Dwarf King") of the *Salon Bleu*, might have alluded ironically to him when he wrote to Mme de Rambouillet pretending to be jealous: "Mademoiselle, je ne sais pas qui sont les abencerrages que vous me préférez. Mais j'imagine que ne sont point nés à Grenade, non plus que moi..."²² Their memory lived on throughout the 17th century: in 1685 a splendid carousel with two opposing groups representing the two most famous rival families of Pérez de Hita's Granada, the Abencerrajes and the Cegrías,²³ was paraded in Versailles in the

¹⁸ Remember the double sense of "invención": a witty pun and a dress or disguise.

¹⁹ Fosalba (1990: 12).

²⁰ Here the literary gatherings of *L'Astrée*, a conversational pastime at the time of Mme de Rambouillet, are also grafted into its plot, already fragmented by secondary tales and complicated according to the Greek model. In any case, the work did not achieve great success; the audience was already tired of long, drawn out plots with numerous, difficult to remember subplots, unending descriptions and discussions about questions of love. See the complete, somewhat dated but still very useful study by Jerome W. Schweitzer (1939).

²¹ Tallemant des Réux relates the anecdote in one of his *Historiettes*, which remained handwritten until well into the 19th century. Once he was caught in a sea battle, following the Duke of Brezé, his patron, "mais il desmentit bien le sang des Abencerrages, dont il se disoit issu", since his greatest concern was: "Helas!" s'escriat-il, "où est-ce donc que je me fourrayer?" (1961: 494). The same author mentions two more characters that are related to the Abencerrajes. The first is a Morisco, Alphonse López, who arrived in Paris towards 1604 with the apparent intention of establishing a secret alliance in France against the tyranny of Madrid. He said he was descended from the Abencerrajes of Granada (I, 315). And the second, Montbrun, was alluded to in a mocking way: "...il s'avisait d'aller faire fanfare tout seul à la Place Royale; car il n'y eut que luy qui allast faire comme cela l'Abencerrage." (II, 363).

²² Voiture (I, 240). Quoted by Jean Cazenave (1925: 605). See the presence in France of other festive events inspired by the *Guerras civiles* in *Traité des tournois...* Claude François Ménestrier (1669).

²³ Although the so-called Cegrías were never an aristocratic lineage but rather a name from the "form of address *zegrí*". As Luis Seco de Lucena explains, "it refers to men from the border region and several

presence of the Sun King, and the knights from each side changed their names of princes or of great lords for those of the heroes of the *Guerras civiles*. *La brillante journée, ou Carrousel des galants Maures*, the title given to the celebration, consecrated, according to Festugière, "l'intime association dès lors opérée dans l'opinion générale entre l'idée de galanterie et celle que l'on se faisait des Mores andalous."²⁴ In fact, gallantry had been identified much earlier with the nobility of Granada.

There is another vague but very recognisable echo in *La Princesse*. When the Prince of Clèves is surprised to find his wife pale, recumbent and so completely sad, an emblematic sentence of the *Abencerraje* is filtered into the novel: "Qu'avez-vous, madame, lui dit-il. Il me paraît que vous avez quelque autre douleur que celle dont vous vous plaignez?"²⁵ It seems reasonable to think that, in a moment of intimacy between the distant spouses, the memory of a conciliatory scene of the Spanish novel would suddenly come up: when, after a fierce fight, and while he rides on horseback together with the captive Abindarráez, Rodrigo de Narváez believes he has foreseen in the noble Moor's sorrow a pain more profound than defeat.

And it seems reasonable to consider that it could have happened that way, given that in the creative process leading to *Zaide* (1670-1671), a novel which excited readers in the following century,²⁶ the same text was present, with no need to constantly compare it, as if it had been read and then forgotten. Segrais could establish the *dispositio* and provide it with the precise historical documentation for its return to the legendary Spanish Reconquest.²⁷ Being a novel set outside the

chiefs of the African militias who were in the service of the kings from Granada, who probably had it because of their military activities in the border region.", (1963: 35-36).

²⁴ Festugière (1944: 145-183, esp. 149).

²⁵ *Princesse* (1939: 348). Rodrigo de Narváez utters it in the *Abencerraje* upon observing the deep sadness of the recently defeated Abencerraje. Rodrigo suspects that such a brave knight would not sigh about having been captured, but that another, deeper sorrow is the cause of his sadness: "Acordábase de lo que le había visto hacer; parecióle demasiada tristeza la que llevaba para un ánimo tan grande, y porque también se juntaban a esto algunos suspiros que daban a entender más pena de la que se podía pensar que cupiera en hombre tan valiente, y queriéndose informar mejor de la causa desto, le dijo: "Caballero, mira que el prisionero que en la prisión pierde el ánimo, aventura el derecho de la libertad, y que en las cosas de la guerra se han de recibir las adversas con tan buen rostro que se merezca, por esta fuerza de ánimo, gozar de las prósperas. Y no me parece que estos suspiros corresponden al valor y esfuerzo que tu persona ha mostrado, ni las heridas son tan grandes que se aventure la vida, la cual no has mostrado tener en tanto que por la honra no dejases [de] olvidalla. Pues si otra ocasión te da tristeza, dímelas, que por la fe de caballero te juro que se use contigo de tanta amistad que jamás te puedas quejar de habérmelo dicho", Fosalba (1990: 9-10).

²⁶ *Zaide* was reprinted seven times in Paris before the end of the 18th century (1672, 1699, 1705, 1715, 1764 and 1780) and three times in Amsterdam (1700, 1705 and 1715).

²⁷ The name and certain specifics from the life of the heroine were taken from Pérez de Hita, but the facts concerning the political and military order were taken from the *Histoire générale d'Espagne*, published in Lyon in 1587. See the excellent summaries of the European works of the genre, together with its most relevant sources, offered by Carrasco Urgoiti (1956).

decadent Nasrid court, descriptive details that in *Almahide* took up hundreds of pages were eliminated; military events, duels, trips and voyages were reduced to the minimal descriptive expression. If an Arab festival or wedding feast was stumbled upon, nothing specific was said about the costumes or decorations except what was absolutely essential. It is also possible that La Rochefoucauld was careful to give a certain stylistic touching-up to its prose and, in that way and before anything else, Mme de La Fayette could concentrate on the psychological aspects. And at the beginning of the novel readers could clearly perceive the empathy that the *Abencerraje* had made famous in the *Diana*, where the shepherds also liked to communicate their complaints in the pleasure of conversation. The encounter between Consalve and Alphonse on the beaches of Tarragona is interesting. The sadness of the Count of Castile awakens the curiosity and touches the resigned heart of Consalve, who decides to toast to him for his hospitality, providing a reason for the retrospective telling of their stories within the narrative context of friendship. At another moment, the bracelet of hair motif, a love-token also present in the *Astrée* (1607-1628) – a fashion that influenced or perhaps began in the sophistication of the translation of the “cordón de seda verde y cabellos” from the *Diana* – condenses the incommunicable love of protagonists into only one scene.²⁸ As incommunicable as the violent passion of Nemours and the princess, not separated by either race or language, but whose love can only be expressed in oblique ways and ends by being fulfilled in pure fantasy.²⁹

If the chroniclers of the time (not only Brantôme; also Agrippa d’Aubigné, Michel de Castelnau, Jacques de Thou, or La Popelinière, among others) tell mainly of the military prestige of Nemours, the mythic aura surrounding him in the novel written a century after his death is primarily due to his role as a court gallant. Despite the great distance between both works, something similar could be said about the Abencerrajes, whose warlike activity in Granada was so profitable to the Kings of Castile that first in the chronicles and then in literature they were extolled as a very attractive noble line, in a process of idealization that had already begun in the historical sources. Both novels, *El Abencerraje* and *La Princesse*, exalted their masculine protagonists, based on unambiguous historical background. Mme de La Fayette is inspired by the memoirist style to recreate the mundane atmosphere of the French court of the previous century, but it is worth bringing to mind that

²⁸ I have already analysed the traces in this work of the *Abencerraje* (1994: 260-265).

²⁹ An example of oblique communication is recalled in the marvellous scene of the theft of the portrait, but any other will do. A symbol of the love that only survives in the psyche of the Princess could be the beautiful night-time scene of the Coulommiers pavilion where the lady braids her lover’s coloured ribbon into an Indian shot that had belonged to him and in the light of a candelabra contemplates her image in the paintings with which the interior of the room was decorated. When she hears a sound outside and catches a glimpse of the duke hiding in the garden observing her closely, she flees into the rooms of the house.

inserting a fictitious anecdote sketched over a historical backdrop was precisely one of the contributions of the *Abencerraje* to the sentimental novel, and years later, of its enormously successful sequel in France.³⁰ In fact the prose of Ginés Pérez was certainly inspired in ballads known today as frontier and Moorish, full of twisted fantasies of reality incorporated into the text as if they were reliable historical sources, that had been previously published in various anthologies (*Cancionero de romances*, *Silva de varios romances*, *Rosa de Romances* by Timoneda, *Flor de varios romances* by Moncayo). Likewise, numerous completely literary amorous anecdotes to sweeten the last days of the Nasrid Granada are immediately noticed in the novel thanks to the pitfalls of nostalgia. The cycle of Reduan³¹ is a good example of the loss of military burden and amorous amplification attributed to the epic heroes of the frontier ballads once they had blended into the Moorish style. This tendency was influenced to a great extent by the *Abencerraje*, which appears in the critical moment when the first collections of ballads were being published. Pérez de Hita only followed its lead, when the process had already been completed, and nevertheless made a repetitious use of this sentimental aspect in his novel (now focused on the variety of its casuistry and embellished with jousts and tournaments). This would explain why the second part of the *Guerras Civiles de Granada* (from around 1597, although the earliest existing edition is from 1619), of practically the opposite tendency, would be overlooked: it was neither published nor even translated in France.³² The reader can already guess the Moorish novel's key to success and in which direction it must evolve to augment public interest in it, not only in Spain, but also on the other side of the Pyrenees. This is especially true if it is remembered that after thirty years of civil wars the Spanish sentimental novel is read in France as a model of refined behaviour, having become popular in the middle of the reaction provoked among the "learned" ladies, who under the auspices of Salesian devotion and its concept of lay leisure, aim to civilize the

³⁰ From the first part in 1595, five editions have been preserved since the years 1597 and 1598. It was also reprinted some forty times during the 17th century, ten times in the 18th century and five times in the 19th century. In France the first Parisian edition appeared in 1606; later, in 1660, another one appeared in the same city and was sold by three booksellers. In 1608, the Parisian bookseller Toussaints du Bray offered a complete and exact French version. Later, in 1683, a more faithful translation by Mme de la Roche-Guilhem appeared. She brought it closer to the gallant novel by not hesitating to eliminate the long descriptions of parties and combats, the details of the suits of clothes and the interspersed verses.

³¹ Superbly analysed by Luis Seco de Lucena (1963: 16-22).

³² Because now Pérez de Hita talks about deeds he had witnessed (even playing an active part in it sometimes): the Andalusia Moorish insurrection putting at a stake the Felipe II impressing military power. The outcome, certainly, is far from the first part idealization: at certain point, being forced to put aside the love affairs between Albexari and the beautiful Almanzora, he says: "would not this story be full of beatings, weapons and battles we would rather deal with these lovers and their utter tenderness". In fact Pérez de Hita shows us aspects of the battles along with the human devastation: misery, truculence and horror brought in altogether. The narrator feels himself both the victim and the executioner guilty of plunder and abuse. The work, extremely important from the historic point of view, had been overlooked by Spanish like at the moment and absolutely forgotten beyond the Pirenees.

"noblesse d'épée."³³ In the conversation dedicated to glory (II, i) of *Clélie, histoire romaine* (1655), Hermilie states clearly that it should be detached from military exploits: "Nous n'aurons plus grande part à la gloire selon Mutius, car les femmes ne vont pas à la guerre."³⁴ It does not matter how valiant the knights emerging from narratives and ballads based on themes from Granada are, since true heroism for the feminine spirit involves internal and external masculine elegance. For this reason the tournaments and festivals – the preferred motif in the complicated intrigues of the *Galanteries grenadines* (1673) by Mme de Villedieu, already late in her attempt – will always be accompanied by sentimental consequences, in a purification process of the epic part that will appeal to the tastes of the gallant society more and more. This emotional aspect receives a definitive push after many ups and downs in the *La Princesse*, which appears stripped of any exotic costume, be it oriental or pastoral. Now only a soft patina of antiquity is accepted, with glowing allusions to the mundane present.

The idealization of James of Savoy, Duke of Nemours

Brantôme was a good friend of Nemours and a true admirer of his beauty, elegance and gallantry. He also revered his success with women, due in good part to his boldness, according to what Nemours himself had remarked to him: "Je luy ay ouy raconter plusieurs fois de ses aventures d'amour; mais il disoit que la plus propre recette pour jouyr de ses amours estoit la hardiesse."³⁵ Although this detail is not made as explicit in the same way in the novel, we cannot overlook here that this "daringness" which arouses clear admiration on the part of the memoir writer is none other than a vice in the manuals of good manners such as that of Faret mentioned above. It is, furthermore, a disgrace for an *honneste homme*, who is immediately placed on the very opposite side of prudence³⁶, so similar to Castiglione's original temperance, which in contrast restrains the interior of Nemours' rival, the Prince of Clèves; it may even be this latter, much less conspicuous quality, which explains the protagonist's sacred respect for the memory of his deceased husband and offers the key to the posthumous triumph of the Prince over his afflicted feminine will.

However, in the volume of his memoirs dedicated to the lives of the French captains he writes at great length about the military part of his development, the

³³ Vid. Marc Fumaroli (1994: 321-339).

³⁴ (1655: 471). See the third chapter "De la gloire héroïque à la constance amoureuse" by Chantal Morlet-Chantalat (1994: 161-177).

³⁵ Merimée and Lacour (1895: 166).

³⁶ Vid. Faret, "Eloge des honestes gens", "de leur prudence" (1925: 77).

"official" version of the life of the character. He narrates, for example, how he took part in the sieges of Lenz and of Metz in the battle of Rentry, and he spares no superlatives: "Il fit ses jeunes guerres en Piedmont, par deux à trois voyages qu'il fit, et en France aux sièges de Bouloigne, de Metz et bataille de Ranty et autres belles factions, en representation [in the meaning of "reputation"] d'un très-brave, vaillant et très-hardy prince." Always loyal to the House of Guise, he obtained the rank of Colonel General in their light cavalry. Back in France after a brief trip to Savoy for reasons to which we shall return, he battled against the Huguenots with Guise and Saint-André. He was appointed governor of the Lyonnais, Forez and Beaujolais, recaptured Vienna and besieged Lyon. He took part in the battle of Saint Denis, helped Aumale repel the invasion of the Duke of Deux-Ponts and went to receive Henry III in Lyon, withdraw shortly afterwards to Annecy. But Brantôme could not avoid the allusion to his absence, years earlier, from France. It is a dark episode that cast a shadow over his brilliant career before the first civil war broke out. For the first time his life as a seducer had come face to face with his public image when he met up with "madamoyselle de Roan", of whom it is only said here that she was the cause for which he was denounced to the queen (Catherine of Medici) by a waitress named Denise "qui chantoit de las mieux" and "qu'il haysoit fort mondict sieur de Nemours, a cause de madamoyselle de Roan". However, Brantôme avoids the details of the betrayal: Nemours planned to take Henry of Orléans (later Henry III) to Lorraine or to Savoy to make him head of the party.

On the other hand, Le Laboureur explains why that was negligent and provides details that question the moral quality of the character, thereby bridging the gap of the friend of the Lord of Nemours in the appendix to his edition of the memoirs of Castelnau. It seems, he points out ironically, that "ce Prince, le plus beau, le plus adroit, & le plus accompli de son temps, mais qu n'estoit pas le plus fidèle en ses amitez" used ploys to disappoint any hopes that "Demoiselle Rohan", first cousin of the King of Navarre, had of getting married. The marriage ("contracté par paroles de present, & consommé") was disclosed for the benefit of the son born of the union. When the King of Navarre, who took part in the *affaire*, was Lieutenant General of the Crown and "estant encore redoutable par le party Huguenot", the Queen wasn't prepared to commit to either religion, so Nemours did not feel safe, and unsure about either having a problem in the court or withdrawing, he opted for the latter, but not without deciding beforehand to take the Prince of Anjou with him and convert him into head of the Catholic party. Nevertheless, the plan was ruined, according to Le Laboureur, because the Queen learned of it, not from the waitress but from the *jeune enfant* himself, who told his mother everything. Of interest here is the hardly laudable (or, more accurately, cowardly) role that Nemours continued playing, as Le Laboureur writes: "le Duc s'enfuit en Savoye, & laissa Lignerolles son Escuyer (...) en danger de sa teste pour avoir esté le principal Ministre de l'entreprise."³⁷ Following his tendency to reveal

³⁷ At that time he presented as proof the letters of the King to his Ambassador, the *Sieur* of Isle, from the 3rd of November of 1561, and the response of said lord of the 9th of the following month, printed in

the truth about what happened, he justifies Brantôme's tribute to the friendship we had already assumed: "mais nonobstant toutes ces preuves, le sieur de Brantome, comme fort affectionné qu'il estoit à ce Prince & à la Maison de Guise, l'en veut justifier ses Memoires, ou il traite l'Eloge de ce Duc de Nemours". Here we come up against an ethical question, but curiously it emerges from a comparison of the historical documents because the version of the character that Mme de La Fayette chooses to specify is in theory the official and highly favourable version of the *Vies des grands capitaines*. Nevertheless, her character is severely punished in her novel, since he surrenders his heart to the princess (a foreshadowing of the defeated Don Juan of Choderlos de Laclos) and even so is rejected in the end.³⁸ But having arrived at this point, perhaps it would be appropriate to remember other data from Brantôme's memoirs that would help provide some colour to the character's background. This is no longer the "official" version of the privileged military officer, of "la fleur de toute chevalerie", but suddenly, in the mundane chronicle of the second part of the *Recueil des dames* (and not *Dames galantes*, as it was called by its publishers), his true libertine nature comes out. There's a rude and true story, by the way, I assume takes place in a brothel, where we find James of Savoy as well as Brantôme himself and the Vidame of Chartres, another unrepentant seducer from the novel (relative of the fictitious Mlle de Chartres, later the Princess of Clèves); it contains a significant episode whose horrifying obscenity obliges me to refer to it in a footnote.³⁹

the records of the Council of Trent *de feu M. du Puy*. En Chapitre neuvième "Du Desein du Duc de Nemours d'enlever le duc d'Orleans" le Laboureur (1731: 774-775c). Henry Bourdeux recounts in "Les amants d'Annecy" (1922) the terrible and unending fight in and out of the courts between Françoise de Rohan and the Duke of Nemours, even spoiling the celebration of his wedding to Anne d'Este.

³⁸ Disagreeing with H. Chamard and G. Rudler when they no longer differentiate between the contributions of Brantôme and Le Laboureur about Nemours and they attribute a solely favourable version of the knight in the novel of the Countess: "Malgré l'admiration qu'ils professent pour ses rares qualités de corps et d'esprit, Brantôme ni même Le Laboureur ne cachent rien de sa vilénie, et par eux Mme de La Fayette n'a pu manquer de connaître à fond ce peu scrupuleux personnage. Elle a rejeté dans l'ombre tout ce qui eût atteint son honneur. Elle néglige les notes de Le Laboureur et suit son texte, où il presente en Nemours 'le veritable parangon de tous nos Paladins et de nos Preux du temps passé, le modèle de toutes les grâces et de toutes les vertus' ", in "La couleur historique", (1917-1918: esp. 17-18).

³⁹ In an excursus about different possible deformations of the female genitals, Brantôme amuses himself with the description of the disproportionately large labia minora he has observed in certain women, and then remembers as funny an anecdote that made the King roar with laughter: "...une fois, estans de bons compagnons à la court ensemble, comme M. de Nemours, M. le vidame de Chartres, M. le comte de La Rochefoucault, MM. de Montpezac, Givry, Genlis et autres, ne sachans que faire, allerent voir pisser les filles un jour, cela s'entend cachez en bas et elles en haut. Il y en eut une qui pissa contre terre: je ne la nomme point; et d'autant que le plancher estoit de tables, elle avoit ses lendilles si grandes qu'elles passerent par la fente des tables si avant qu'elle en monstra la longueur d'un doigt; si que M. de Randan, par cas, ayant un baston qu'il avoit pris à un laquais, où il y avoit un fiçon, en perça si dextrament ses landilles, et les cousit si bien contre la table, que la fille, sentant la picqueure, tout à coup s'esleva si fort qu'elle les escerta toutes, et de deux parts qu'il y en avoit en fit quatre; et lesdites lendilles en demeurèrent decoupées en forme de barbe d'escrevices; dont pourtant la fille s'en trouva

The countess carefully read and reread Brantôme's memoirs, as well as the Le Laboureur's *addenda* to the memoirs of Castelnau. This is obvious because she knew all sides of the character, a man reckoned to be a libertine and, for many years, capable of loving a married woman, Ronsard's *Vénus la Sainte*, possibly without any physical contact between them.⁴⁰ It is not difficult to imagine how the countess was inspired by the chronicles of that time to carefully carve out her creation. It seems obvious to me, for example, that she knew another piece of information about Nemours that appears in a biographical sketch of Francis of Lorraine, when it turns our attention from the knight of Guise and directs it again towards James of Savoy. Although they were good friends during their military careers, in Brantôme's presentation it is easy to conceive of them as rivals, even without mentioning again that Nemours finally married the widow of Lorraine, his long-loved Anne d'Este.⁴¹ The information concerns a description of a joust of the ring in which both knights, dressed up clownishly, participated. The first was dressed as a Gypsy and the second as a "bourgeoise de ville" wearing "à sa ceinture une grande bourse de ménage avec un grand clavier de clefs, ou pour le moins il y avoit plus de cent clefs pendants avec la grosse chaisne d'argent". With the noise of the keys rattling together in the background, he had his horse perform brilliant jumps – Brantôme called it miraculous – that it earned him the admiration of the entire room, and in particular that of "une Dame qu'il servoit & aimoit fort, aussi elle luy."⁴² It does not require much imagination to deduce that the keys are a symbolic allusion to that lady who was observing him, whose surname he was trying to remember. On the other hand, his refusal to travel to England to court the Virgin Queen is also taken directly from the second part of the *Recueil*, where it is insinuated that some other lovers were behind the French aristocrat's sudden loss of interest. This is probably a symptom of the character's fickleness. In the novel, however, without overshadowing this interpretation, it is experienced by the

tres-mal, et la maistresse en fut fort en colere. M. de Randan et la compagnie [among which is found M. de Nemours] en firent le conte au roy Henry, qui estoit bon compaignon, qui en rit pour sa part son saoul, et en appaisa le tout envers la reine, sans rien en deguiser." This time I quote from the edition called *Les dames galantes*, texte établi et annoté par Pascal Pia présenté par Paul Morand, Le Livre de Poche Librairie Générale Française, 1962, pp. 254-256.

⁴⁰ This great love for Anne d'Este, burdened by the guilt of the broken engagement with Françoise de Rohan, is also implied in *Les vies des grands capitaines*: "Pour en aymer trop une et luy estre fort fidelle, il ne voulut aymer l'autre, qui pourtant l'aymoit tousjours", (1895: 166).

⁴¹ Valentin Poizat (1920) emphatically defends identifying this former lover of Nemours, who married him when she was widowed, with the protagonist of our novel. It wouldn't be strange if the countess was inspired in part by her, but the fictional distortion of elements taken from reality must not be confused with reality itself. Henry Bordeaux takes it on himself to discredit the overly naïve conclusions of Poizat in "Les amants d'Annecy", see note 36 above.

⁴² I wonder if on this occasion he is making a work for Catherine of Clèves, married in 1570 to the brother of Francis, Henry of Guise. In any case, it does not matter who the lady in question was. It is interesting that this passage may have emerged from the idea of giving the name of Clèves to the fictitious lover of Nemours. But this is all only conjecture.

protagonist as a secret test of the unusual nature of the love professed to her by Nemours.

To have a dearer idea of how the chronicles of the 16th century inspired the novelist, it is important to better understand the famous memoirist Brantôme – her main source of information to construct the character of Nemours – and the contradictions in his work. Pierre de Bourdeille (1540-1614) spent his childhood in the court of Margaret of Navarre, where his widowed mother was *dame du corps* of the queen and his grandmother was her *dame d'honneur* until 1549, the year of the queen's death. Shortly after finishing his studies in Paris and Poitiers he inherited the Abbey of Brantôme, from which he took his name. Nevertheless, he would commit himself to a military career and devote time to travelling throughout Europe: his distinguished birth coupled with his temperament and interests opened doors to very close and even intimate relationships with the majority of people playing important roles in the 16th century. He had also been to Spain. In 1564 he entered into the service of the house of the Duke of Orleans, who would later become Henry III, as one of his gentlemen in waiting. With 600 pounds in pay for a post which required no activity, he was thus able to enlist in a Spanish expedition against the Moors. In 1564 a fleet of ships with ten thousand men under the orders of García de Toledo attacked the Peñón de Vélez. After it was taken (according to Brantôme, the sixty Turks waiting for them fled as soon as the first cannon shots were fired), he went ashore in Lisbon, travelled to Madrid, and was very well received by Queen Elizabeth, thrilled that a compatriot was bringing her recent news from the French court. Years later, he decided again to get closer to the Spanish court, having been deceived by the king of France and unhappy with the House of Guise, and no longer aspiring to marry or continue with the wooing of a seducer. Perhaps he took the Castilian seriousness to be a sign of good faith and frankness.⁴³ Those trips account for his knowledge of Spanish (shamelessly bragged about, although far from being perfect) which appears in the sayings he likes to repeat frequently in his work, not to mention the *Rodomontades*.⁴⁴ But he broke his back in a horseback riding accident in 1584 and was obliged to spend four years in bed, during which time his sister-in-law, the widow of his brother André, took great care of him. Isolated in his abbey, he entertained himself during his obligatory rest dictating his well-known and salacious memoirs.

Certain contradictions in those memoirs could be considered very revealing of the different sides of the historical character in question (here I am referring to James of Savoy). Prosper Mérimée noted it shrewdly in his edition of the work of the famous memoirist. For example, the description of the expedition of the

⁴³ I have based the biography of Brantôme mainly on the "Introduction à la table alphabétique générale", ed. Mérimée and Lacour (t. 13, 1895). See also the comprehensive study by Ludovic Lalanne (1896).

⁴⁴ Concerning this genre, see the summary presented by A. Cioranescu (1983: 108-113). See also López Barrera (1923: 3-28).

Invincible Amada is very respectful towards the figure of Philip II, while the account of the expedition in the *Rodomontades* contains offensive details of the same monarch, presented as a raging madman.⁴⁵ Merimée adds that Saint-Marc-Girardin and others after him have repeated that Brantôme was as indifferent to good as he was to evil, but he is convinced that this is not at all certain; evil attracted him more. "Ainsi la vertu des femmes l'agace visiblement; il va jusqu'à prétendre qu'une femme mariée se livrant à quatre amis est plus honorable qu'une veuve deux fois mariée. Il déprécie l'héroïne préférant la mort au déshonneur. (...) Pas un mot d'estime pour l'héroïsme inspiré de Jeanne d'Arc, pas une parole de regret pour son martyr! Non! Elle a été brûlée; eh bien, tant pis pour elle! Cela servira d'enseignement aux filles qui font les garçonnères. En matière semblable, du reste, ne demandez à Brantôme rien de chevaleresque, bien qu'il invoque à tout propos les preux du vieux temps. (...) Nous croyons en avoir assez dit pour montrer que l'indifférence de Brantôme pour le bien confine au mépris. En revanche, son indifférence pour le mal paraît souvent nuancée d'une certaine admiration. (...) Du rest, une meurtre ne compte pas pour lui, bien qu'il n'ait jamais fait le mal à personne."⁴⁶ These reasons make it easier to understand the treatment received by Catherine of Medici: highly favourable in the first part of the *Recueil* and, in the second, full of insinuations (without mentioning her by name) about her wickedness and her perverted sexuality. And herein lies, if I understand it correctly, the key to Brantôme's admiration for Nemours and his insensitivity towards the dark sides of his personality, especially because his infidelity with women did not concern him as a friend and companion of nocturnal exploits. On the other hand, those glimpses of misogyny in his behaviour, recorded by the indifferent pen of the abbot, had to have made a deep impression on the Countess de La Fayette a century later. Viewed in this way, perhaps her work could be viewed as a dish of feminine vengeance, served a century later, seasoned by her delicious prose.⁴⁷

If we scrutinize the novel in greater detail, we might glimpse the moment in which the "boldness" of Nemours enters the literary realm and casts a shadow over his image, a fact that provokes devastating effects in the heart of the princess, who is tortured by arguments both impeccable and contradictory. All his errors are reflected, in addition, in the second part of the *Recueil des Dames*, which I will record in footnotes. The silence with which the duke endures his love, whose object

⁴⁵ Mérimée and Lacour, t. 13 (1895: 105).

⁴⁶ T. 13 (1895: 105-106).

⁴⁷ At this point I cannot enter into the intricacies of *La Carte du Tendre* interpolated in *Clélie* (1655-1660) by Mlle de Scudéry or into the Jansenist influences of its author, a member of the circle of Mme de Sablé and a frequent visitor to the Countess du Plessis in the Hôtel Nevers, concerning exclusively the French context, already studied. See, for example, the recent book by Benedetta Craveri inspired to a great extent by the memoirs of Mme de Motteville, loyal lady in waiting of Queen Anne of Austria (2003), especially the chapter dedicated to "La marquesa de Sablé: el salón en el convento". I will only recall here a suggestion by Ana María Holzbacher to interpret this rejection of the irresistible young gentleman as a possible personal revenge of the author, possibly for biographical reasons: her scarce beauty, a frustrated adolescent infatuation... See the prologue (1987: 63-66).

remains hidden to everyone except to herself, is one of his most irresistible attractions within the homet's nest of the court. However, it suddenly ceases when he hears, crouched down in the garden of Coulommiers, the princess's unusual confession to her husband. The euphoria at seeing his love returned makes him forget his constraint and he does not have enough time to retell in third person the case he has just witnessed to the Vidame of Chartres, companion of night binges in the chronicles of his time.⁴⁸ Like a swift boomerang, the story will reach the ears of the princess, having travelled across the lips of the secret lover of the Vidame to the Dauphine. Not hesitating to resort to deception,⁴⁹ as soon as he has the chance to talk about the matter with the Princess, Nemours will attempt to pin the blame for the indiscretion on the Prince of Clèves.

Another extraordinary moment of the novel takes place when a love letter addressed to a knight who had the misfortune to misplace it in the *jeu de paume* falls into the hands of the Dauphine. Suspicion falls immediately on the Duke of Nemours, whose fame as a seducer has always preceded him. As if it were addressed to him, the young protagonist reads it, astonished and paralysed by jealousy. As I cannot stop to explore the author's use of all the possible combinations of this literary resource (the interpolation of an epistle in the heart of a work of sentimental fiction), I will only mention that it provides one of the novel's most exciting moments, as it allows the reader to discover, together with the - until then - restrained princess, how strong her confusion and her jealousy really are. In addition, it offers a very sophisticated pretext for Nemours to enter her chambers with the acquiescence of the Lord of Clèves and spend a long moment of intimacy with her while writing the fake letter intended to save the reputation of the Vidame.

Interpolating bundles of letters is a resource inherited from the epistolary novel (of long European lineage) which was made fashionable by Diego de San Pedro two centuries earlier, a resource that was also used in the *Diana*. But in Montemayor's novel, the epistolary debt appears, not only when a letter is rarely introduced, but also in the creation of a whole language (the last literary derivation, influenced also by Antonio de Guevara's prose, of the *ars dictaminis*) for the expression of the inside world of its characters, which the author analyses calmly in

⁴⁸ That indiscretion has a precedent in Guenelic, whose bluffing will also reach the ears of the husband of the princess. The attitude of Nemours, on the other hand, seems inspired by some comment (see, as it happens, note 36 above) such as the one that follows by Brantôme, tinged with admiration: "...M. de Nemours, le parangon de toute chevalerie: car, si jamais prince, seigneur ou gentilhomme a esté heureux en amours, ç'a esté celui-là. Il ne prenoit pas plaisir à les cacher à ses plus privez amis; si est-ce qu'à plusieurs il les a tenues si secretes qu'on les jugeoit que malaisement. Certes, pour les dames mariées, la découverte en est fort dangereuse; mais, pour les filles et veufes qui sont à marier, n'importe: car la couleur et pretexte d'un mariage futur couvre tout", Brantôme (1962: 473).

⁴⁹ Recall, as it happens, the story of *Demoiselle Rohan*.

the third person, almost never avoiding omniscience. It is chiefly for this reason that the *Diana* will be an unforgettable precedent for the analytical novel.⁵⁰

On the other hand, the economic use of motifs and the descriptive bareness (unlike the French heroic novel adapted or not to the narrative model of Ginés Pérez de Hita) are part of the search for brevity and verisimilitude⁵¹ that Huet explored in his *Traité de l'origine des romans* (1670), added as a preface to the first edition of *Zaïde*. This moderation is responsible for having returned the novel "à son vrai ton", already appreciable in the *Princesse de Montpensier* (1662), and for the complex and dense narrative motivation leading now to the decision to insert text from only one letter. This preference for brevity, however, will not diminish the attraction of the *Diana* because Mme de Saintonge will take charge of adapting it to the new times in an unfaithful translation that, like the *Guerras civiles* by Mme de la Roche-Gilhem (1683), eliminates whatever setbacks could threaten the narration's fluidity. In this new literary context, which although different, has inherited much from the previous one, we find the great narrative tension that Mme de La Fayette unfurls by inserting a single amorous missive. The misplaced letter, whose sender and addressee remain mysterious,⁵² unleashes an emotional storm unknown to the very young and inexperienced protagonist (who is almost as tender as Fiammetta and Hélienne). It provides her a surrogate experience: having read it, she analyses it with detective-like keenness and, days later, coolly dissects the feelings awakened in her as if they were also the object of literary interpretation. Once she is able to be objective about it, she is surprised "de n'avoir point encore pensé combien il était *peu vraisemblable* qu'un homme comme M. de Nemours, qui avait toujours fait paraître tant de légèreté parmi les femmes, fût capable d'un attachement sincère et durable".⁵³ Thus, the idealization of Nemours, responsible for the princess falling in love, is overshadowed by the historical character's darker sides, filtered through strictly literary resources in the novel and justifying the protagonist's ever increasing terror. That panic provides psychological verisimilitude to the variety of arguments she makes to herself for the rejection and also justifies

⁵⁰ Versini also sees the epistolary tradition in "les soliloques d'une Mme de La Fayette qui, sans faire servir la lettre autrement que par exception, lègue paradoxalement au genre épistolaire un instrument progressivement assumé." (1979: 49).

⁵¹ Noteworthy, however, are the severe criticisms expressed by Bussy-Rabutin in his letter of response to Mme de Sévigné (the 26th of June of 1678), about the lack of verisimilitude of the key scenes of *La Princesse*, and how his beloved cousin – considered such a good friend of Mme de La Fayette – did not have time to agree with him (letter of the 27th of July), (1974: 617).

⁵² This is, on the other hand, a fictional episode, based on the historical love hate of Catherine of Medici towards the Vidame of Chartres, that once again brings up connotations of a contemporary event for the countess: the letter that was lost during a reception held by Madame de Montbazon, and the immediate suspicion that it had ended up in the pocket of Coligny, who was in love with Madame de Longueville according to whispers heard around the court. The case began as a game of palace guessing and ended having degenerated into an affair of state in which Anne of Austria was obliged to intervene, Craveri (2003 : 100-105).

⁵³ *Princesse* (1939: 330).

the self-analysis of her reactions as if they were a part of a literary work that made it possible to rewrite the dénouement - let us not forget the warning function that subplots have.⁵⁴ In short, her love lived like a novel⁵⁵ helps her to master her own destiny. Only a subterfuge like substituting life experience with literary experience - in a new oblique demonstration of sentimentality - could provide the distance necessary to release her from the most violent passion.

The *Cárcel de amor* and the *Diana* as models of emotional narration

As soon as the author completes the slow travelling along the historical characters with which the novel begins, the fame of the protagonist's beauty precedes her name and bursts onto (the scene) the court. She is discovered by the Lord of Clèves in the home of an Italian jeweller. Though not described in detail, Mme de La Fayette assigns her beauty superior quality through the effect she has on him: admiration, surprise and astonishment take hold of the heart of this knight, so impressed is he by her beauty. Only after the introduction of the solemn members of the court gathered around the figure of the king does this first shift in perspective proceed. The entrance of Mlle de Chartres is described through the eyes of a young man overwhelmed by her beauty; this fact sets into motion the sentiments of courtesan rivalry - ultimately orchestrated by Diane of Poitiers - and

⁵⁴ The secondary tale is also a contribution of the *Diana*, imitated with such assiduousness by Cervantes starting from a certain point in the first part of *Don Quixote* that obliges him to hastily transfer the chapters dedicated to the story of Marcela and Grisóstomo in order to balance the ramifications of the main story. E.C. Riley believes that the intercalated tale, together with the recitation or singing of poems, contributed notably to the development of the "literary self-conscience" in the pastoral novel. He believes that in this type of novel a certain critical attitude is inherent and that it must have inspired Cervantes in many aspects and therefore contributed to the immediate development of the modern novel ((1971: 61-62). I believe that we can see in the *Princesse* another derivation of the same literary resource towards the universal novel. As regards the fluctuations of the interspersed tale during the XVIIth century vid. Yllera (1992: 109-117); for its fortune during the XVIII vid. Cots (1992: 131-140).

⁵⁵ Note, for example, the claim for the originality of the very confession when wrongly accusing the Prince of Clèves of its disclosure, since it could not have occurred to anyone else: "Ah! monsieur, reprenez, il n'y a pas dans le monde une autre aventure pareille à la mienne; il n'y a point une autre femme capable de la même chose. Le hasard ne peut l'avoir fait inventer; on ne l'a jamais imaginée et cette pensée n'est jamais tombée dans un autre esprit que le mien...", *Princesse* (1939: 349). Nevertheless, Valincour, in his *Lettres à la marquise sur le sujet de La Princesse de Clèves*, pointed out that that confession scene, whose novelty fervently vindicated its protagonist, had been taken from *Les Désordres de l'amour* by Mme de Villedieu, which had appeared two years earlier. The problem is that it is very possible that the *Princesse* or a handwritten outline of it had been circulating from the beginning of the 70s; see note 9 above.

the action of the novel begins. This elusive detail is central to the shaping of the narrative strategy of this masterly work. Although Mme de La Fayette does not describe the exterior scenes (in fact the novel is almost a total bareness of decorations), she constantly combines narrative omniscience with one of the character's point of view, always choosing the one most emotionally affected by the narrated events.

Before revealing which feelings the protagonist discovers deep down when she meets the great love of her life, the narrator subtly diverts the reader's attention towards the effect produced in a third character at seeing the two of them being introduced at the dance. The author recounts the first meeting of the lovers at the wedding of *morsieur* de Lorraine in this way: the Lord of Nemours arrived at the Louvre late, after the dance had begun, and approached the princess, nimbly jumping over some seats.⁵⁶ He was so surprised by her beauty, that when he was at her side and she bowed to him, he could only admire her. When they began to dance, making such a good couple in the eyes of everyone, a murmur of praise rose up in the room. When the dance ended, the Dauphine introduced them at the request of Nemours, although he had already recognized her:

-Pour moi, madame, dit M. de Nemours, je n'ai pas d'incertitude; mais comme Mme de Clèves n'a pas les mêmes raisons pour deviner qui je suis que celles que j'ai pour la reconnaître, je voudrais bien que Votre Majesté eût la bonté de lui apprendre mon nom.

-Je crois, dit Mme la dauphine, qu'elle le sait aussi bien que vous savez le sien.

-Je vous assure, madame, reprit Mme de Clèves, qui paraissait un peu embarrassée, que je ne devine pas si bien que vous pensez.

-Vous devinez fort bien, répondit Mme la dauphine; et il y a même quelque chose d'obligeant pour M. de Nemours à ne vouloir pas avouer que vous le connaissez sans l'avoir jamais vu.

La reine les interrompit pour faire continuer le bal; M. de Nemours prit la reine dauphine. Cette princesse était d'une parfaite beauté et avait paru telle aux yeux de M. de Nemours avant qu'il allât en Flandre; mais, de tout le soir, il ne put admirer que Mme de Clèves.

Le chevalier de Guise, qui l'adorait toujours, était à ses pieds, et ce qui se venait de passer lui avait donné un *douleur sensible*. Il [le] prit comme un présage que la fortune destinait M. de Nemours à être amoureux de Mme de Clèves; et, *soit qu'en effet il eût paru quelque trouble sur son visage, ou que la jalousie fit voir au chevalier de Guise au delà de la vérité, il crut qu'elle avait été touchée de la vue de ce prince*, et il ne put s'empêcher de lui dire que M. de Nemours était bien heureux de commencer à être connu d'elle par une aventure qui avait quelque chose de galant et d'extraordinaire.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ The detail is probably inspired by the appearance of Montmorency in the life of a very young Madame de Sablé, when she saw such a handsome young man come tumbling in through the window. Vid Craveri (2003: 137). On this same scene and its preparation in time, by means of indirect information, vid. Rousset (1984: 104-108).

⁵⁷ *Princesse* (1939: 262-263). The italics are mine.

This scene recalls another, essentially a very similar one, from the *Cárcel de amor* (1492) by Diego de San Pedro. Let us not forget here that the French audiences had been great fans of the Spanish novel: eight reedited versions of its first translation in 1525 are preserved, as are fourteen reedited versions of the 1552 bilingual edition, and it was still arousing interest in the middle of the XVII century, witnessed by the preservation of one edition, also bilingual, from 1616.⁵⁸

When Leriano has recuperated from his deep depression after receiving no response from Laureola to his love letters, he arrives at the court and is introduced for the first time to his beloved in the presence of the *Auctor* (who coincides with the voice of the narrator). The scene, closely observed by Persio – the princess's jealous suitor who sees bewilderment in both of them – triggers new impediments that will end up being insurmountable for the couple. Princess Laureola tries to hide her confusion, but her predicament is noticed right away by Persio, the eagle-eyed observer of what she thinks:

Cuando besó las manos a Laureola pasaron cosas mucho de notar, en especial para mí, que sabía lo que entre ellos estaba; al uno le sobraba turbación, al otro le faltaba color; ni él sabía qué decir ni ella qué responder, que tanta fuerza tienen las pasiones enamoradas, que siempre traen el seso y discreción debajo de su bandera, lo que allí vi por clara experiencia.

Y puesto que de las mudanzas dellos ninguno toviese noticia por la poca sospecha que de su pendencia había, Persio, hijo del señor de Gavia, miró en ellas trayendo el mismo pensamiento que Leriano traía; y como las sospechas celosas escudriñan las cosas secretas, tanto miró de allí adelante las hablas y señales dél que dio crédito a lo que sospechaba, y no solamente dio fe a lo que veía, que no era nada, mas a lo que imaginaba que era todo...⁵⁹

Furthermore, this scene left its imprint on French iconography: among the three Renaissance tapestries inspired by passages from the *Cárcel de amor* that are preserved in the *Musée National du Moyen Âge. Thermes de Cluny*, there is one that significantly fixes its attention on this very moment in the *Histoire de Lérian et Lauréolle*. This is *La Rencontre à la cour*, which faithfully reproduces from the Spanish novel the lovers' perturbation and the perception of this detail by a young man who observes them obliquely from the left, slightly inclined towards an elderly

⁵⁸ Unlike Scarron or Boisrobert, Mme de La Fayette is not inspired by María de Zayas or by Juan Pérez de Montalbán, to give two examples of Spanish 17th century novelists, with their gruesome passions. The dignity and restraint with which the lovers of the countess act is more in doubt with Segrais; the possible echoes of Spanish novels reach her in a less direct way (through literary reworkings or translations) and in the style of subtle reminder. I believe that Cioranescu is referring to an apparently more immediate context when he states: "S'il s'agit du tumulte intérieur, l'influence de la fiction littéraire espagnole semble s'évanouir. *La Princesse de Clèves*, qui est un roman historique et psychologique à la fois, apparaît libre de la contamination espagnole, que l'on décèle cependant dans les autres romans de son auteur.", (1983: 471).

⁵⁹ San Pedro (1985: 113).

courtier who stands next to the king (most severe and inquisitive whilst also watching closely over L'erian); the young man (evidently Perseus), whilst looking at Laureolle, brings his mouth to the ear of this possible *sumiller de corps* or *Mayordomo Mayor* in an attitude of denunciation. In this posture, he is in turn observed by the *Auctor* of the story (in this case, *Viateur*).⁶⁰



But this focalization, evident also in the tapestry, which relates the first meeting of the two lovers in the presence of the entire court with intimate, emotional repercussion in a third person, is not limited to the fragment with obvious similarities to the scene by Diego de San Pedro; the countess extends the technique to all of her work. Thus the *Princesse de Clèves* multiplies its affective potential always in search of a counterpoint, distributing the narration over various perspectives with which the same events are observed and experienced: facts which might be subtle, hardly expressed and which remain invisible to those who are indifferent to them. Almost two centuries after the appearance of the *Cárcel de*

⁶⁰ I am grateful to Pedro Cátedra for indicating to me the existence of these valuable tapestries, which can be consulted in the Joubert catalogue (2002: 130-134).

amor, this zigzagging of the plot through a variety of emotions is now developed to its final consequences and directed with meticulous calculation through the middle of a complex tangle of relationships very typical of palace atmosphere. As the novel's narrative complexity and its sentimental and psychological density grow, this is a very effective narrative technique that suspends the result of all these emotional impulses and sustains the attention of the reader, while satisfying little by little its curiosity about what occurs in the different sensitivities: the fragility of clandestine love is felt with as much strength as the danger that lies in wait for it.

There is another oblique way of interpreting the narration in the *Princesse de Clèves* which in the last analysis also seems to be due to Spanish. More than ten years ago, when I compared the three texts of the *Abencerraje* to decipher their genealogical relations, I realized that the oldest text, which was said to come from a chronicle (that of the renowned Infante Don Fernando), preserved the fragments dedicated to staging skirmishes in greater detail, while the intermediate text included by Antonio de Villegas in his *Inventario* eliminated a great deal of them. The more modern text was even more extreme and I then decided to show that Montemayor had rewritten it. In accordance with the rest of the *Diana*, a pastoral novel that inherits and amplifies, in its redundant and periphrastic prose, the Petrarchan and Garcilasian poetic tendency towards fine analysis of feelings, this last text of the *Abencerraje* was adorned with amplified external and in particular internal descriptions of the characters. And in this sense, the style he employed, charged with negations that avoided direct assertion and looked to make a detour through circumlocution and omission, the style charged with an irregular rhythm, deeply rhythmic, was completely essential. Not only that, I pointed out something that, as obvious as it seems, had not been noticed: the immense majority of the sentences of the novel of Montemayor are negative. In other words, the first psychological novel written not only in Spain but in Europe avoids an assertive style and searches obsessively in negation and periphrasis the expression of feelings in the most stylised and least direct way. This means that as soon as the feelings of love begin to play a greater role in the novel, its adapted language is the negation of the same. This is indeed an interesting paradox. France understood very well this rhetorical legacy of the Spanish novel, which arrived to its own narrative fiction through the numerous translations of the *Cárcel de Amor* and also the novel by Montemayor (eight different ones in a little more than a century, including that sentimentalised *Abencerraje* and popularising it). Of course, this legacy also arrived through the filter of the *Astrée*, in whose reading the first *précieuses* were trained. One more proof that this influence, after many ups and downs, and stripped of Moslem or pastoral clothing, leads to the gallant novel of the countess, is the preference for negation that can be observed in her work, so frequent in the writing of Honoré d'Urfé. In effect, like the redundancies looked for by Montemayor,⁶¹ in *La Princesse* there is an overabundance of omission, euphemism, absolute superlatives

⁶¹ Its first translators did not respect this sought after limitation, breaking it in the persistent search for the *variatio*.

and even hyperbole. We know from her letters that the style of Madame de La Fayette could be lively, simple and pragmatic. But in her sentimental novel she changed register, and when looked at very closely, it seems as if her techniques were repeated excessively (like, for example, in the careless repetition of the conjunction "que"). Rather than taking away flexibility, the exact opposite occurs and provides the discourse with a touch of *négligé*, conversational, very much in line with the spirit of its time.⁶² After these redundancies there is in fact a very subtle capacity for penetrating into the soul of the characters, and giving them life, following the complicated meanderings of their feelings. The countess boasts of a great flexibility in the handling of dialogue, in the alternation of the indirect and the free indirect style, which transcribes thoughts. Sometimes, as Ana María Holzbacher explained very well, the direct style of the narration and of the dialogues is also seen in the soliloquies, "when the character allows himself to be carried away by vehemence, and words burst out, perhaps aloud."⁶³ A great sense of rhythm is also perceived, as occurs in the *Diana* itself. But in *La Princesse* the attenuation, like the letter (and to a certain extent also the interspersed tale and the questions of love), is not indiscriminate. It is only employed in the right moment – increasing its sophistication, always in pursuit of originality. Choosing a random example: there are so many hedgings in the explanation that Mme de Chartres makes to herself before giving the hand of her daughter to a man who she knows her daughter does not love, and so much negation is once again strung together in the only verbal exchange transcribed between Mlle. de Chartres and the Prince of Clèves, that the wedding does not take long to celebrate, with all its ill-fated consequences.⁶⁴

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⁶² Marc Fumaroli, "L'art de la conversation, ou Forum du royaume", (1994: 283-320).

⁶³ See the epigraph "Estilo y técnica narrativa" from the prologue quoted by Ana María Holzbacher (1987: 69-72).

⁶⁴ Disastrous for M. de Clèves, sweet for his wife, since Mme de La Fayette only allows love to survive in the permanent dodging of obstacles. When the obstacle to the marriage disappears, love enters in its death throes, passes away, and the novel ends. The countess has made the wise move of transforming Lelian's paradigmatic example and his useless sacrifice into a secondary though crucial character: converted into the despised and depressive spouse of M. de Clèves, his death for love could not be further from the passion of the protagonists, but it does have the singular virtue of breaking the defining triangular narrative system in the *Princesse*. Thus Nemours ceases to make progress in the interior of his beloved. Because this death of the injured third character sets in motion the ending of the art of narration and even of love itself.

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