Translating and Transforming the Chivalric Romance in Margaret Tyler’s *Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood*

Joyce Boro

Université de Montréal

Women and men from across the social spectrum voraciously enjoyed medieval romance in manuscript, print, and dramatic, verse, and prose adaptations throughout the sixteenth century. Rather than herald the death of romance, the Early Modern period epitomizes a vibrant era in which romance flourished and was reinvented and transformed repeatedly. The publication of Margaret Tyler’s *Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood* (1578), a translation of Diego Ortizúñez de Calahorra’s *Espejo de príncipes y cavalleros*, represents a significant moment in the genre’s evolution. The first romance written by an Englishwoman, Tyler’s groundbreaking work marks the appearance of Spanish chivalric romance in England, and it sets the stage for the translation of a host of other Spanish chivalric romances, including the nine subsequent books of *Mirror* translated by R.P. (Robert Parry or Parke; 1585, 1586?, 1583, 1598), and L.A. (1598,1599); as well as L.A.’s *Honour of Chivalrie* (1598); Anthony Munday’s *Amadis de Gaula* (1590?), *Palmerin d’Oliva* (1588), *Palmendos* (1589), *Primaekon of Greece* (1595), *Palmier of England* (1596), and *Palladine of England* (1588); and, of course, Thomas Shelton’s *Don Quixote* (1612).

*Mirror*’s preface has garnered attention incommensurable to the romance since it articulates a justification of women’s authorship and provides a rare glimpse of female authorial self-perception. Yet, looking beyond the preface to Tyler’s translation practices and methodology, this paper argues that Tyler reconfigures the style and contents of her source text, recasting it for a specifically sixteenth-century, English audience. These alterations reflect contemporary interests and preoccupations, many of which characterize new Renaissance romance forms such as the humanist and sentimental romances. In addition, stemming from *Mirror*’s Spanish origin, the narrative’s settings and the protagonists’ nationalities, goals, and frames of reference invoke a non-Protestant poetics that differs from the imaginative universe of the English romance. Not only does this alternative ideology imbue the chivalric romance with a fresh, vibrant dimension, but also it further emphasizes the importance of translation to sixteenth-century literary production and generic evolution. *Mirror*, therefore, is far from a mere “idle conceit .... devised to beguile time,” as Tyler dismissively describes her endeavor. Through the composition of *Mirror*, Tyler authors, and helps to usher in, a new type of chivalric romance—a romance that marries typically Spanish and English, as well as medieval and early modern, sensibilities—thereby breathing yet more life into the already vivacious and thriving romance genre.

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