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## VIRGIL, ARIOSTO, AND BOOK XII OF *AMADIS DE GAULE*

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NEAR THE END of Guillaume Aubert's translation of Book XII of *Amadis de Gaule* occurs a noteworthy interpolation. At Chapter 84 Aubert departs from his Spanish source and inserts fourteen chapters of what may loosely be called original composition. In Chapter 98 he returns to his translation, almost without dropping a stitch. Since the fourteen chapters amount to some sixty pages, about 12 per cent of the whole book, it is a fairly large insertion.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since almost all the "original" matter is borrowed from Ariosto and Virgil, Aubert's addition is of great interest to anyone concerned with Renaissance literary taste in the blending of epic, heroic, and romantic. It is also of particular interest to anyone concerned with the Renaissance idea of a heroic poem in prose.

Aubert's borrowing has not gone unnoticed. In 1909 Walther Küchler pointed out that several of Aubert's added chapters—those dealing with the adventures of Prince Agesilan and Diane—were actually a composite of episodes from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.<sup>2</sup> Küchler demonstrated beyond doubt that Chapters 84, 85, 86, 87, 94, and 95 of *Amadis de Gaule*, Book XII, are made up of events lifted from Ariosto: the great storm at sea described in Canto XLI,

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from Book XII are taken from the Rutgers Library folio, part of a twelve-volume set of *Amadis de Gaule* (Paris, 1541-1559) recently acquired.

<sup>2</sup> "Eine dem *Orlando Furioso* Ariosto entlehnte Episode im französischen Amadis-roman," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Litteratur*, XXXIV (1909), 274-292.

st. 8ff.; the description of the hippogriff in II, 49 and IV, 18, 19, and 44ff.; the adventures of Angelica in VIII, 35-57; Astolpho's fight with the harpies in XXXIII, 96ff.; and Rogero's fight with the orc and his rescue of Angelica in X, 92ff. All these episodes, far flung in Ariosto, Aubert combines with considerable skill, adding some bits of his own but generally guided by Ariosto's inventiveness. Küchler, in fact, has high praise for the neatness with which Aubert has blended *Orlando* into *Amadis*: "Auch die Art wie er sich des bei Ariost gefundenen Materials bedient, muss man als durchaus entsprechend und glücklich bezeichnen."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to point out how Aubert has simplified and unified his source. For example, the deeds performed in *Orlando* by Rogero and Astolpho are done in Aubert's *Amadis* by Agesilan alone. Küchler admits, however, that Ariosto's style undergoes considerable diffusion in French prose.

Küchler's discovery was expanded a bit by Alexandre Cioranescu. In his *L'Arioste en France* (1939) he points out some other borrowings in *Amadis*—both in Book XII and other books by French translators—and gives the French translation of the *Amadis* cycle credit for helping pave the way in France for the greater and more sophisticated Italian work. Cioranescu is not so impressed as Küchler by Aubert's skill or originality: "Dans cette sort d'emprunts, seule la fable de l'Arioste intéresse l'imitateur; il transcrit scrupuleusement ses aventures, sans intervenir autrement que pour changer les noms des personnages, et pour mettre d'accord ces histoires nouvelles avec celles qu'il avait déjà empruntées ailleurs."<sup>4</sup> Cioranescu has a point, but had he been aware of Aubert's further borrowings from Ariosto and from Virgil, he might have been willing to grant him a modicum of skill, perhaps even originality.

But then, perhaps not. A third scholar has carried Aubert's record of borrowings a step beyond Cioranescu without finding much to praise. In his learned and informative *L'Arioste en Espagne* (1966) Maxime Chevalier indicates, what Küchler and Cioranescu somehow overlooked, that Chapters 88, 89, 90, 91, and 92 of Aubert's *Amadis* derive from Ariosto's celebrated—and often imitated—tale of Ariodant and Ginevra. Chevalier does not discuss the borrowing in detail, for such discussion would be out of his way, but he calls Aubert's rendition "adaptation sans prestige." He notes that all the

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>4</sup> Second ed. (Turin, 1963), I, 262.

borrowings from Ariosto are lumped together at the end of *Amadis*, where they “restent isolés dans son œuvre, comme un corps étranger.”<sup>5</sup> His argument is that Ariosto’s matter is so different from the standard stuff of prose chivalric romance that Aubert could not have inserted it anywhere without its being conspicuous. Yet the mere fact that scholars like Küchler and Cioranescu did not recognize even the famous tale of Ariodant and Ginevra suggests that it did not look obviously out of place in *Amadis*.

Moreover, Chevalier does not give Aubert sufficient credit for ingenuity in his redaction of the Ariodant and Ginevra tale. It is by all odds the cleverest retelling of that oft-told tale—much better, for instance, than either Shakespeare’s or Spenser’s version.<sup>6</sup> Aubert admittedly does not change the story much. He follows Ariosto closely. But he makes one startling alteration that sets the story in a new perspective: he changes its sexual orientation. Ariosto’s tale is set in Scotland, where by law any woman taken in sexual congress with a man not her husband is to be burned at the stake. When Dalinda tells Rinaldo how Ginevra has been betrayed, he is eager to fight in defense of the accused woman. Nowhere, however, does he show any horror at the law itself.

Aubert sets his version in the Isle of Canabée, formerly ruled by Amazons and still subject to Amazon law. There any male caught in sexual impropriety with a woman not his wife is to be burned at the stake. The shift from a male-dominated to a female-dominated society turns the tale topsy-turvy and makes it very droll. Aubert does not have to change the order of the story and barely bothers to change the characters’ names—thus Ariosto’s Polynesso becomes the Amazon Polinecque—but the change of sex guarantees a shift in emphasis and meaning. When Brianges first hears that Prince Bruzanges has been sentenced to be burned, he is horrified and bursts out in anger: “Maudites soient les malheureuses creatures qui ont peu inuenter si malheureuses loix: & fault-il donc qu’un iouuenceau pour auoir donné plaisir à vne Dame, en reçoynie la mort pour recompense? . . . Si vne pareille ardeur, si vn mesme desir, si vne semblable

<sup>5</sup> (Institut d’études ibériques et ibéro-américaines de l’université de Bordeaux, 1966), pp. 260-261.

<sup>6</sup> In his *Sources of Much Ado About Nothing* (New Haven, Conn., 1950) Charles T. Prouty discusses a large number of the variations of this tale. He does not, however, include Aubert’s retelling.

affection, enflamment en amour les femmes & les hommes; pourquoy est-ce que lon defendra l'vn aux hommes, & qu'on le permetra aux femmes? C'est vn folie manifeste, & vous asseure . . . que telle iniustice ne deuoit point estre endurée si long temps. . . ."<sup>7</sup> The emphasis and words here are all Aubert's, and they are sufficient to establish that as a borrower he is not without ingenuity and a keen sense of social satire. Many a 16th-century reader of this story in Book XII of *Amadis de Gaule* must have paused to ponder—in a way he would not have pondered while reading Ariosto's tale of Ariodant and Ginevra—the contemporary French double standard of law and morality.

In thus completing the record of Aubert's borrowings from Ariosto, Chevalier adds a significant *obiter dictum*: "Enfin la mort de la reine Florelle abandonnée par don Rogel est certainement calquée sur la fin de Didon."<sup>8</sup> This is true, but Chevalier, whose eye is on Ariosto, does not fully appreciate the extent and skill of Aubert's borrowing. It is not merely the death of Dido that he takes over from Virgil. In fact, Chapters 93, 96, and 97 of *Amadis*—the rest of the fourteen chapters under discussion—are lifted almost wholly from the *Aeneid*, especially Book IV.

According to Aubert's story, after Prince Bruzanges is saved from a fiery death by Brianges and his friend Rogel, Queen Florelle, Bruzanges' sister, feels a great sense of gratitude toward the two knights. Indeed, so grateful is she that she falls immediately in love with Rogel, and he, a notorious philanderer, readily responds. Almost before the reader is aware of what is happening, the tale merges into that of Dido and Aeneas. Like Dido, Florelle, still in mourning for her late husband, has vowed not to remarry. The Isle of Canabée, like Carthage, is surrounded by enemies. Like Aeneas, Rogel has been driven ashore by a wild storm at sea. (He and Brianges are on their way to Persia to restore the three princesses Sidère, Fleurinde, and Sindaïde to their uncle the sultan.) After Bruzanges' rescue Florelle holds a great banquet, like that Dido holds for the Trojans in Book I of the *Aeneid*, and there she falls deeper in love with Rogel.

Aubert follows the outline of Virgil's story faithfully: Florelle seeks the advice of her confidante Garlonne, who urges her to re-

<sup>7</sup> Folio 217.

<sup>8</sup> Chevalier, p. 260.

nounce the memory of her husband; she consults her priests and soothsayers, but Love blinds her to all warnings; she shows Rogel around her chief city and falls ever deeper in love; she and Rogel consummate their love and, careless of rumors, continue to meet; the princess Sindaïde meets Rogel and upbraids him for his dereliction of duty (and his betrayal of her sister Sidère); Rogel makes plans to leave secretly; Florelle learns of his new resolve and berates him; he pleads a higher law; she curses him, swoons, and takes to her bed; she dies as the ship clears the harbor; her body is burned, and Rogel at sea observes the smoke from her pyre.

Not only has Aubert followed the Dido-Aeneas story as Virgil tells it. He sometimes follows Virgil's language so closely that his French serves as a free translation. Thus when Florelle seeks the advice of Garlonne, her words echo those of Dido to Anna:

si mihi non animo fixum immo-  
tumque sederet / ne cui me vinclo  
vellem sociare iugali, / postquam  
primus amor deceptam morte fe-  
fellit; / si non pertaesum thalami  
taedaeque fuisset, / huic uni forsan  
potui succumbere culpae. / Anna,  
fatebor enim, miseri post fata Sy-  
chaei / coniugis et sparsos fraterna  
caede penatis / solus hic inflexit sen-  
sus animumque labantem / impulit.  
agnosco veteris vestigia flammae. /  
sed mihi vel tellus optem prius ima  
dehiscat / vel pater omnipotens abi-  
gat me fulmone ad umbras, / pal-  
lantis umbras Erebo noctemque  
profundam, / ante, pudor, quam te  
violo aut tua iura resolvo. / ille  
meos, primus qui me sibi iunxit,  
amores / abstulit; ille habeat secum  
servetque sepulchro. / sic effata si-  
num lacrimis implevit obortis.

(IV, 15-30)<sup>9</sup>

Certainement . . . si ie  
n'auois pris en moy vne  
ferme resolution de iamais  
ne me marier, & si l'amour  
de mon premier espoux ne  
me eust fait auoir en hor-  
reur les secondes nopces, peut  
estre que maintenant ce beau  
ieune Prince eut gaigné vne  
partie de mon affection; car  
ie vous iure, ma chere nour-  
rice, que depuis la mort de  
mon mary Neophone, cestuy  
seul à peu flechir ma rigueur,  
& contraindre ma poitrine  
obeïssante à ressentir & recog-  
noistre quelques estincelles de  
mes premieres flames amou-  
reuses. Mais plus tost la terre  
me puisse engloutir en ses  
abismes, & les Dieux me con-  
sumer de leur foudre, que ie  
viole celle sacrée chasteté la-  
quelle j'ay iurée aux cendres  
de mon cher mary. Il a eu

<sup>9</sup> The citations from Virgil are from *P. Vergili Maronis opera*, ed. F. A. Hirtzel (Oxford, 1963).

mes premieres amours en son viuant; il les a emportez avecques luy en mourant; & maintenant ie veux qu'il les garde encores avecque luy dans son tombeau. A ces motz la belle Royne commença à plorer à grosses larmes. . . . (fol. 232<sup>v</sup>-233)

Comparison of the two passages makes clear that at this stage of his composition Aubert had a copy of the *Aeneid* before him. He follows Virgil closely—even to the inclusion of *fatebor enim*—and makes changes only where the Latin is obviously out of keeping with his narrative. Thus Virgil's phrase *et sparsos fraterna caede penatis* is not translated by Aubert.

He does not always follow Virgil so slavishly. As he proceeds through the Dido-Aeneas story, he takes what he can use, but where the Latin becomes specific, he has to make changes. The speech of Anna urging Dido to forget the dead and live a little is interesting to compare with the French because it compels Aubert to proceed more independently:

o luce magis dilecta sorori, / solane  
perpetua maerens carpere iuventa /  
nec dulcis natos Veneris nec praemia  
noris? / id cinerem aut manis credis  
curare sepultos? / esto: aegram nul-  
li quondam flexere mariti, / non  
Libyae, non ante Tyro; despectus  
Iarbas / ductoresque alii, quos Af-  
rica terra triumphis / dives alit: pla-  
citone etiam pugnabis amor? / nec  
venit in mentem quorum consederis  
arvis? / hinc Gaetulae urbes, genus  
insuperabile bello, / et Numidae in-  
freni cingunt et inhospita Syrtis; /  
hinc deserta siti regio lateque furen-  
tes / Barcaei, quid bella Tyro sur-  
gentia dicam / germanique minas? /  
dis equidem auspibus reor et Iu-  
none secunda / hunc cursum Iliacas  
vento tenuisse carinas. / quam tu

Et comment, ma Dame, es-  
tes-vous donc deliberée de  
passer ainsi la fleur de votre  
ieunesse sans plus experimen-  
ter les plaisirs de l'amour, &  
sans iamais sentir la ioye que  
les enfans donnent à leurs  
meres en leur enfance par  
mille petites folatrics? Pensez  
vous que ceux qui sont au  
tombeau, ayent aucun soucy  
de telles simplesses, & friuoles  
superstitions? Je ne dy pas  
que si le roy Dardanin de  
Canarie, & le Prince de Ma-  
lerne, vous ont semblé de  
mauuaise grace & indignes  
de vostre beauté, vous les  
deussiez accepter pour es-  
poux: Mais à quelle ocasion

urbem, soror, hanc cernes, quae  
 surgere regna / coniugio tali!  
 (IV, 31-48)

contredirez vous à vostre plaisir? pourquoy prendrez vous les armes contre l'affection qui vous est la plus douce & agreable? quelle raison vous empeschera d'aymer celuy lequel seul entre tous les autres vous à peu plaire? Vous souuient-il point en quelle contrée vous estes? car toutes les Isles circonuoyssines vous sont ennemyes; & n'y a aucun de ceux qui regnent en icelles, lequel ne desire vostre ruïne, & qui ne soit prest (peut estre plus tost que ne pensez) à vous mener vne cruelle guerre. O quel apuy ce vous seroit, si vn ieune Prince tant courageux, & duquel vous auez experimenté la prouesse à l'oeil, se trouuoit lors à vostre secours! O combien vous seriez redoutée de voz ennemys, si vous estiez alliée auecque ce superbe & illustre sang de Grece, dont le seul renom fait estonner toute la terre! (fol. 233)

Once again Aubert obviously has his eye on Virgil, but this time he follows much less subserviently. Anna's advice is so devoid of generalized sentiments that it is of limited use to Aubert. A large part of Anna's speech he has to omit entirely, and perhaps for this reason he pads out other parts with considerable sentimentalizing. Thus Virgil's "nec . . . natos . . . noris" becomes the excuse for Aubert's "sans iamais sentir la ioye que les enfans donnent à leurs meres en leur enfance par mille petites folatrics," and Virgil's single word "id" is expanded to "telles simplesses, & friuoles superstitions." For obvious reasons King Dardanin of Canary and the Prince of Malerne—Aubert's invented names—take the place of "Iarbas ductoresque alii," and Anna's sober assessment of the military and political alignment against Dido becomes the more generalized and repetitive

"toutes les Isles circonuoysins vous sont ennemyes; & n'y a aucun de ceux qui regnent en icelles, lequel ne desire vostre ruyne, & qui ne soit prest . . . à vous mener vne cruelle guerre." In short, Aubert's relative independence here seems a bit sterile. He uses Anna's speech as a general guide but interlards it with sentimental clichés from chivalric romance. Perhaps the borrowed device of the rhetorical question—which usually brings out the worst in writers of romance—is partially to blame.

There is no need to examine in further detail all the other instances where Aubert similarly follows Virgil. Only once does he depart radically from his classical source: When Florelle dies of a broken heart, she is four months pregnant. Shortly after she expires, she is delivered of a son by Caesarean section, the attending physician a supernatural being who glides off with the child while all those present look on helplessly. The child, we are told, will be called Foulgorant because of the thunderbolt birthmark he bears on his chest, and his deeds will be told in following books.<sup>10</sup> The incident takes the reader back, perhaps with a jolt, into the terrain both familiar and strange of chivalric romance.

Whether or not one regards the Foulgorant episode as a happy addition to the death of Florelle-Dido, Aubert's talent is for integration. The fourteen chapters of incidents taken from Virgil and Ariosto and added to the Spanish romance fit with scarcely a wrinkle. Most interesting of all to the modern reader is the openness of it all. Aubert does not try to hide his borrowings. In fact he flaunts them. No invention in the *Orlando* is more fantastic or memorable than the hippogriff, no story more famous than that of Ariodant and Ginevra. No book of the *Aeneid* was better known in the Middle Ages or in the 16th century than Book IV. Undoubtedly Aubert's borrowings were recognized by many a Renaissance reader of *Amadis de Gaule*, and it can reasonably be supposed that the recognition was one of delight more often than shock. Such borrowings, after all, showed off the writer's learning. They were no more than Ariosto had done with Virgil and Virgil in his turn with Homer.

Now that the main record of Aubert's debt is complete—all four-

<sup>10</sup> Foulgorant, of course, is never mentioned in any of the books that follow. Aubert may have entertained the notion of adding a book of his own to the cycle, a venture not uncommon in the bibliographical history of *Amadis*.



teen of his interpolated chapters having been accounted for—what are we to make of it all? Certainly *Amadis de Gaule*, Book XII, emerges as a unique example of Renaissance eclecticism. Where else can one find Virgil and Ariosto brought together so substantially and worked into the fabric of a Spanish chivalric romance in French translation? That Aubert felt free to depart from his Spanish text and add to it is nothing new in 16th-century literary practice, but the liberties with Virgil and Ariosto raise some questions for us. Aubert's version of *Amadis* becomes inevitably an index of literary taste, especially in 16th-century debates over the relative merits of Virgil and Ariosto and the relationship between epic and romance. It seems likely too that Book XII of *Amadis* was influential in the growth of ideas about an epic or heroic poem in prose.

Especially striking is the apparent ease with which Virgil and Ariosto, epic and heroic, blend into the prose romance. Despite Chevalier, who feels that Ariosto is intrinsically different and remains like a foreign body in *Amadis*, a reader sees no basic difference as he goes in the French translation from Feliciano de Silva to Ariosto to Virgil. Though Aubert's skill deserves some credit, the smoothness of transition suggests also that the narrative stuff of the *Aeneid*, *Orlando Furioso*, and *Amadis de Gaule* is essentially similar. The adventures of Aeneas, Rogero, and Agesilan-Rogel flow into one another like parts of the same dream. Virgil was often thought of in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as a writer of romance. In fact the prologue to a version of the *Aeneid* published in France in 1483 called it "un veritable roman de chevalrie."<sup>11</sup> It is worth recalling too that the only complete version of the *Orlando Furioso* in French during the entire 16th century was the 1543 prose translation. Take away the majesty of Virgil's hexameters and the essential voice of Ariosto that one hears only in *ottava rima* and you have left what cannot easily be distinguished from the stuff of chivalric romance. If Aubert's *Amadis* does nothing else, it offers instruction in the importance of style. It shows that style, not matter, separates epic, heroic, and romantic.

Both Virgil and Ariosto suffer in translation into *Amadis de Gaule*, but, as might be expected, Virgil suffers more. The *Orlando*, despite

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Chevalier, p. 38.

its epic ornaments, was already wed to romance. A poem of great parts, it comprehends the world of 16th-century Europe with all its instabilities. Skeptical, ambivalent, irreverent—the almost unending list of adjectives that spring to mind as applicable to it is an indication of how much it contains. Ariosto's characters like Rogero, As-tolpho, and Angelica remain remarkably generalized and interchangeable. They become in Aubert's addition Agesilan, Rogel, and Diane without the reader's awareness of disparity or loss. Indeed, Aubert's handling of the Ariodant and Ginevra story is quite original even as it is very Ariostan.

Virgil, of course, has more to lose. Unlike the *Orlando*, the *Aeneid* is not a poem of parts, and Aubert's borrowing may strike some 20th-century readers as sacrilegious. The 16th century was not so queasy. The Dido-Aeneas story had for a long while fascinated readers who cared not a straw about epic poetry or high endeavor. It struck them as a self-contained episode. DuBellay translated Book IV into French and Surrey made it English because the love story of the errant Trojan and the Carthaginian queen was high in the literary fashion of their day. Aubert could scarcely have found matter more to the popular taste. Of course, he cheapens the love story woefully. Merely the omission of the divine machinery, which in Virgil explains in large part the conduct of the lovers, makes for a tawdry affair. Queen Florelle's pregnancy piles upon Rogel-Aeneas the final onus of perfidy.<sup>12</sup>

Aubert included Ariosto and Virgil not to downgrade them but to raise *Amadis de Gaule*. Obviously he did not consider epic, heroic, and romance incompatible. *Amadis de Gaule*, after all, shared many of the conventions associated by the 16th century with heroic poetry: a general magnitude of events, an elaborate structure of episodes, a strong element of historical celebration of a people or a family, divine machinery—magicians usually replace the gods in *Orlando* and *Amadis*—and various other similarities real or imagined. The vague bounds of heroic poetry were subject to continuing debate, and one is reminded of Byron's half-joking list of requirements that his *Don Juan* supposedly satisfies:

<sup>12</sup> It may be worth noting that although in the *Aeneid* Dido wishes she were pregnant, Aubert would have been aware of a tradition stemming from Ovid's *Heroides* that she was pregnant indeed.

each book containing  
 With Love, and War, a heavy gale at sea,  
 A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning. . . .

Some critics even suggested that verse, though a desirable ornament, was not absolutely necessary, and the idea that a heroic poem could be written in prose continued to tease the imaginations of critics and writers well beyond the century.

That Aubert may have had a notion, however dim, of a heroic poem in prose is suggested by his handling of one of the most famous of epic conventions: the divine descent. In the *Aeneid* an instance occurs in the Dido-Aeneas story when Mercury descends to earth to awaken Aeneas to a sense of his almost forgotten mission. In remarkably spare fashion Virgil shows what has happened to Aeneas by describing him as Mercury sees him:

atque illi stellatus iaspide fulva  
 ensis erat Tyrioque ardebat murice laena  
 demissa ex umeris, dives quae munera Dido  
 fecerat, et tenui telas discreverat auro.  
 (261-4)

The word *ardebat* carries a great deal of weight, as the scansion shows, and great symbolic stress is placed on the hero's wearing an ornate garment made for him by the queen. When Aubert in the process of retelling the Dido-Aeneas story came to this point, he obviously remembered that Ariosto had drawn upon the same episode in describing the appearance of Melissa to Rogero in Canto VII:

il suo vestir delizioso e molle  
 tutto era d'ozio e di lascivia pieno,  
 che de sua man gli avea di seta e d'oro  
 tessuto Alcina con sottil lavoro.<sup>13</sup>

That this was one of several places where Ariosto imitated Virgil was well known in the 16th century.<sup>14</sup> Aubert's recognition of Ari-

<sup>13</sup> Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. De Benedetti and Segre (Bologna, 1960), p. 182.

<sup>14</sup> Sir John Harington, who translated Ariosto into English in 1591, writes in his notes to Book VII: "The comming of *Melissa* to *Rogero* alludeth to the comming of *Mercurie*

osto's debt is made evident when he momentarily drops Virgil and follows Ariosto.

In Aubert's addition the episode occurs in Chapter 96, when the Princess Sindaïde happens to see Rogel in the company of Queen Florelle and realizes that he has become so infatuated that he has completely forgotten his promise to take her and her sisters back to Persia. She is also angered to see that Rogel, who has professed love for her sister Sidère, is unfaithful. His appearance gives him away: "il portoit vn manteau fait de soye blanche & de fil d'or que la belle Florelle auoit fait & tissu de sa propre main."<sup>15</sup> Aubert's language appears to owe something to each of his sources. His *manteau* is closer to Virgil's *laena* than to Ariosto's more general *vestir*, and his *fait & tissu* contains both Virgil's *fecerat* and Ariosto's *tessuto*. Ariosto's dominant influence is clear, however, not only in such a phrase as *de sa propre main* but also in the passage that immediately follows in Ariosto, where Aubert enlarges the description of Rogel's effeminacy by following *Orlando*, VII, st. 54-55. Thereafter Aubert shifts back to Book IV of the *Aeneid* and borrows no more from Ariosto.

The descent from heaven episode illustrates the nature of Aubert's borrowing. It is not a Mercury or a Melissa who appears to Rogel but merely Sindaïde. The epiphany occurs through the agency not of a divinity or an enchantress but a mere princess. Though the emphasis in *Amadis* changes from the celestial or supernatural to the terrestrial, the analogy with the *Aeneid* or the *Orlando* suggests that the will of heaven works here through human hands. Aubert may thus be seen as continuing the movement begun by Ariosto away from the employment of gods. He is "wading further," imitating a recognized model but making changes to suit his own ends.

Aubert, of course, expected that his readers would take note of his borrowing of this epic convention. Unquestionably many of his 16th-century readers did so. One of them was Sir Philip Sidney, whose *Arcadia* was strongly influenced by his reading of *Amadis de Gaule*. Moreover, Sidney's revised *Arcadia* was apparently designed by him

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to *Aeneas* in *Virgill*, who was then at Carthage stayd by the loue of *Dydo* as *Rogero* was here by *Alcyna*." (*Orlando Furioso in English Heroical Verse*, Da Capo Press, Amsterdam, New York, 1970, p. 55.)

<sup>15</sup> Folio 233<sup>v</sup>.

as a heroic poem in prose, and it was so regarded by his contemporaries and by 17th-century critics.<sup>16</sup> In his *Defense of Poetry* Sidney refers to *Amadis de Gaule* as a work that has had a beneficial moral effect upon many readers though it "wanteth much of a perfect poesy." It seems likely that Aubert's use of Virgil and Ariosto in Book XII contributed to Sidney's conviction that *Amadis* had greatness in it and that it was a prose poem, however imperfect.

Guillaume Aubert deserves at least a footnote in any history of the heroic poem in prose. Whatever he thought he was doing by inserting his extended imitation of Virgil and Ariosto into *Amadis*—and since he says nothing directly, we must infer his intention from his practice—Book XII must have added to the critical confusion of the century. Certainly if we take seriously the complimentary poems that grace many of the books of *Amadis* in France, many men of letters looked upon it as a kind of heroic poem. In the light of the conflicting views arising out of the comparisons between Virgil and Ariosto in the 16th century the idea was not unthinkable. Aubert, at any rate, emerges as not just a translator but in the best Renaissance sense a creative imitator.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of Sidney's views see K. O. Myrick, *Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935).