*Amadís de Gaula* presents particular challenges to the translator because of its long and complex textual history. By the time of Robert Southey’s source text, a 1547 Sevilla printing of the romance, *Amadís* had already undergone a number of material, cultural, and perhaps even linguistic transfers. There is no extant “original” *Amadís* by a known author. The romance as we know it descends from a medieval legend modeled loosely on the Vulgate *Lancelot.* Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce posits that a first version of the primitive *Amadís* may have been composed as early as 1290, during the reign of Sancho IV. Martín de Riquer dates the earliest references to the legend in other texts to 1350 (13). Antonio Rodríguez-Moñino discovered fragments of a fifteenth-century Castilian manuscript of *Amadís* in 1955 and transcribed their content in *El primer manuscrito del* Amadís de Gaula (15–24). The text of *Amadís* as we know it comes from the version of Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, a minor nobleman from royal city Medina del Campo, who undertook the project of copying, editing, and reworking one or more medieval texts of the *Amadís* legend during the last decades of the fifteenth century (Pierce 14–15). Montalvo is an author in his own right in addition to an editor and a scribe; he altered the well-known tragic ending of the medieval language and added an original Book IV and Book V to *Amadís.* Following the precendent set by the Sevilla edition of 1508, the first four books of *Amadís* are always published as a unit, though the influential 1540 French translation by Nicolas de Herberay was printed in four separate luxury volumes by Parisian printer Janot.

*Amadís* was a bestseller of formidable impact in early modern Iberia, France, and England. Marian Rothstein estimates that there were 500,000 readers of the French *Amadís* alone*,* and José Manuel Cacho Blecua counts 527 editions of *Amadís* printed before 1694 in various formats and languages, including translations in Hebrew, French, Italian, English, and Dutch (Cacho Blecua 86). In the sixteenth century, editions of *Amadís*, including the 1547 with which Southey worked, often either reported Montalvo’s name incorrectly, as Garci Ordóñez de Montalvo, or omitted his name altogether; French translator Herberay refers to him only as “the Spanish author.” Scholars and critics have, at various points in *Amadís*’s history ascribed a French or Portuguese origin rather than a Castilian one to the medieval legend. Robert Southey’s influential 1803 translation follows the scholarly current of his time in attributing the text to fourteenth-century Portuguese courtier Vasco de Lobeira, who, as scholars now have discovered, was not alive at the right time to be the original author. Scholars now agree on a Castilian origin for the romance, and for the source texts with which Montalvo worked in order to produce the 1508.

The text of *Amadís* itself is likewise challenging. [show image] As you can see from the images, the punctuation is quite different from modern Spanish, and each chapter appears in a largely undifferentiated block. We noticed when working with the 1547 that it contains a number of punctuation marks that do not appear to be in a hierarchical relationship. In our digital edition, we’ve treated them as siblings. Southey was confronting a text that very much did not conform to the publication standards of his own day, which also happened to be a text with a long translation history. When he produces his edition, Southey very consciously strips out some of the early modern features of *Amadís*, both of the Montalvo and of the early modern translations, the French by Nicolas de Herberay and the English by Anthony Munday that followed it. *Amadís* had become in the mid-sixteenth century a book almost without an author; Herberay claims that it must be French for no better reason than that the fictional *Amadís* hails from Gaul. Southey in the ninetheenth century attempts to recover the medieval origins of the text, trying to peel it back how he imagines it must have been when the courtier he believes to have been the author, Lobeira, first produced it. The search for a medieval, original *Amadís* is not unique to Southey, and it was in fact an obsession of twentieth-century critics, notably Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce, who in a very influential book tried to guess, based on linguistic traces, what parts of Montalvo’s *Amadís* were truly medieval and which were early modern. I believe, along with most other twenty-first century critics, that this is a fruitless search; *Amadís* is a forever hybrid text with no fixed coordinates in space and time.

What Southey has done is to take a particular literary thesis—that *Amadís* is medieval, originally Portuguese, and attributable to a certain courtier—and develop it into a translation theory for the text. Southey is an excellent Hispanist and excellent scholar, and his knowledge of the Spanish language in its late fifteenth-century state shows in the details of the translation. He also has in mind his monolingual English audience, and in the footnotes and in certain additions to the text, he explains the conventions of Iberian culture for a non-habituated audience. In this sense, he comes close to the scholarly tradition of translation and critical edition that has been prominent in the twentieth century. However, when we approach Southey’s translation, we have to keep in mind Southey’s place, and the Romantics’ place more generally, in the history of translation. Susan Bassnett talks about the history of translation from ancient Rome to the end of the nineteenth century as a debate over two concepts of fidelity to a source text: the word for word translation versus the sense for sense translation. Horace in *Ars Poetica* famously argues for the sense for sense translation; that is, adapting the source text so that it makes sense, both linguistically and culturally, in the target language. Etienne Dolet, a French translator, Humanist, and contemporary of Nicholas de Herberay, translator of the French *Amadís*, likewise advocated for sense-for-sense translations, but with a sense of doing good service to the author of the source language text. Translations, according to Dolet, could take some artistic license, but only in their grammar, syntax, and word choice. Alexander Tytler, writing in 1790, advocates a position similar to Dolet’s; he is in favor of a balance of the word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation strategies that renders the full meaning of the source author’s text. The Romantics, according to Susan Bassnett, tended to break with earlier translation theories, privileging the needs of the text—its genius—above all other concerns. What we would expect from Southey, even before reading the translation, is a text that celebrates the medieval aspects of the source work, preserving some of its sound and feel, but that takes extensive liberties with the actual language in order to produce a more pleasing text for English readers.

What we get when we look at our code is a much more complex relationship between source text and target text. [show Helena’s table for Montalvo 0 / Southey 1] Southey combines translation approaches, for the most part remaining very “faithful” to the source text, with word-for-word translation where Montalvo’s syntax makes that possible, and sense-for-sense translation otherwise, with some scholarly apparatus in notes. You can see that there are a few additions, which mostly supply structures the Spanish text needs to become intelligble in English, notably adverbs of time, which would help readers sequence events, and proper names, which resolve unclear antecedents in the source text. The large blocks of red are more interesting for what they reveal about Southey’s translation theory. In the Preface, he explained to readers that he omitted what he found to be the early modern Spanish author’s ill-conceived additions to the text, both its sermonizing and its objectionable moral content. One could see this as a flattening of the moral ambiguities of Montalvo’s text. The sixteenth- and seventeenth century translators also intervened with these same parts of the text, but instead of taking out both the sex scenes and the sermons, they took out the sermons in order to lengthen the sex scenes. Southey mentions working with the early modern French and English *Amadíses* in his preface, and his omissions are almost certainly a conscious response to the translation history of this text as well as to the early modern book in the form in which he encountered it.