**A Digital Humanities Approach to Cultural Translation in Robert Southey’s *Amadis of Gaul***

Robert Southey is unique among English Romantic poets for his depth of engagement with Spain and Portugal. He traveled to both countries, spoke both languages, translated medieval and early modern texts from Spanish, and produced a well-regarded history of Brazil. In May of 1802, Southey entered into a contract with the Longman, who had published his verse romance *Thalaba the Destroyer* in 1801, to produce a new translation of *Amadís de Gaula*, a medieval Castilian romance whose earliest extant version dates to 1508. The plot of the romance chronicles the rise to prominence of a young prince of Gaul. Abandoned at birth, Amadís learns his identity, reconciles with his parents, indulges in a secret marriage with a British princess, and eventually becomes king of Britain and Gaul. Southey translated *Amadís* translation after traveling twice to the Iberian Peninsula, first in 1795-96 and then in 1801-01 (Speck 62–65; Zarandona 310). Juan Miguel Zarandona writes that the Iberian Peninsula had become a Grand Tour destination after the publication of Anglo-Italian Giuseppe Baretti’s 1770 travel diary, and thus travel to Spain might have been expected of a wealthy aristocrat of Southey’s era (Zarandona 309). Yet Southey, the son of a draper, viewed his trips to Spain and Portugal not as idle travel, but as an economic opportunity, as they allowed him to conduct research for his literary works (Speck 83–84). As early as 1797, Southey’s letters express his appreciation of *Amadís* and all related texts, including Bernardo Tasso’s poetic adaptation *Amadigi di Gaula*.[[1]](#footnote-1) Southey’s highly readable version of the medieval romance did, in fact, answer his financial hopes; he wrote to his wife Edith in 1804 that *Amadís* had already outsold *Thalaba* (Southey, “Letter 944, to Edith Southey, [Late May] 1804”).

Southey’s *Amadís* resembles other early nineteenth century translations its approach, rendering the late medieval Castilian sense-for-sense rather than word-for-word. Southey makes the notoriously difficult language of the Spanish romance pleasant to read in English and alters cultural detail that might not have met the expectations of the English reading public in a literal translation. Susan Bassnett writes that early nineteenth century translators expressed two conflicting tendencies in their work: “One exalts translation as a category of thought, with the translator seen as a creative genius in his own right, in touch with the genius of his original and enriching the literature and language into which he is translating. The other sees translation in terms of the more mechanical function of ‘making known’ a text or author” (74). Both ideologies are active in Southey’s *Amadís*. The voice of Southey the author is in evidence in many of the sentence-level changes to the text. Southey’s *Amadis* is highly readable, free of the rhetorical flourishes and extended flights of sentiment previous French and English translations by Nicolas de Herberay (1540), Anthony Munday (1590), and the Comte de Tressan (1779) had added to the late medieval Castilian work.

Southey describes his translation practice in the Preface to *Amadis of Gaul* as one that seeks to improve the aesthetics of the original through radical compression. Addressing the source romance’s famous length, he writes: “To have translated a closely printed folio would have been absurd. I have reduced it to about half its length, by abridging the words, not the story; by curtailing the dialogue, avoiding all recapitulations of the past action, consolidating many of those sin gle blows which have no reference to armorial anatomy, and passing over the occasional moralizings of the Author” (“Preface” xxxi). As this sample demonstrates, Southey throughout the Preface takes a dismissive view of the Author, in this case Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, the sixteenth-century editor compiler of *Amadís de Gaula*. Southey’s lack of fidelity to the persona of Montalvo does not reflect his view of authorship in general, but of a figure he believed to be a translator like Herberay, Munday, and Tressan, all of whom he despised.

Montalvo, a minor city official from Medina del Campo, was not the author of *Amadís* in any traditional sense, but he is responsible for the medieval or “primitive” text’s survival. The romance, inspired by French Arthurian texts like the *Lancelot*, emerged sometime around 1350 in the Iberian Peninsula (Riquer 13). Antonio Rodríguez Moñino’s 1955 manuscript find, which uncovered fragments of a pre-Montalvo *Amadís,* indicated that the legend most likely originated in Castile, though other readers and scholars previously believed it to have a Portuguese or French origin (15–24). The French origin of *Amadís* had always been a fanciful notion, a misreading of French translator Herberay’s apocryphal claim to have found manuscript fragments of *Amadís* in Picardie (iii). Herberay’s early modern readers, accustomed to the apocryphal manuscript trope, would have understood the story of the fragments as proto-nationalistic posturing. Herberay in fact encountered the famous Spanish romance while serving as master of artillery in François I’s wars against Spanish monarch Charles V (Avalle-Arce 57; Thomas 199). Readers of later centuries, however, including Sir Walter Scott, did lend the French thesis some credence (109). However, greater proof existed for the Portuguese thesis, of which Southey was a proponent. As Southey himself mentions in the Preface, Portugal had a tradition of claiming *Amadís* for itself, with evidence ranging from late medieval poetry to chronicles, much of it plausible (“Preface” x).[[2]](#footnote-2) The idea of medieval Portuguese courtier Vasco de Lobeira as *Amadís*’s original author had some adherents among nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars of Spanish literature but has been deprecated in recent decades. Even before Rodríguez-Moñino’s discovery, references uncovered in medieval Spanish poetry suggested that *Amadís* predated the historical Lobeira (Williams 22–26; Riquer 13; Avalle-Arce 69–87). Most scholars of Hispanic Studies now agree that *Amadís* is Castilian (Sales Dasí 6–7).

As he translated, Southey attempted to restore an imaginary Portuguese original, unraveling additions to Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo’s early modern Spanish edition of the text by previous translators. By walking back what he perceived to be *Amadís*’s translation history, Southey takes a scholar’s approach to the text. Southey based his translation on the earliest version of *Amadís* he could access, a copy of the 1547 Sevilla printing of Montalvo that belonged to his friend Richard Heber. Southey’s first plan, abridging from Munday, would have been a more expedient option and and was in fact Southey’s first plan (“Letter 674, to Richard Heber, 7 May [1802]”; “Preface” xxxiv). The choice to use Montalvo instead reflects not only Southey’s facility with archaic Spanish but his attention to textual authenticity. While writing Amadís, Southey remarks in the Preface, he kept Herberay, Munday, and Tressan at hand, sometimes adopting Munday’s wording while rejecting Herberay and Tressan’s anachronisms (Southey, “Preface” xxxiii–xxxiv).[[3]](#footnote-3) In some cases, Southey made guesses about the medieval *Amadís* that have been disproven in the twentieth century. For example, he writes: “With the celebration of the marriage, the story obviously concludes. I have ended here, and left the reader to infer that Amadis and Oriana, like the heroes of every nursery tale, lived very happy after” (“Preface” xv). The medieval *Amadís*, in fact,ended with the accidental killing of Amadís and Oriana’s subsequent suicide, a messy and tragic conclusion that mirrored those of medieval French Arthurian romances (Lida de Malkiel 150–152). Southey imagines a marriage plot for the medieval romance that suits the aesthetic preferences of his own era much better than those of medieval Iberia. Medieval romances, especially those feature courtly love, end in cataclysm; early modern romances, like Montalvo’s *Amadís*, end in the infinite production of children and sequels necessary to satisfy the demands of serial publication (Williamson 31; Krause 121).

It is Southey’s scholar’s instincts and his attention to the slow changes *Amadís de Gaula* experienced throughout its translation history that inspired our research team to create the Amadis in Translation project, in which we use Digital Humanities methods, including TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) encoding, to separate and examine each of Southey’s linguistic decisions. Even though Southey follows a dead-end path in literary scholarship, his choices interest us as scholars of literature and translation. We are not the first to study Southey’s Spanish-to-English translations; Zarandona has described Southey’s translations as “pragmatic” and “medievalizing,” and on the whole, our results show that conclusion to be correct (313). The digital methodology the Amadis in Translation project, however, can shed light on Southey’s work at the level of the word, the clause, and the paragraph much better than traditional methods can. *Amadís de Gaula* has an extent of approximately 2,000 modern-equivalent pages, and human reading cannot account for each translation decision in a systematic way. [[4]](#footnote-4) Our digital project uses machine reading to assist, track, and record different types of human reading. We use our TEI encoding to test Southey’s statements about his own practices in the Preface and to identify phenomena he did not discuss. Producing results from the project requires a combination of the quantitative analysis computational methods enable with the traditional methods of literary scholarship.

Paragraph on our TEI metholology: EBB

Our project website, http://amadis.newtfire.org, offers what we term “aligned contents” for five sample chapters from Montalvo and Southey drawn from Book I, the most faithful part of Southey’s translation.[[5]](#footnote-5) The selection covers three episodes: the meeting of Amadis’s parents, their clandestine liaison, and the birth of Amadis in the first two chapters, the false report that Amadis has died in Chapter Twenty-One, and Amadis’s combat with his brother Galaor in Chapter Twenty-Three. These well-known episodes all contain moments of high emotional intensity, and the feelings they express in word and gesture range from joy to sorry. Chapter Two, about Perion and Elisena’s love affair and Amadis’s birth, is rich in the language of happiness and despair, and Chapter Twenty-One overflows with Oriana’s grief. Amadís’s combat with Galaor, meanwhile, shows off surprise, anger, and hatred. In choosing these chapters, we attempted to find a sample for *Amadis of Gaul* that included all its major characters and its emotional range. Though we plan to add chapters in the future, we believe that this test bed of texts represents Southey’s translation—at least in Book I—accurately.

Within the sample chapters, we have uncovered a striking feature of Southey’s translation that he did not preview in the Preface, a systematic dampening of the language of emotion. Southey declares in the Preface that he minimizes repetition and combat detail from the 1547, but he only mentions objectionable expressions of emotion when he references the two French translations (“Preface” xxxi). We discovered that, in fact, Southey calmed down the Castilian *Amadís*, reflecting the same range of emotion words as the source but using each with less frequency. Southey’s suppression of sentiment is silent, pervasive, and so subtle that, even for the member of our team who specializes in Iberian romance, it passed unperceived until we looked at it with digital methods. Southey both omits full clauses in which descriptions of emotions appear and fails to translate the diction of emotion in clauses he compresses. We term this change a cultural translation, recognizing that the expression of emotion in language obeys cultural rules and can vary quite a bit from one genre or time period to another (“Preface” xxxiv). While there is much that is universal in human feeling, our project supports Jan Plamper’s argument that specific iterations of emotion, in this case emotional language, are “framed and pre-structured” by the media in which they are imbedded (Plamper 74). Though both might be termed “romance,” Montalvo’s Iberian chivalric text obeys one set of cultural instructions, while Southey’s obeys another. Though we expected Southey’s translation to deviate from the source, it did not always do so according to stereotypes about Romantic literature or even according to our knowledge of Southey’s other works, like the verse romance *Thalaba*. For example, we expected the sex scene in Chapter Two to be truncated, but we did not guess beforehand that the amount of emotional suppression would be greater in the chapter that features grief than in the chapter that showcases love and sex.

To illustrate how Southey alters the emotional language of the Montalvo 1547, we have prepared a number of visualizations from the project data. One of the major features we track is the number and extent of clauses Southey omitted wholesale from Montalvo’s text. Indeed, because the source and translation do not compare well word by word, we have identified the “clause-like unit” as the smallest unit of comparison we can use between the texts. Our data on emotion is partly machine-generated and partly hand-coded. In order to compare the texts clause by clause, we match them by hand in xml. From there, we use machine reading to compare their extent and align them. Once we have positioned them side-by-side, we use human reading again to flag a list of emotion words and note where Montalvo’s diction is missing from the translation. One of the surprises of working in this method has been to see that Southey occasionally adds emotion words to Montalvo, as in the phrase “the pleasure of sleep,” in Chapter 2, while the Montalvo simply uses the verb *dormir* (“to sleep”). We have also noticed that Southey occasionally sustitutes a weaker emotional word for an expression of feeling, rendering the sense without the intensity. For example, in Chapter Twenty-One, the character Arcaláus expresses *vergüença* (“shame”) at having to sing his own praises, but Southey translates with the milder “albeit I must be content to declare mine own praise.”

Some of the differences between Southey and Montalvo, however, have less to do with emotion than cultural codes for the presentation of texts. The 1547 Montalvo presents a particular challenge for modern translation, as it bridges the textual aesthetics of the medieval and early modern periods and lacks modern paragraphing and punctuation. Indeed, early sixteeth century romances of chivalry printed in Castile, including the copy of *Amadís* Southey had to hand, look very much like their manuscript forebears and employ a number of practices that allowed printers to maximize the number of characters on the page, including substituting the calderón symbol (similar to the modern paragraph symbol) for white space, hyphenating words at the end of lines regardless of where syllable breaks occurred, and using the tilde (~) to mark the elision of letters. Paper was a printer’s most expensive resourse, and these techniques make it possible to print long texts like *Amadís* with relatively little of it (Lyons 38). In the 1547, moreover, even in-line punctuation is difficult for modern readers to interpret. Periods, colons, and forward slashes are used in a freely alternating pattern, and it is difficult to say where sentences begin and end. The spelling is not consistent in the 1547, and archaic forms alternate with early modern ones with no discernible logic. In our coding, we accommodate the 1547’s premodern features, measuring in “clause-like units” (drawn from punctuation mark to punctuation mark, whatever they happen to be) rather than in sentences. Southey, however, had to modernize for publication: he uses vastly different clause and sentence boundaries that obey modern puncutation rules.

Southey’s modernization of the text’s grammar and typography, so essential in communicating with English readers, also tended to simplify the text at the level of diction and theme. Omissions are a primary vector for this simplification. In our five sample chapters, we found that Southey omitted 111 clauses. Most of the full-clause omissions target repetition or wordiness in the source text, but some appear to matters of culture or taste. Iberian romances of chivalry were notorious by the late sixteenth century in Spain for their poor style, and critics up until the mid-twentieth century tended to judge them to be of scant aesthetic quality (Menéndez y Pelayo 278).[[6]](#footnote-6) Southey follows a well-established line of criticism on Montalvo in correcting perceived deficiencies. Though most of the omissions in the set are style-related, we identified 34 related to emotion, eight related to expressions of courtesy, eight that eliminated religious diction, and 6 that suppressed combat detail.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reason for omitting clause | Definition | Number of occurrences | Percentage of total (out of 111; rounded to nearest half percent) |
| style | clauses containing repetition or needless words | 57 | 51% |
| emotion | clauses that contain specific diction related to emotion, such as happiness, sadness, love, tears | 34 | 31% |
| courtesy | clauses containing late medieval hierarchical forms of address | 8 | 7% |
| religion | clauses containing reference to Catholic practices | 6 | 5.5% |
| combat | clauses containing the specific diction of battle: wounds, weapons, battlefield movement | 6 | 5.5% |

Of the clauses that appear to have been omitted for reasons of content rather than style, the emotional clauses predominate. Clauses with overt sexual diction (sexual acts, sexualized body parts) comprise only 8% of the emotional clauses (three clauses in the sample), which means that the suppression of sexuality is not the primary reason for changes to emotion in the text. This contradicts our original hypothesis, formed based on prior knowledge of Southey.

To explore in more detail the nature of these unexpected suppressions, we separated out the omitted clauses and generated a list of emotions. We found Montalvo’s text to cover a range of positive and negative emotions. Love (*amor*) and sorrow (*cuita*) dominate Montalvo’s emotional vocabulary. This usage suits the content of the sample chapters, which contain one happy event, Perión and Elisena’s love affair, and two sad ones, the abandonment of the infant Amadis and the apocryphal report of Amadis’s death. We found a total of 67 emotion words in the omitted clauses, 30 of which are unique.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Emotion word (grouped by root word, in alphabetical order in Spanish) | Number of occurrences in omitted clauses |
| alegría (happiness) | 5 |
| amargura (bitterness) | 1 |
| amor (love) | 10 |
| angustia (anguish) | 1 |
| cativo (unhappy) | 1 |
| congoja (anxiety) | 1 |
| consuelo (consolation) | 2 |
| contento (happy) | 2 |
| corazón (heart) | 4 |
| cuita (sorrow) | 6 |
| descanso (relief) | 2 |
| deseo (desire) | 1 |
| dolor (pain) | 1 |
| enojo (anger) | 2 |
| esperanza (hope) | 1 |
| gozo (enjoyment) | 1 |
| grave (grievous) | 2 |
| maravilla (amazement) | 2 |
| padecer (to suffer) | 3 |
| pasión (passion) | 1 |
| piedad (pity) | 1 |
| placer (pleasure; used in expressions of courtesy) | 5 |
| querer (to love; excluded when it means “to want”) | 1 |
| reír (to laugh) | 1 |
| sobrealto (distress) | 1 |
| sonreír (to smile) | 1 |
| sufrir (to suffer) | 1 |
| temer (to fear) | 2 |
| tormento (torment) | 2 |
| tristeza (sadness) | 3 |
|  |  |
| unique words = 30 | total emotion words = 67 |

Though Southey appears to systematically suppress emotional clauses, these omitted clauses do not, on their own, tell the whole story of Southey’s the sentimental transformation of *Amadís* for its new audience. When we examined the portions of the aligned contents that were not omitted from the translation, we found that some of Montalvo’s emotion words had been suppressed even when Southey rendered all other content in English. To ascertain approximately what percentage of Montalvo’s emotional vocabulary Southey eliminates from his translation, we analyzed the alignment charts for Montalvo and Southey for the two most emotional chapters in the span, Chapters Two and Twenty-Two. In both instances, Southey makes dramatic changes to emotion, but the percentage of emotion suppressed varies widely. To calculate the numbers below, we determined that an emotion word in Southey matched the Montalvo if the translation rendered it at all, either freely or literally.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter number | Number of emotion words in Montalvo | Number of emotion words in Southey | percentage of Montalvo’s emotion words present in Southey |
| Southey 2 | 57 | 40 | 70% |
| Southey 21 | 63 | 23 | 36.5% |

We also generated a list of the emotion words in both chapters and compared them against each other. In the two sample chapters, we found only two instances where Southey omitted an emotion word in one clause and recuperated it in another. These appear in the chart as co-occurences.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Emotion word | Number of occurrences in the two Montalvo chapters | Occurrences in the two Southey chapters | Percentage suppressed |
| afición (affection) | 2 | 0 | 100% |
| alegría (happiness) | 7 | 3 | 57% |
| amor (love) | 12 | 9 | 25% |
| angustia (anguish) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| bien (joy) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| congoja (anxiety) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| consuelo (consolation) | 3 | 1 | 66% |
| corazón (heart) | 8 | 6 | 25% |
| cuita (sorrow) | 13 | 7 | 46% |
| deleite (delight) | 3 | 2 | 33% |
| descanso (relief) | 3 | 2 | 33% |
| desprecio (spite) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| deseo (desire) | 2 | 0 | 100% |
| dolor (pain) | 6 | 4 | 33% |
| duelo (grief) | 2 | 1 | 50% |
| enojo (anger) | 4 | 1 | 75% |
| espanto (fright) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| holganza (enjoyment) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| gozar (to enjoy) | 3 | 2 | 33% |
| grave (grievous) | 2 | 0 | 100% |
| lágrimas (tears) | 2 | 1 | 50% |
| llorar (to cry) | 9 | 6 | 33% |
| maravilla (amazement) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| miedo (fear) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| orgullo (pride) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| padecer (to suffer) | 3 | 1 | 66% |
| pagar (to gratify)[[7]](#footnote-7) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| pesar (to aggrieve) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| piedad (pity) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| placer (pleasure) | 4 | 3 | 25% |
| querer (to love)[[8]](#footnote-8) | 2 | 0 | 100% |
| reír (to laugh) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| sentir (to feel)[[9]](#footnote-9) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| sobresalto (distress) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| sonreír (to smile) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| sufrir (to suffer) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| temer (to fear) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| tormento (torment) | 1 | 0 | 100% |
| tristeza (sadness) | 3 | 0 | 100% |
| vergüenza (shame) | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| vicio (pleasure) | 2 | 1 | 50% |
| total unique emotion words in sample: 42 | total uses = 117 | total uses = 61 | overall suppression = 48% |

Though our sample size for this comparison, two chapters, is quite small compared to the overall extent of the Montalvo and Southey’s texts, we think that the figure we have generated for the suppression of emotion words, 48%, suggests that the suppression of emotion is not a fluke, but a consistent practice. We believe this figure, which seems high, might even grow once we include the project Montalvo’s Book IV, which Southey abridged so heavily that it hardly seems the same work.

It seems quite clear to us that Southey has dramatically altered the emotional content of the romance for his translation, though especially with a small sample, the reason for the suppresion of emotion is not so clear.

EBB: Something here on Romanticism and emotion—what are the received ideas we might be contesting?Jan Plamper writes that it has been traditional in the history of emotion, with examples going back to John Huizinga’s seminal work in the field, of representing the people of the Middle Ages as “hyperemotional medieval children” (39). While scholars in recent years have questioned the idea, which dates back at least to the nineteenth century, of a progressive notion of human emotion characterized by increases in emotional control, it may be that Southey calms Montalvo’s *Amadís* as a means of suiting his audience’s taste (Plamper 49). Yet Southey is not, as a rule, unemotional, even in *Amadis of Gaul*. His parting comment to the reader of the Preface, indeed, is rich in sentiment, in this case his own fond affection for his inconvenient source text: “Perhaps others may not see the beauties which I perceive; the necessity of dwelling upon every sentence has produced in me a love for the whole” (“Preface” xxxv).

Based on clues from Southey’s Preface, we have another hypothesis to suggest: Southey suppressed emotions in the Montalvo text in reaction against the two French translators who expanded rather than contracted Montalvo’s sentiment. While Southey’s Preface does not criticize emotions in Montalvo, it does critique expressions of feeling in both Herberay and Tressan. Southey accuses the sixteenth-century Herberay, his least favorite *Amadís* translator, of “abominable obscenities” and complains that the late eighteenth-century Tressan concealed true expressions of chivarly under a “varnish of French sentiment” (“Preface” xxxiii–xxxiv). To our project team, it seems plausible that for Southey, the language of sentiment in the Montalvo simply felt too French to be acceptable in a text for English readers.[[10]](#footnote-10) In a curious moment of reverse causality, it appears that *Amadís*’s translation history might have caused the source text to seem overly emotional.

Indeed, Southey’s own feelings—anti-French feelings, that is—appear to be quite strong by the time of composition of *Amadis of Gaul*. In the Preface, Southey frequently mentions France and French translators in a disparaging way, and in a letter to Richard Heber, owner of the 1547 *Amadís*, he expresses disapproval for the widely appreciated French Vulgate romances that influenced *Amadís* (“Letter 1598, to Richard Heber, 13 March 1809”). [[11]](#footnote-11) Southey’s strong dislike of France was not universal among English readers of *Amadis*. In the Edinburgh Review, Walter Scott expressed his belief in the French thesis about the text’s origin, which appears to have annoyed Southey (Scott 109). Southey laments Scott’s disagreement in five letters to different recipients and finally writes Scott directly to debate the question in 1808, five years after the review appeared (“Letter 1426, to Walter Scott, 11 February 1808”). W.S. Rose’s English versification of Book I of Herberay’s *Amadis*, which appeared in 1803, the same year as Southey’s translation, constitutes another English vote for an *Amadís* liberally varnished in Frenchness (Moore xxii; Thomas 256).

Regarding France, Southey is perhaps more nationalistic—at least in 1803—than Scott or Rose. The threat of war with Napoleon forms the backdrop for Southey’s Preface and letters about his *Amadis* translation, and it seems likely that the looming conflict informed Southey’s negative opinion of French translators and French sentiment. Caught up with anti-French sentiment, moreover, are positive feelings for Portugal, which Southey believed to be the true origin of *Amadís*. In an 1803 letter to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, Southey jokingly references Napoleon: “if this war shuts me from Portugal & cuts off my supplies of books – it will almost break my heart. God send that Bonaparte may come in person with his Invaders. [H]e had better come with a diving-bell instead of a helmet, in readiness – for if he do not feed the crabs in the channel […] the Crows shall have him ashore.” The boast in Southey’s letter perhaps conceals a degree of anxiety about conflict on English soil. Yet war brings opportunity as well as chaos. In the same letter, Southey wonders if war might lead to work in Portugal: “It has come into my head that France will go to war with Portugal – & if so perhaps we may send an army there, & if so – perhaps it might not be impossible that I could get a civil appointment’ (“Letter 795, to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, 9 June [1803]”). France, not Spain, is the source of Southey’s fears about England’s political future, and Portugal, not Spain, is the site of his hope to profit from it. Between these two fantasies, there is little room left for Spain, or for late medieval Spanish emotion.

Southey’s changes to the expression of emotion in *Amadís* might well be an attempt to peel back the text one layer beyond Montalvo, to the apocryphal Portuguese author Lobeira. From our twenty-first century perspective, the task is impossible, as it is certain that Lobeira did not write the primitive *Amadís*, but it is nonetheless compelling to Southey, not least for its emotional resonance. For Southey, Lobeira represented “the age of chivalry, the noon-day of heroism and honour;” in other words, the kind of medieval authenticity Herberay, Tressan, and even Montalvo obscured (“Preface” xxiii). According to Southey, Montalvo came from a comparatively fallen world: “a Spaniard who described humane and generous valour in the days of Ferdinand and the Austrian family could paint only from a dim recollection of the past” (“Preface” xxiii). Lobeira is less a real person for Southey than the focal point for projections about a glorious Middle Ages. Twice in his letters, Southey imagines meeting Lobeira in heaven (“Letter 906, to Mary Barker, 3 March 1804”; “Letter 1317, to John Rickman, 4 May 1807”). The fantasy recalls Dante’s journey through the afterlife with Virgil in the *Divine Comedy* and positions Lobeira as a spiritual guide. Montalvo, the earliest “author” who can be attached in truth to *Amadís*, earns neither respect nor longing from Southey.

The Romantic poet provides the clue to this difference in his comment about the “Austrian family,” i.e., the Spanish Hapsburgs, including Charles V, whose aunt Catherine of Aragón was queen of England, and Philip II, husband to Mary Tudor and sender of the “Invincible” Armada. Southey’s distaste for Spain has its origin in Spain’s imperial past, and specifically, in its early modern rivalry with England. While early modern Portugal was an empire in its own right, Spain emerged in the sixteenth century as the greater power. Indeed, due to the consanguinity of the two monarchies, Portugal and Spain were united for a brief period, 1580-1640. Spain, a fiercely Catholic and fiercely militaristic nation in the early modern period, was a consistent threat to England, while Portugal was not. For Southey, it may have been ideologically easier to dream of medieval Portugal than to dream of medieval Spain.

Though we are persuaded by our theory that nationalism inflected Southey’s rendition of emotion in *Amadis of Gaul*, we also recognize wide cultural gap that lies between Montalvo and Southey. One of the strengths of our digital project has been to suggest that translation decisions are incredibly complex, and that even a translator’s description of his method can only give an incomplete acounting of them. Though we began the project with a belief that translation decisions could be sorted according to simple typologies like “literal” v. “free,” our project team has come to view all translations as cultural and multivalent. Going forward, we hope to expand the project, revisiting emotion and taking on more topics to get a more complete picture both of how Southey’s early nineteenth century translation worked and how translations work on a more general level.

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1. Southey, “Letter 237, to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, 19 July [1797].” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See also Southey, “Letter 1082.1, to the Editor of the Monthly Magazine, [Mid-July 1805].” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Anthony Munday translated *Amadis* based on Herberay, not the Castilian original, as was a usual practice for English translators in the early modern era. Most educated Englishmen and women knew at least some French in Munday’s era, but because of military and political conflicts, knowledge of Spanish was less common, and texts from Castile were less frequently available. See O’Connor 208–209. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In this essay, we use the term “human reading” as a catchall for the traditional methods of non-computer assisted literary analysis, which continue to be an important part of our work. We contrast this term with “machine reading,” a generalized term we use for all computer-based text processing. We prefer these terms to “close” and “distant” reading, because both machines and humans can read closely and distantly, and because we like to ground our human and machine readings in literary history in a way that has not always been a part of close or distant reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In general, deviations from the source increase as Southey’s translation progresses, and Montalvo’s Book IV is mostly missing. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Curiously, in France, Herberay’s translations of Montalvo—without diverging much from the source in this respect—were considered masterpieces of elegant style. The English market absorbed Munday’s translation from Herberay in a similar fashion. See Giraud 18–19; Rothstein 36; Moore xix. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The verb *pagar* usually means “to pay.” We have an archaic use here in *Amadís*, “muy pagado de su amiga,” very pleased/gratified with his lover. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. When *querer* means to want, as in “I want a sandwich,” rather than to love, we have not included it in the chart. *Querer* can be a synonym for *amar*. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. We include *sentir* only when it means “to feel an emotion” not when it means “to hear.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Marian Rothstein and Yves Giraud have discussed Herberay’s tendency to add to Montalvo’s erotic scenes. See Rothstein, p. 55 and Giraud, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Letter 1598, to Richard Heber, 13 March 1809. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)