An Introduction to Two Female-Oriented Popular Romances of the Early 1660s: S.C.'s *Cleocreton and Cloryana* and J.P.'s *Floridon and Lucina*

Tomás Monterrey (jmonterr@ull.edu.es)
0000-0002-7741-4741
Universidad de La Laguna

Abstract: This article introduces two neglected popular romances indirectly addressed to (young) female readers in the early 1660s. The undated chivalric romance *Cleocreton and Cloryana* (ca.1661) was apparently written by a woman who concealed her identity under the initials S.C., while J.P.'s non-chivalric story of *Floridon and Lucina* (1663) was inspired by the ballad "Loves Paradice," also by J.P., who was probably related to the ballad-monger Martin Parker. The first section surveys scholarly approaches that may help contextualise mid-seventeenth-century popular romances and chapbooks, as well as female readers of this kind of publications, despite the lack of certainty in these matters. The next two sections concentrate on the romances. The analysis of *Cleocreton* considers the publication year, authorship, genre, and gender issues. The discussion of *Floridon* takes into account aspects as different as authorship, female agency, and race. This article ultimately proposes to pinpoint a significant group of popular prose-fiction acceptable for (young) female readers in a period when literacy and the book business were expanding, and the romance still bore the stigma of pernicious literature.

Keywords: Restoration fiction, women's readership, popular chivalric romance, female authorship, ballad, race.

Introducción a dos romances populares ingleses de principios de la década de 1660 orientados al público femenino: *Cleocreton and Cloryana* de S.C. y *Floridon and Lucina* de J.P.

Resumen: Este artículo presenta dos romances populares no estudiados por la crítica y que iban indirectamente dirigidos a (jóvenes) lectoras a principios de la década de 1660. El romance de caballería *Cleocreton and Cloryana* (ca.1661) aparentemente fue escrito por una mujer que ocultó su identidad bajo las iniciales S.C., mientras que la historia no caballeresca de J.P., *Floridon and Lucina* (1663), se inspiró en la balada "Loves Paradice", también de J.P., que quizás estaba relacionado con el baladista Martin Parker. La primera sección examina enfoques académicos útiles para contextualizar tanto los romances y *chapbooks* populares de mediados del siglo XVII, como su recepción por el público femenino, a pesar de las pocas certezas que tenemos sobre esta materia. Las dos secciones siguientes se centran en los romances. El análisis de *Cleocreton* considera el año de publicación, autoría, el romance caballeresco y asuntos de género. El estudio sobre *Floridon* trata diversos aspectos como autoría, balada, agencia femenina y raza. En última instancia, este artículo propone identificar un conjunto significativo de ficción popular aceptable para las lectoras en una época donde la alfabetización y el negocio del libro se expandían, y el romance aún portaba el estigma de literatura perniciosa.

Palabras clave: ficción narrativa de la Restauración inglesa, público lector femenino, romance caballeresco popular, autoría femenina, balada, raza.

1. Introduction

To qualify mid-seventeenth-century prose romances as "female-oriented" may strike readers as redundant or misleading since their tight association with the female public was firmly established at the end of the sixteenth century, prolonging that symbiosis from the medieval romances in verse. However, Helen Hackett's rethinking of that relationship in *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (2000) may help clarify that expression with respect to Renaissance prose-fiction, specifically in the early 1660s. Hackett contends that "[Lyly, Rich, and Greene] wished their works to be *perceived* as directed at gentlewomen. It appears that some sort of connection was developing between women and romance which had less to do with actual women's reading habits than with cultural perceptions of romance as 'women's reading' and cultural constructions of romance as a feminine genre" (10. Original emphasis). To substantiate her proposal, Hackett argues that, among other factors, these romances—with the notable exceptions of Margaret Tyler's translation of *The Mirror of Knighthood* (1578) and Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621)—"were all written by men" (3), the rate of female literacy by the end of the sixteenth century "remains frustratingly elusive" (6), records of female reading of romances are scarce (6-7), and that these books were disapproved of as morally dangerous for children's, especially girls', education, owing precisely to some of their most alluring attributes: their fantasy, lies and "erotic matters" (10). Although the rate of literacy—or reading ability, at least—experimented a significant increase, these factors persisted relatively unchanged up until the early 1660s.

From Wroth's *Urania* to S.C.'s *Cleocreton*, Anna Weamys's *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia* (1651) remains the sole large romance piece published by an English woman. Like S.C., she also masked her social identity behind initials ("Mris A.W."), thus lessening the risk of attracting a spiteful vituperation such as Wroth endured when she was infamously scorned as a "hermaphrodite in show, in deed a monster," resulting in *Urania*'s removal from circulation (Hannay 235). Romances continued to be dedicated to both sexes from 1620 to 1660, though some gender distinctions depending on the subject matter and on the status of romance books in relation to erudite publications can be observed. For example, in his dedication of Scudéry's *Artamenes, or, The*

Grand Cyrus (1653) to Lady Anne Lucas, Humphrey Moseley conceded that "Were it a Discourse of the most profound Learning that Humane Nature is capable of, and written in Greek or Hebrew, I would make its Dedication to your Noble *Lord* […]" (Scudéry *Artamenes*, A2). In line with this logic, the translators of La Calprenède's *Hymen's Praeludia* (*Cleopatra*) and other highly successful French heroic romances (published in folio in England) dedicated each new instalment to a different noble or gentle woman, with very few exceptions (the 1661 full edition of La Calprenède's *Cassandra* was dedicated to Charles II), thereby primarily addressing them to upper-class female readers, while often soliciting their patronage and acknowledging their generosity, which may suggest "royalist coterie circles" similar to the French salons during the Interregnum (Whitehead 121).

Those French heroic romances and the political turn of the native *à-clef* or allegorical romances (in the model of John Barclay's *Argenis* (1621/1625) reflecting the reign of Charles I, the Civil Wars and the Commonwealth ranked the romance as "serious" literature in the late 1650s and early 1660s (Smith 235). As Nigel Smith has argued, "romance articulated the modulating experiences and desires of the governing elite: it was a vehicle of aristocratic and gentry republicanism as much as it was a tool of royalism" (234. See also Kahn 627, and Zurcher 1). Yet, the traditional subgenres (Sidneian or Arcadian model, popular chivalric romance, popular non-chivalric romance, picaresque fiction, didactic romance, and utopian/imaginary voyages), patterns, and motifs remained inspirational for authors and attractive for the market, at least in the first decades of the Restoration period, and co-existed with successful subgenres such as the antiromance, criminal biographies, and hybrid, impure romance that emerged in the first half of the seventeenth-century.

What also persisted was the "poison *topos*" (Álvarez-Recio 5), concerns about the pernicious effects of this literature, and its inadequacy for the recreation of youth in general and of women in particular. For example, Robert Codrington, in *The Second Part of Youths Behaviour, or Decency in Conversation amongst Women* (1664), disapproves of women reading and praising those books:

> Some Mothers of Children, and others there are, who make a great scruple, that their Children should read

> the Books of the Heathen, such as *Seneca, Plutarch*, and others, in English, and yet they will give them full leave to read any lying Pamphlet. There are some again, who make a conscience to read the Books of the *Apocrypha*, though full of good Precepts, yet the History of *Parismus*, or *Ornatus* and *Artesia*, must be commended and read by them. (161-162)

Owing to the immense popularity of French heroic romances among the elite and to royalist cultural influence, prose-fiction reading became a relatively common—or socially accepted—entertainment for women by 1660. Interestingly enough, the anonymous author of the anti-romance *Don Samuel Crispe* (1660) affirms women read almost every kind of romances. In his dedication "To all the Madams, Ladies and Gentlewomen in *England*, *Scotland* and *Ireland*, and the Dominions thereunto belonging", he states: "I know, Ladies, […] there is a time when you exhilarate your selves with looking on the labours of S. *George*, *Palmerin* of *England*, *Bevis* of *Southhampton*, don *Quixot*, and the like" (A2). However, in the early 1660s, such new books decidedly targeted, albeit indirectly, female readers, most conspicuously *The Seven Wise Mistresses* (1663), contrived after the traditional and popular exemplary-tale collection *The Seven Wise Masters*. In the prefatory epistle, Thomas Howard mentioned its learned sources, defended its moral purpose, and strongly recommended the "histories" for the education—not specifically of girls—but of children in general to improve their reading ability (5Av-7A). Its reception was immense; Robert Hume listed it among the most widely disseminated titles "with twenty-two editions by 1798" (29). This article contends that *Wise Mistresses* was not a rare case of prose-fiction specially oriented to (young) female readers, though it did not address them directly either on the title page or in the paratextual sections. Two romances (albeit much less successful, if at all) were equally effective at appealing to female readers and deterring the opposite sex through different strategies: S.C.'s *Cleocreton and Cloryana* was written by a woman, while J.P.'s *Floridon and Lucina* was presented on the title page as intertwined with J.P.'s ballad "Loves Paradice," which describes its namesake garden, and Lucina's emotions for the absence of, and later re-encountering with, her unnamed sweetheart.

2. The (Young) Female Reader of Romances in the Early 1660s

In 2017, Robert Hume maintained that:

> We need to be studying what readers at the time bought. The teleological approach so long favoured—in which the scholar looks for the anticipations of the forms and titles that interest us in a later period—is not without value, but it almost inevitably skews our view of the subject matter. Beyond a small number of familiar titles, pre-1740 fiction remains largely *terra incognita*. (30. Original emphasis)

This observation becomes even more meaningful regarding the 1660s and 1670s. On the one hand, this period's production is overshadowed in scholarly criticism by Elizabethan achievements and the post-1640 rise of political romances, and by the long-eighteenth-century rise of the novel. On the other hand, we have scant evidence of women readers and buyers of fiction besides the well-known remarks of Dorothy Osborne and Mary Hatton Helsby, both in the early 1650s. Elucidating female readership of fiction becomes even more problematic when the social stratification below the gentry, and the distinction between young and adult women are considered. As Sasha Roberts has acknowledged: "the historical record of women's reading remains frustrating in its silences" (5). Grenby only mentions one woman, Mary Collier, who declares she read chapbooks in her childhood (278), but that was a century later, in 1762. He also remarks that "if we can be fairly certain that children read chapbooks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we cannot be as confident that girls consumed equal quantities to boys" (278).

In 1964, Lawrence Stone gave reasons to speculate that "early seventeenth-century England was at all levels the most literate society the world had ever known" (68). Nonetheless, as David Cressy laments, "Many of the gradations of illiteracy, from total ignorance of the written word through partial illiteracy to full and fluent skill, are lost to history" (2). Passive or semi-literacy (ability to read) was wider spread than active literacy or ability to write because it was taught first, and many children left schooling before they acquired writing ability beyond, perhaps, signing with initials. Cressy reckons that "By the 1690s female illiteracy in London had been reduced [from about 90 percent in 1660] to 52 percent ± 6 percent, while it lingered around 80 percent in the

provinces" (146). Margaret Spufford cites that girls were taught "to read, knit and spin and also needlework," but concludes that there is "absolutely no way of knowing how many women below the level of the gentry in England learnt to read" (35).

In *Women's Reading Habits and Gendered Genres* (2019), Hannah Jeans has shown that romances do not prominently feature in seventeenth-century women's libraries, which held devotional and theological books, together with a variety of other matters—among them, herbals, medical tracts, conduct literature, poetry, gardening, history, politics, law, and mathematics (32, 34). Jeans also discusses Puritan Richard Baxter's and Anglican clergyman Richard Allestree's objections to romance reading. From a religious perspective, it "represented an improper indulgence of leisure time, which women must put aside in order to become devout and fulfil their role in society" (216). As Jeans reminds us, "it was adolescence and young adulthood when women were thought to be in most danger of being corrupted by their reading habits" (243). But she also highlights the opposite attitude: "there were increasing arguments for its potential benefits, and attempts to understand its popularity among consumers. Romance reading came to be seen by some as holding educational value, and there was an increasing appreciation of empathetic reading habits" (242). While Thomas Howard foregrounded the educational benefits of *Wise Mistresses*, the authors of the titles under focus carefully avoided writing anything offensive to female readers, whether young or adult.

Chapbooks, also known as small or little books (Spufford xix), "covered a marvelously wide range of materials" (Simons 178), including "editions of the second generation of chivalric romances produced in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by writers such as Richard Johnson and Emmanuel Forde" (Simons 179). Both *Cleocreton* and *Floridon* fall into this category of cheap publications—quartos probably sold at *2d*. - *4d*. (Spufford 98)—widely enjoyed by readers of all social classes, and extensively distributed throughout the country by hawkers and pedlars. In the early 1660s, there was an unusual wave of new titles and reprints of romance chapbooks, including *Dorastus and Favvnia* (1660), *Montelion King of the Oracle* (1663), *The Destruction of Troy* (1663), *Don Bellianis of Greece* (1663), *Palmerin of England* (1664), *Palladine of England* (1664), and *The Fifth Book of Amadis* (1664)—

sold by Charl(e)s Tyus (often spelt "Tias" in scholarly literature), the bookseller of *Cleocreton*. Robert Hume has reckoned that "between 1660 and 1700 […] printers generally ran off anything from 500 to 1500 copies" (28-29). The market for chapbooks was immense and highly profitable. Margaret Spufford, in her invaluable *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (1981), has examined Charles Tyus's business in depth to amazing results. For example, she states that "Tias's total chapbook stock, including both the reams ready to make up and the 10,000 copies ready to go out, was probably around 90,000 books," and remarks that he "is not known as an outstanding figure in the English trade" (98). Despite these astonishing figures, there are hardly any extant copies (and records) of the two romances analysed here. Unlike ballads, popular fiction in chapbooks offered little appeal for high-class libraries or collectors. Copies of both *Cleocreton* and *Floridon* are held at the Huntington Library, while the British Library and the Worcester College Library (Oxford) also have the first title. A copy of *Floridon* existed in a private library according to Arundell Esdaile, writing in 1912 (225), as does the apparently sole specimen of *Simon and Cisley*, also by J.P. (whether the same author of *Floridon* or not), which has survived in the Vulgaria section of Samuel Pepys's library at Magdalene College (Cambridge).

The 1662 Licensing Act limited the number of both printers and booksellers, increased control of publications, and restricted imports of books that could be offensive to the Church of England, members of the government, or any private person (Ezell *Oxford*, 127-128). Transcripts of Stationers' Registers do not record *Cleocreton* or *Floridon*—though the latter bears the *imprimatur* issued by Roger L'Estrange on "November 9. 1663"—perhaps because, as Alfred Pollard has suggested, such trivial books were not worthy of being recorded (98).

The 1660s' popular romances were printed in blackletter, which was used in teaching reading and in printing Bibles. It is an important feature to consider in seventeenth-century popular fiction since, in both romances, blackletter is used for the narrator's story while roman typeface is reserved for dialogues, soliloquies, letters, poems, and so on. In 1953, Charles Mish proposed that "black letter in the seventeenth century can be used as a determining criterion—one sufficient, if perhaps not necessary—to decide for which audience, upper- or

middle-class, a given work was produced" ("Black" 630). He observed that the transition from the old English to the new roman typeface took place by 1600, while in the Restoration period it was a "real anomaly" ("Black" 628), though it continued to be used until the turn of the eighteenth century. He argued that romances in roman type offered innovative fiction in more sophisticated form and style, addressing the more educated upper classes, while blackletter fiction "must indicate the conservatism of the middle-class reading public, which […] continued to consume stories not only old-fashioned in content but old-fashioned in appearance. Black letter then must have come to be a symbol of time-tested material and therefore a guarantee of either respectability or the satisfactory meeting of expectation, or both" ("Black" 629). It must also have reduced the poison-*topos* anxiety attached to romances, and appealed to a less schooled population, including adolescents and young adults of both sexes; but, once again, there is little evidence of popular romances directly addressed to women, whether young or old. Though more the author's wish than evidence of actual female reading, Francis Kirkman dedicated his adaptation of the second part of *Don Bellianis* (1664) "To my loving Sister Mary Kirkman, The Wife of my Brother Thomas Kirkman: And to my dear Daughter, Elizabeth Kirkman" (A3). Conversely, it could be argued that *Cleocreton* and *Floridon* were conceived to primarily appeal to women though, again, we lack textual evidence and must rely on other sources regarding what they enjoyed.

Anne Falke has revised and enlarged Mish's suggestions in her study of Emmanuel Forde's romances which, as she contended, "were chiefly written to appeal to women and girls" (246). Falke makes a further distinction among the blackletter romances: "In accord with gradual change in popular beliefs, English writers consistently eliminated or reduced the fantastic and magical elements in their medieval sources. They corrected any deprecatory references to tradesmen, and generally tried to provide models which were Renaissance, bourgeois, and Protestant, rather than medieval, aristocratic, and Catholic" (244). By comparing Forde's romances with those of Richard Johnson and Henry Robarts, Falke endeavours to underline the potential appeal of his romances to women and proposes a number of traits, which are useful here as theoretical tools, though not to suggest the romances under focus were influenced by Emmanuel Forde, but to argue they were written to appeal to female readers. Anna Falke remarks that

Forde's stories provided "more love and courtliness," and "Love, not military adventures or the opportunity to 'gaine Fame,' is what prompts Forde's knights" (246). About the female characters, "Forde's heroines occupy a good deal of the plot, and their characterizations receive much of the author's attention" (247), they are much more active (248) and are courted and won elegantly (248-249). In his romances, "Forde was exploiting the fantasies and aspirations of girls and women, while Johnson sought to gratify boys' and men's similar imaginative needs by creating a world of strong masculine dominance," and he was also concerned with "the obstacles to love that a girl must endure," such as the obedience due to her father in matters of love and marriage (249), but was not "interested in battles, only to the bare minimum necessary to further the plot" (245). Falke describes his style as "low-key" (245), but his romances "contain a much greater 'interest in the courtly and sentimental in action and speech,' a feature Mish correctly cites as characteristic of elite romances, but which is also characteristic of books appealing to women" (250). Her comparative analysis leads her to propose that, despite the lack of external evidence to demonstrate the concurrence of Forde's romances with feminine tastes, the internal evidence seems "conclusive" (250). The "female-oriented" romances introduced in this article are in line with this set of features.

3. *Cleocreton and Cloryana*

Nowhere is *Cleocreton* more cited than in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and two of the seven entries appear as first recorded in this romance: "outwit (1)" dated "?1630" [sic] and "skylight (3.a)" dated "?c1660" [sic]. The disparity in the publication year of the extant copy responds to Donald Wing's replication of the date proposed by Pollard and Redgrave in their Short-Title Catalogue (STC). In 1967, Mish reconsidered it by listing the romance in 1661. He claimed that "although the STC dates the book [1630?] it is likely that a date of ca.1660 is more nearly correct" (*English* 36. Original brackets). The main reason to support this dating lies in Charles Tyus's business activity, from 1656 to 1664, whereas J[ohn] B[eale], the printer proposed in the STC, was active from approximately 1612 to 1641. The initials J.B. could refer to John Best whose *Christian-mans Calling* (1662), *Brief Chronicle of the Late Intestine Warr* (1663), and *History […] of St. George* (1664) show

the same ornament as the romance on page A2 and similar factotum initials. Moreover, though Tyus did not usually advertise books, his 1664 reprint of *Palladine of England* announces *Cleocreton* as "a new History lately printed" (159). Therefore, the year of publication must have been 1664 or not long before, probably 1660 or 1661, since *Cleocreton* was bound with six other romances, and placed after Tyus's 1660 reissue of *Dorastus and Favvnia*, in William Clarke's "*Pheander*" *Sammelband* (Worcester College Library, Oxford), which has 1661 stamped on the spine (Armstrong 90).

Whether or not we must also credit the claims of the dedication, "To Her discerning and most Knowing Brother, Mr. E.C." (Ar), signed by "Your sister and servant, S.C." (Av), is another matter. Unlike Weamys, who dedicated *A Continuation of […] Arcadia* to the Perpoint sisters, S.C. reverses Sidney's addressing *Arcadia* to his sister by dedicating *Cleocreton* to her brother. This raises very different implications as it reinforces—rather than challenges—the established gender politics for women because her transgressive act of writing a romance remains within the family and domestic realm, and her "servant" voice emerges into the public arena of printing through her judicious and cultivated brother. The brief dedication reveals no other major or controversial gender issue, except that S.C. refers to her romance as her "Cloriana [sic]," whereby she cloaks the fact that her imagination equally conceived the hero and the amorous story, an unacceptable, if not shameful, fantasy for a mid-seventeenth-century English woman, which a comparison with Cavendish's treatment of her male characters in *The Blazing World* may evince. At any rate, the dedication meets its purpose of concealing the author's social identity to the point of virtual anonymity while modestly asserting her sexual identity.

Yet, Guyda Armstrong has questioned S.C.'s gender when she describes her as "either female or pretending to be" (95). Margaret Ezell has fitly stated that "women who chose to hide behind certain masks were complicit with the cultural forces that constrained them" ("By a Lady" 66-67). Nevertheless, feminine authorial masks (such as "by a lady" and the like) proliferated after 1680, as far as prose-fiction is concerned. In the early 1660s, male authors of romances also masked their identity behind similar labels, total anonymity, or names, such as the signatory of the prefatory epistle in *Wise Mistresses*, Thomas

Howard, who remains unidentified. Ezell also discusses both the commercial and persuasive powers of "projecting a female presence" as rhetorical artifact: "a female voice from behind the feminine mask […] was a means of engaging the desired consumers of the texts […]—an authoritative woman speaking to women. […] it might well have been used by a man in order to attempt to shape the mentality of women, to reinforce socially […] acceptable roles as virgin, wife, and widow" (74). The dedicatory note of a female author to her brother fulfils both objectives: the commercial appeal to women and the conformity with the established sexual politics, whether written by a man who knew well what his female contemporaries enjoyed in romances, or by a woman as the note states and the story strongly suggests.

Cleocreton takes place mainly at the Persian emperor's court and, to a lesser degree, in Hungary and Tunis (Italy and Germany are also settings of incidental side-stories), in an unspecified remote past, evoking a medieval environment with classical deities. It also contains the conventional garden scene, shepherdess attire, supernatural elements, oracle, pirate attack, tournament, side-stories, cross-dressing, dissembling, and so on. Quite significantly, however, these traditional resources occur in a marginal or incidental manner in the plot, yet never to redirect or further the course of events, but mainly to enhance the dynamics of courtship, which constitutes the core matter. *Cleocreton*, thus, seems to outmode received forms of romance, and proposes a narrative dominated by the discourse of love and emotions, mostly centred in the comfortable world of the court, which may also suggest true female authorship. The ladies are never abducted, imprisoned, threatened with rape, or murdered. Instead, inconstancy, absences, and sudden requests of marriage from the wrong candidate arouse their anxieties, as in a novel of manners. The romance avoids religious matters, Restoration politics, or any other serious subject, and, though it portrays virtuous models to imitate and evil plotters to reject, it promises pleasure and entertainment, especially for youth. In fact, the young characters are given prominence, while the mature ones are usually identified by their royal dignity, and the lower class few by their activity, or kinship.

Like Heliodorus's *Aethiopian History*, it begins in medias res, at the break of day. Strolling along the Persian shore in an attempt to overcome his melancholy, Prince Albyazer encounters a vessel adrift,

with no pilot. Strikingly, he does not see a young lady, but a *Pietà*-like mother, the Queen of Hungary, grieving over her dying son, Cleocreton, in her lap, and his trusty dwarf Galtazet. The dwarf, a frequent character in the chivalric tradition, here softens the perception of the knight's masculine prowess and mimics his debased condition as an exiled prince. He contrasts with the giant who protects Meaga, the evil woman who, with the aid of her old aunt's "Devilish Art" (13), has bewitched the King of Hungary to the point of his disowning his queen and two sons, and whom Cleocreton considers a tyrant. Once the Persian emperor has given them hospitality and the prince recovers, Galtazet narrates the harrowing events at the remote Hungarian court (12-17). S.C. relegates love stories with witchery, violence, murders, and battles to side narratives, and foregrounds modern and sophisticated manners of love affairs at the Persian court.

Unlike the King of Hungary who fell in love with his future wife only "by fame" (9), the courtship of Cleocreton and Cloryana (the Persian emperor's daughter) evolves by steps from their first acquaintance (11-12): gazing and blushing (23), becoming sick and disquiet (23-25), disclosing their emotions to confidants (25, 27), Cleocreton's writing a note to tell her she has conquered him (27), Cloryana's boasting of such a conquest (30), dancing (32), talking about love while Calsey plays the lute (33, 35-39), Cloryana's declaring her love to Cleocreton (41), and presenting each other with their respective pictures (41, 48). The portraits take on a dearer Neoplatonic value beyond that of their jewelled frames and artistic craft as memory tokens of their mutual love: "as she was to remember him by his Pourtraiture, so he might do the same for her by her Picture" (48). Besides the main characters, Albayzer (Cloryana's cousin) loves Philopeet (niece to the King of Corinth and resident at the Persian court); Muxorb (the most valiant of the warriors sent by the King of Corinth when he demanded Philopeet's wardship) falls for Calsey, sister to Albyazer. The plot revolves around the courtship and obstacles faced by the three couples in Persia, and by Prince Fortus of Hungary and Lady Freesa in Tunis, until their respective marriages. The subplot in the first half is concerned with the news from Hungary and the need to "rout the wicked Meaga out" (28).

In the climactic central part of the romance's five-act structure, Cleocreton departs for Hungary to retrieve his father from Meaga's

influence. En route, he visits his uncle, the King of Tunis, whose daughter, Mersea, falls in love with him and, impersonating the role of the villain, plots to separate him from Cloryana. Mersea intercepts the correspondence between the lovers and counterfeits Cleocreton's letter to Cloryana, which claims he no longer loves her. But Cleocreton discovers Mersea's treachery. Meanwhile, in Persia, Cloryana is requested by the Emperor of Calydon for his son (who secretly marries another woman) and suggests her father consult the Oracle of Delphos, which enigmatically features her future husband as a "Metamorphosed Maid" (68). Now in Hungary, Cleocreton triumphs and is reinstated as the lawful heir. On his return to Persia, he enters the palace with Galtazet, both in women's clothes, not to be commended by the emperor for his prowess, but to reassert his truthfulness and constancy to Cloryana by this act of self-humiliation. Both realise that he is the person the Oracle has predicted; however, when he asks Cloryana to marry him, she declines (80). In his despair, he thinks of killing himself; but a vision of Venus assures him of a gratifying denouement, whereby he resolves "if there be any hope, why should not I employ all my endeavours to procure me the Paragon of the world?" (81).

In the next phase, the King of Hungary comes to Persia to fetch his wife, who later reluctantly attends the execution of Meaga and her children (86), and Cleocreton pacifies a Hungarian town (Cebria). Meanwhile, Mersea falls to plotting again, this time by writing to the Emperor of Calydon with false news of the Persian emperor having promised Cloryana to the Hungarian Prince. However, when the Persian emperor learns that the Calydonian prince is already married, he immediately opens war against Calydon. Only the opportune intervention of Cleocreton saves both the Persian emperor and his empire, making Calydon tributary to Persia, and Cleocreton, who departs without revealing his identity (145), "a man reserved by the Gods, to do wonders in the World [… and] none so fit a husband for […] Cloryana" (145-146). Yet, Cleocreton hurries to support his brother, Fortus, against the Prince of Hecate, who had requested the hand of Lady Freesa, only to return to Persia this time in "the habit of a Pilgrim" (154). Eventually, as Mersea kills herself by jumping into the sea (153), Cleocreton will rule over Hungary, Tunis and, by marrying Cloryana, Persia.

Despite the warring episodes in the last pages, S.C. avoids combat and violent events to the disappointment of potential male readers, and provides only brief passages or short summaries revealing Cleocreton's growing prowess and skills, such as his report to Cloryana about his victory in Hungary which he enlarges by detailing how he came by female disguise, and incidentally adding his fight against the pirate Almacus (76-79). Also, when a joust is agreed to clear up the conflict of Philopeet's wardship, the knights must win the pictures of the ladies, since the Persian emperor has declared the tournament a "serene exercise" (41), with strict orders against bloodshed: "you shall shed no blood here, but stay, and I will send you the Pictures of all the Ladies of my Court that hath beauty, and break your Spears in the honor of your Ladies" (44). Similarly, in the confrontation between Fortus and Assyrtus, Prince of Hecate, for Lady Freesa, the King of Tunis commands "I beseech you be not so bent to spill your blood in my Kingdom" (92). Conversely, S.C. describes in fine detail furniture and outfits (11), Cloryana's attire reminiscent of a shepherdess (27), the knights' apparel and shields (43-44), the "Revolet," or rivulet (48-49), and the delightful garden and its magnificent room (83-84), and so on.

Falke's description of Forde's language can also be applied to S.C.'s plain style and modern diction matching the courtly environment. It is rich in figurative language and evocative images, such as when a lion lays its head on Cloryana's knee, recalling Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. In addition, *Cleocreton* is not divided into chapters or single stories; instead, the narration unfolds in a balanced rhythm orchestrated by a clever combination of the teller's and the characters' speeches, scenes, subplots, settings, crises, and resolutions.

The reception of *Cleocreton* was apparently unremarkable. Thomas Passinger, Charles Tyus's apprentice who ran his bookshop after his death by marrying his widow, Sarah, underlined the novelty of the romance by adding "very" to "lately printed" on the book-advertisement page of *The Book of Palmestry* (1666 and 1676) with other chivalric romances. However, on the advertisement page of Thomas Robins's *Sir John Barley-Corn* (1675), *Cleocreton* is listed alongside Forde's *Parismus* and several garlands of love poetry, which suggests Passinger was trying to attract female readers, indicating perhaps that it had proved unsaleable among consumers of chivalric romances, or that it was a

reprint now lost. However, it was not forgotten by William Winstanley in *The Essex Champion* (1690?) as Billy holds a copy in his library—destined for the fire by Old Thomasio with other knight-errantry books (21)—and fancies Cloryana as a paragon of beauty and Cleocreton as a token of a famous and renowned knight (24).

4. ***Floridon and Lucina***

J.P.'s *Floridon* is a short, simple, and trivial romance, with many woodcut pictures that illustrate broadside ballads, except for the frontispiece Royalist-wreath. The printer, Thomas Mabb, honestly warned about its poor literary merits in his note to the reader by ambiguously appraising it through *via negativa*, that is by acknowledging "a great deal of worse matter" and by declaring he has "known [books], as bad as this, which hath been kindly accepted" (A3v). Apparently, it was neither advertised by bookseller William Gilbertson (a specialist in broadside ballads), nor reprinted. The extant copy at the Huntington Library was not considered by J.L. Gaunt in his 1978 article "Fiction and the Ballad Market in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century" (nor other studies regarding Restoration fiction), despite the romance's title page indicating it contained a description of "Loves Paradice," which is also the title of a ballad by J.P., whose identity remains unknown (he is not John Phillips, John Milton's nephew, the satirist to whom the second part of the anti-romance *Don Juan Lamberto* is attributed).

The J.P. who wrote *Floridon* was undoubtedly the same *ballatter* who composed "Loves Paradice" (dated by EEBO as 1663. ESTC R181372, English Broadside Ballad Archive, EBBA 31931), since he quotes extracts from it. The ballad spotlights feminine experiences and anxieties by focusing on the heroine. "Lucina" (l. 51) is the only name given by the poet who uses the generic word "dear" (l. 54) for her partner. Also, the romance soon discloses her mind to the reader when, at the end of the first chapter, the narrator reproduces the eighth stanza (ll. 57-64)—the sole poem in the romance—to quote Lucina's ditty both lamenting and comforting herself for the absence of her "True-Love" (l. 59), who is, of course, called "dear Floridon" in the romance (9).

It could be argued that J.P. is related to the famous balladist Martin Parker. The pictures of a vessel on page 21 and of five men at a tavern

table on page 44 also adorn a famous ballad entitled "Neptunes Raging Fury" (ESTC R181454, EBBA 31788), also printed by Mabb and signed by J.P., which is an improved version of Parker's "Saylors for My Money" (ESTC S5147, EBBA 20297). Hyder Rollins refers to J.P. as "some unknown writer" (119), yet EBBA ascribes the highly popular updated version to Martin Parker. Moreover, Parker's "The Distressed Virgin" (ESTC R181448, EBBA 37220) recalls the story, albeit not the sad end, of Mariana in *Floridon*.

Though Mabb genders the author only once as "him" (A3r), this person wished for a discreet appearance in public both as a fiction and ballad writer, rather as a woman would. However, *Floridon* was most likely written by a man because, as Sandra Clark has observed, "There is no evidence to refute the general assumption that the writers of the ballads were all male." Clark specifically mentions Martin Parker as one who wrote "paired ballads, setting out [gendered] antithetical views on the same subject." When Clark comments on J.P.'s "A Fairing for Maids" (ESTC 181370, EBBA 37222), she says "it consists of the advice of a woman offered as a present to women contemplating marriage," but assumes the author was a man.

Floridon takes place in an unidentified past in "the province of Arcadia" (10), near a temple devoted to Diana, though Sicily and Florence are also mentioned. The characters are not courtly or aristocratic, but three middle-class or gentry couples: Floridon and Lucina, Isabella and Chrisipus, and Sir Malpas (a knight) and his betrothed yet forlorn Mariana, and a gang of thieves. The romance displays the common fictional sites (garden, wood, cave, castle, road) and some typical episodes (two abductions, imprisonment, (Scythian) pirates and shipwreck). It is told by an unnamed first-person narrator, albeit extradiegetic and omniscient.

The romance tells instructive love stories of constancy and virtue, and of the sexual and sentimental dangers a woman may face—more appropriate themes for ladies' recreation than stories of battles or heroic deeds, as the narrator makes clear in the introductory description of "loves paradice," a garden "frequented by none but amorous lovers," where "rough Martialists" and "Mellancholy Saturnists" have no admittance (8).

The story proper starts when the narrator, walking in Love's Paradise, overhears Lucina's lamenting ditty for absent Floridon. The eponymous couple plan to marry but he is captured by a gang of outlaws and taken to a cave, a dystopian counterpart of the garden. For most of the story, the hero remains imprisoned and completely inactive. In the cave, the thieves also retain a Sicilian woman, Isabella, who narrates her life to Floridon. She had married a rather poor man, Chrisipus, but they were separated in a shipwreck. The captain of the thieves has fallen in love with her and expects to be accepted, but she repeatedly rejects him. Indeed, Isabella controls the captain's passion, looks after Floridon, and takes the initiative when she spies an opportunity to escape with him from the cave—not the other way round as would be expected in traditional romances.

After Isabella's story, the narrator returns to Lucina's lament in Love's Paradise. A knight and "person of great authority" (23), the villain Sir Malpas, who never fulfilled his promise to marry Mariana, loves Lucina, who rejects him wrongly blaming him for Floridon's disappearance. He abducts her and imprisons her in his castle under the strict surveillance of an old woman. Mariana, another pro-active female character, visits Sir Malpas and curses him to suffer the same misfortune that he had made her suffer. Chrisipus eventually finds his uncle, Sir Malpas, who by then has decided to move Lucina to Florence. On the way, they are attacked by thieves, who are defeated, thereby enabling the two couples to reunite. Fatally wounded, Sir Malpas repents of the mischief he has caused, declares his nephew Chrisipus heir to his wealth and estates, and is forgiven by Lucina and Floridon, and also by Mariana just before he dies.

The female characters' actions, curses, and calls for justice, and their resistance to, and endurance of, the physical, moral, and sexual oppression of the male villains (the captain of the thieves and Sir Malpas) reveal the powerful female agency in the romance, leading to Floridon's release, and to Sir Malpas's repentance and moral conversion. Floridon and Chrisipus (the good male characters), however, remain ignorant and passive, except for their brief fight against six thieves.

Chapter 12 closes the romance with a description of Floridon and Lucina's wedding, surely to please maidens. Part of the ceremony involves a new princess of "Love's Paradise" being chosen, but there

are too many candidates. Strikingly, as a solution, it is agreed that one of the musicians, a "blackamore boy" (46), should decide. He is clearly a servant or a slave who cannot yet command English: "[the boy was] ordred by his Master (whose Language he best understood) to take out that Lady by the hand, which he liked best of all that company" (47). His favourite is one "whose hair and eye-brow's were as black as a Raven" (47), thus challenging the general taste. Afterwards, the new princess chooses the one she wishes to be the prince, and they "both were crowned with delicate Garlands, richly beautified with fragrant Flowers" (47). Though this trivial romance is set in Arcadia and addressed to young ladies as examples of constancy and virtue, the servant/slave musician blackamoor leaves a record of the growing black population in Restoration England, at a time of colonial expansion in Africa and a burgeoning of slave trade. According to Imtiaz Habib's description of Mingoe (recorded in Pepys's *Diary*), the blackamoor boy also seems to function as "an exotic pet, albeit one with useful skills" (224), performing the happy-ending humorous anecdote. However, by means of this stratagem, J.P. deconstructs the established standard of feminine beauty in romances and makes every woman eligible through the male gaze to be the most beautiful among a group of ladies.

5. Conclusion

Although the publication year of *Cleocreton* has been narrowed to 1660-1664, and *Floridon*'s indebtedness to ballads has been shown, the masked authors' identities remain unknown. Together with *Wise Mistresses*, both romances constitute a notable sub-corpus of early 1660s' popular fiction overtly appealing to young ladies (and dissuading male readers) through external aspects: authorship, ballad source, and title, respectively. In that sense, the stories do not disappoint. As already discussed, they contain narratives that give pre-eminence to female characters and their interests and, above all, dissipate morally embarrassing or offensive elements and situations. Thus, they overcome or reduce pervasive concerns about the genre's allegedly corrupting effects by providing morally acceptable fiction, which was more suitable for ladies than for men (though, in the end, it all depended on what was bought, as Hume suggested). From a literary perspective, *Floridon* offers poor literary merits. Yet, *Cleocreton* deserves some attention for, among

other aspects, the centrality of the young ladies' world, its plain—albeit elegant and polished—style, the development of the protagonists' courtship, the five-act structure from exposition to denouement through a climactic central part, and the balanced, rhythmical combination of discursive modes, settings, and events.

Notes

[1] Two more titles should be added: E.F.'s *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* (written in 1627, published in 1680, and attributed to Elizabeth Cary in the twentieth century), and Hester Pulter's *The Unfortunate Florida* (c.1650s, published in 2014).

[2] Many prose-fiction books had no dedicatee (such as picaresque stories). Didactic romances were dedicated to men. A political romance (if Bayly's *Herba Parietis* can be considered such) was dedicated to a woman in 1650, and an anti-romance (*Don Samuel Crispe*) in 1660.

[3] In Robert Hume's words, "authors and readers of the time thought of fiction […] as a congeries of disparate and overlapping types: 'history', 'letters', 'tale', 'romance', 'secret history', 'memoirs', 'true relation', and the like" (26). The tension between history and romance became a remarkable issue of critical debate in terms of moral teaching. George Mackenzie, in the prefatory essay to his à-clef political romance *Aretina* (1660) "An Apologie for Romances, contended that "[history] teacheth us onely what was done, and [romance] what should be done" (7). Also in 1660, George Havers, the translator of the fourth part of Scudéry's *Clelia*, highlighted one definition of History—"the Image or Picture of Life"—and explained that "Histories are like pictures, either drawn according to the resemblance of some reall example, or meerly made out of the invention of the Writer" (Scudéry *Clelia*, A2). Thomas Howard, however, refers to the exempla in *Wise Mistresses* as "histories," claiming that they are taken from renowned writers of the past, although in fact they are popular didactic tales or legends, following the model of the *Wise Masters*.

[4] *The Famous and Delectable History of Cleocreton and Cloryana; Wherein is set forth the Noble and Heroick Actions of Cleocreton Prince of Hungary, His Wonderful and Warlike Atchievements in sundry Kingdoms. Herein is also declared, his constant love to the most beautiful Princess Cloryana, the onely Daughter of the Emperor of Persia*. "London. Printed

by J.B. for Charls Tyus, at the three Bibles on London Bridge." Wing (second edition, 1994) C121. ESTC S122307. Format: 4º. Pages: [4], 103, but irregular paging beyond p. 49. One initial woodcut depicting the main characters, and another of a knight on horseback on the last verso page, which also appears in the EEBO digital facsimile of the 1664 edition of *Palladine of England*.

[5] *The Pleasant and Delightful History of Floridon and Lucina, Illustriated with an admirable Description of Loves Paradice. Wherein you may behold, the abundant Felicity, that true Lovers enjoy, in the Chaste Imbraces of their Dearest Loves, And the sad Effects that mostly commonly attends Faithless and Unconstant Lovers. With Variety of other Passages never before Printed or Published*. "London, Printed by T. Mabb, and are to be sold by William Gilber[t]son, at the Bible in Gil[t]spur Street, 1663." Wing P64. ESTC R9318. Format: 4º. Pages: [6], 48. Two woodcuts at the beginning and another 22 small woodcuts (some are repetitions, and all decorate different broadside ballads) illustrate the body text, though none are related to the story events.

[6] For an in-depth examination of seventeenth-century women's reading activity, see Hannah Jeans.

[7] This also applies to the Iberian Chivalric romances. However, the new mid-seventeenth-century editions mainly updated the English spelling, but the 1664 edition of *Palladine of England* also changed the plot of chapters XI-XIV and XXIII-XXV to narrate the hero's encounterings with Florabella and Rosamonde of France, respectively (the 1700 edition of *Palladine* follows this version, not the original 1588 translation).

[8] A crucial difference between *Cleocreton* and other chivalric romances is precisely that the "exciting" episodes occur elsewhere, "off-stage," and are usually reported by a character, not by the narrator.

[9] Cleocreton is so young that he is believed by the Ancient Gentleman's Daughter when he tells her "My self is also a young Maid and I am now seeking a sweetheart of mine" (78), while the Emperor of Persia does not consent to Cloryana's parting to Calydon because "she is too young" (61).

[10] The opening scene of Forde's *Ornatus and Artesia* shows the hero seeing Artesia's naked breast.

[11] Similarly, Calsey's story of Italian Lady Trandia (34-36) that recalls an Italian novella of secret marriage and violent death, or Cleocreton's casual encountering with the German emperor's daughter abducted by

Almacus, who becomes a pirate captain when the emperor banishes him (79), are fittingly placed to illustrate a potential course of events in the main plot when pride, inconstancy, and disobedience prevail.

[12] Gender roles are strictly maintained according to the established sexual politics. This is best illustrated when Lady Freesa is crowned Queen of Calchos and "she took it off again, and with her own hands Crowned the head of King Fortus" (152), unlike Sabrina in *Wise Mistresses* who continues ruling her empire after marrying King Alexander.

[13] The wreath, placed opposite the title page, shows the miniature pictures of Charles II and George Monck, and the national flowers of Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales, and France. It must also have decorated the poem collection *The Loyal Garland*, as it appears in the fourth edition—the earliest extant copy (Thomas Passinger, 1673).

[14] Most of Parker's production dates before ballad-singing was forbidden in 1647, after which his subsequent work became untraceable: "Accordingly, there is no record of what ballads Parker wrote during this period, though it is highly improbable that he had ceased to write" (Rollins 131). Parker died around 1656; however, a short, twelve-page quarto, prose romance by him (*The most admirable Historie of […] Arthur King of the Britaines*) entered the Stationers' Registers in April 1660, but Rollins does not explain why it was published four years after his death (135).

Works Cited

Álvarez-Recio, Leticia, editor. *Iberian Chivalric Romance*. U of Toronto P, 2021.

Armstrong, Guyda. "Print, Paratext, and a Seventeenth-Century *Sammelband*: Boccaccio's *Ninfale Fiesolano* in English Translation." *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads*, edited by Sara Barker and Brenda Hosington, BRILL, 2023, pp. 79-99.

C., S. *The Famous and Delectable History of Cleocreton and Cloryana*. Charls Tyus, n.d.

Clark, Sandra. "The Broadside Ballad and the Woman's Voice." *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1500-1700*, edited by C. Malcolmson and M. Suzuki, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002, pp. 103-120. https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/549/1/549.pdf. Accessed 10th December 2024.

Codrington, Robert. *The Second Part of Youths Behaviour, or, Decency in Conversation amongst Women*. William Lee, 1664.

Cressy, David. "Literacy in Seventeenth-Century England: More Evidence." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1977, pp. 141-50.

Don Samuel Crispe. n.p., 1660.

Esdaile, Arundell. *A List of English Tales and Prose Romances Printed before 1740*. Blades, East & Blades, 1912.

Ezell, Margaret J.M. "'By a Lady': The Mask of the Feminine in Restoration, Early Eighteenth-Century Print Culture." *The Faces of Anonymity*, edited Robert Griffin, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003, pp. 63-79.

— *The Oxford English Literary History. Volume 5 1645-1714. The Later Seventeenth Century*. Oxford UP, 2017.

Falke, Anna. "'The Work Well Done That Pleaseth All': Emanuel Forde and the Seventeenth-Century Popular Chivalric Romance." *Studies in Philology*, vol. 78, no. 3, 1981, pp. 241-254.

Grenby, M. O. "Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature." *The Library*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2007, pp. 277-303.

Habib, Imtiaz. *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500–1677*. Routledge, 2008.

Hackett, Helen. *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance*. Cambridge UP, 2000.

Hannay, Margaret P. *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*. Ashgate, 2010.

Howard, Thomas. *The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome*. M[ary] Wright, 1663.

Hume, Robert D. "Authorship, Publication, Reception (2): 1660-1750." *Prose Fiction in English from the Origins of Print to 1750*, edited by Thomas Keymer, Oxford UP, 2017, pp. 26-45.

Jeans, Hannah. *Women's Reading Habits and Gendered Genres, c.1600–1700*. PhD diss., University of York, 2019.

Kahn, Victoria. "Reinventing Romance, or the Surprising Effects of Sympathy." *Renaissance Quarterly*, no. 2, 2002, pp. 625-661. https://doi.org/10.2307/1262320.

Kirkman, Francis. *The Honour of Chivalry: or, […] Don Bellianis of Greece. […] The Second Part*. Thomas Johnson, 1664.

Mackenzie, George. *Aretina; or, The Serious Romance*. Robert Broun, 1660.

Mish, Charles. "Black Letter as a Social Discriminant in the Seventeenth Century." *PMLA*, vol. 68, no. 3, 1953, pp. 627-630.

— *English Prose Fiction, 1600-1700*. Bibliographical Society of the U of Virginia, 1967.

P., J. "Loves Paradice." W. Kendrick, n.d.

— *The Pleasant and Delightful History of Floridon and Lucina*. T[homas] Mabb, 1663.

Plomer, Henry Robert. *A Dictionary of the Booksellers and Printers Who Were at Work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1641-1667*. Blades, East & Blades, 1907.

Pollard, Alfred. "Some Notes on the History of Copyright in England, 1662-1774." *The Library*, vol. s4-III, no. 2, 1922, pp. 97-114.

Roberts, Sasha. "Reading in Early Modern England: Contexts and Problems." *Critical Survey*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2000, pp. 1-16.

Rollins, Hyder. "Martin Parker, Ballad-Monger." *Modern Philology*, vol. xvi, no. 9, 1919, pp. 113-138.

Scudéry, Madeleine de. *Artamenes, or The Grand Cyrus*. Humphrey Moseley and Thomas Dring, 1653.

— *Clelia. The Fourth Volume*. Humphrey Moseley and Thomas Dring, 1660.

Simons, John. "Chapbooks and Penny Histories." *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, edited by Corinne Saunders, Wiley-Blackwell, 2004, pp. 177-196.

Smith, Nigel. *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660*. Yale UP, 1994.

Spufford, Margaret. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*. Cambridge UP, 1985 [1981].

Stone, Lawrence. "The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640." *Past & Present*, no. 28, 1964, pp. 41-80.

Whitehead, Nicola. *The Publisher Humphrey Moseley and Royalist Literature, 1640-1660*. PhD diss., University of Oxford (Jesus College), 2014.

Winstanley, William. *The Essex Champion*. J. Blare, n.d.

Zurcher, Amelia. *Seventeenth-Century English Romance. Allegory, Ethics, and Politics*. Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007.

Acknowledgement

This article is a result of the research project "Las mujeres y la novela inglesa temprana, 1621-1699: El contexto europeo / Women and the Early Novel in English, 1621-1699: The European Context" (Wom-En), funded by Junta de Andalucía (Ref. PROYEXCEL_00186).

Received / Recibido: 22/1/2025 *Accepted / Aceptado: 7/5/2025*