

Gendering Action in Iberian Chivalric Romance

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MEDIEVAL IBERIAN chivalric romances offer countless possibilities to construct gender in diverse guises. In these romances we repeatedly encounter heroines who, in spite of the restrictions imposed on them, textually perform, and thus exhibit to the reader, the ambiguity and problematic nature of the female speaking subject. As E. Jane Burns cogently argues in her analysis of Old French texts, “even the most misogynous of medieval literary texts, where a long-standing tradition figures woman’s body as the precondition for and guarantor of male intellectual, sexual, and chivalric prowess, can be seen to reveal repeatedly how women’s bodies and the voices issuing from them can resist the constructions that contain and define them.”¹

Among the chivalric romances composed in the Iberian Peninsula there are two that very visibly epitomize this concept of “bodytalk” or resistant doubled discourse: *Tirant lo Blanc*, composed in Catalan (or Valencian) by Joanot Martorell between 1460 and 1464, although not printed until 1490;² and the more obscure female-authored *Cristalián de España*,³ published in 1545 by Beatriz Bernal.⁴ We deem useful a comparison between these two romances because the first text might have inspired the latter. Beatriz Bernal most likely had read *Tirant lo Blanc* and effected a rewriting of some of Martorell’s episodes as well as a refashioning of the genre of the chivalric romance. Consequently, the progression from the model to the sequel can be productively scrutinized. In addition, *Don Cristalián de España*, since it is the only known female-authored Iberian chivalric romance,⁵ adds a unique and essential dynamic to the discussion of how action is gendered in the chivalric genre.

According to “masculinist”⁶ paradigms explicitly or implicitly present in chivalric romances, the knight is the doer, the agent, or the acting partner while the lady is passive and, therefore, does not engage in any action. This gendered reading, however, does not apply to the

two Iberian romances under scrutiny. Two characters, in particular, defy the purported static and concrete female identities of the chivalric romance: Plaerdemavida (Pleasure-of-my-life) in *Tirant lo Blanc* and Minerva in *Cristalián de España*. These two female characters will not only become active participants in the action of the romance but will also appropriate (literally or figuratively) the knightly attributes customarily reserved for the male protagonists, namely their forcefulness and their prowess in combat.

Tirant lo Blanc narrates the adventures of a young Breton knight, Tirant, who leaves his land in search of fortune. He first meets a former knight turned hermit, Guillem de Varoic, who instructs the youth in the rules of chivalry.⁷ After his training, Tirant initiates his adventures by participating in several tournaments all over Europe where he distinguishes himself for his prowess in combat. He then travels to Sicily and the Byzantine Empire and falls helplessly in love with the emperor's daughter and heir to the Byzantine Empire, Carmesina. After leaving Constantinople, Tirant will be shipwrecked and will subsequently endure a long captivity in North Africa. There he eventually engages in a very effective missionizing campaign of converting the infidels to Christianity, defeats the Turks in Constantinople, consummates his love with Carmesina thanks to the help of the princess's lady-in waiting, Pleasure-of-my-life, and then dies of a "mal de costat" (side pain).

As for *Cristalián de España*, this romance tells the story of Cristalián, son of the famous emperor Lindedel of Trapisonda. As a young knight of fourteen, Cristalián becomes the greatest knight on earth by demonstrating his superior skills at arms and his supreme devotion to the chivalric code. After saving his mother, father, and younger brother from the deadly grasp of sorcery and enchantment, he embarks on many quests that prove his prowess and secure his position as the greatest knight in the world. He falls in love with princess Penamundi who becomes the object of his greatest quest of all, the conquest of her heart. When Penamundi is captured, Don Cristalián immediately takes to the road to save her. Along the way he meets a great warrior, Minerva, who is searching for the knight who will save princess Penamundi. Cristalián affirms that man is he, and the *virgo bellatrix*, Minerva, joins him in his quest not only to save the princess, but also to help her fellow knight

win Penamundi's heart. Minerva proves to be a capable go-between, and, after many adventures, Cristalián is successful in his ultimate quest, and he marries the Princess.

In order to better comprehend some of the gender distinctions at play in these texts, it is important to examine some medieval assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality. In *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, Ruth Mazo Karras explains that for medieval people, sexuality, sex, and gender were not viewed as separate entities. In modern discourse there is a tendency to label each individual with a determined sex, male or female, a gender, masculine or feminine, and a sexuality or sexual orientation. But in medieval society, such determinants may have been defined differently. According to Karras "medieval people would have assumed that the desire for women came from a masculine body and, in itself, constituted masculine behavior."⁸ While there were sexual identities, Karras explains, these identities were probably much different than today's, having less to do with sexual preference than with the relationship between active and passive partner.⁹

With Karras's theory as a point of departure we are now able to deepen the focus of the study by addressing the two active roles played by both Minerva and Pleasure-of-my-life: the warrior¹⁰ and the go-between. Minerva's character literally dresses in knightly armor and assumes the position of a woman warrior, while Pleasure-of-my-life's role as warrior is figurative. We construe the terms "knight" and "warrior" symbolically when applied to Pleasure-of-my-life due to her role as a go-between for sexual conquest and the strategies she employs to win the bedroom battles as well as her discursive utterances and the rhetoric used by the narrator when referring to her and her actions. Thus, although Pleasure-of-my-life never dons knightly armor, she proves to be, as we will see, a mighty warrior. We then shift our focus to Minerva, the *virgo bellatrix*¹¹ of Bernal's *Cristalián de España*. Minerva, accomplished warrior as well as beautiful *donzella*, serves also as a go-between for her friend Cristalián and the princess Penamundi.

Before scrutinizing these two characters, however, it is worth pausing to briefly examine the literary history of the go-between. The go-between is a well-known literary figure that has populated numerous romances and poetry of medieval and early modern literature while

wearing a variety of faces. We find the Old Woman go-between in Fernando de Rojas's *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Juan Ruiz's *Libro de Buen Amor* (Urraca, Trataconventos). Aside from the notorious Old Woman, the go-between can be a friend or confidant like Guinevere in Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligés*¹² or even a close friend to both parties.¹³ Whatever the go-between looks like, be it an Old Woman, a friend, relative, nurse, or governess, his or her function inside the text is always the same; to choreograph the union of two people for love or sex.

Gretchen Mieszkowski's illuminating study *Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus* specifies two very distinct categories of go-betweens: "going between that facilitates idealized love and going between in the service of lust and sexual conquest."¹⁴ The facilitators of idealized liaisons, Mieszkowski elaborates, are typically aristocratic men and women and their entourages. These go-betweens typically introduce couples, arrange romantic meetings, offer words of encouragement and emotional support, and help one person win over the other. In contrast, the go-betweens of the stories of sexual conquest often trick or force one of the couple into a sex act. In fact, Mieszkowski reports that these go-betweens "have no interest in distinguishing between love and lust, and most of them are hired to help men seduce women by any means necessary. The most frequently recurring figure in this group is, of course, the lower-class old woman who scrapes together a living by sewing, serving as a duenna, or peddling small items, and who arranges sexual encounters for a price."¹⁵

Mieszkowski mentions in her study two go-betweens who precede both *Pleasure-of-my-life* (1490) and *Minerva* (1545). These two mediators are curiously pertinent to this study and have, indeed, left a footprint on their successors. The first is Pandarus, from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, written somewhere near the end of the fourteenth century. He is the best friend of the lover Troilus and a relative of Criseyde. He plays an idealized go-between by counseling the lover, comforting him, and choreographing a love union between the pair. At the same time, he is also the go-between who orchestrates sexual conquest, the familiar *Celestina*-like character who tricks Criseyde into sexual compliance by bringing Troilus into her bedroom. Pandarus

doesn't fall into either of Mieszkowski's categories. He is instead the progeny of a double tradition, a fusion of the conflicting conventions as if "two photographs had been taken on one frame of film to produce a literary double-exposure."¹⁶ Mieszkowski asserts that "Chaucer creates Pandarus by crossing two literary traditions that had stood in opposition to each other for hundreds of years."¹⁷ The second go-between is found in Boccaccio's *Filocolo*, an Italian prose romance written around 1336. In this romance Glorizia, a nurse/governess go-between, orchestrates the love liaison between Florio and Biancifiore. When Biancifiore is sold into slavery and is imprisoned in a tower, Florio hides himself in a chest of flowers and valiantly ascends the tower to be close to her. Glorizia discovers his presence and conceals him in various places, including the women's bedchambers, while orchestrating situations in which Florio can see and hear Biancifiore without being detected.¹⁸

Pleasure-of-my-life, the go-between in Martorell's *Tirant lo Blanc*, is much like the character Pandarus who Mieszkowski has termed a literary double-exposure. Because she has direct access to Tirant's love interest, Princess Carmesina, she is able to encourage the love union and shield the princess from any harmful or negative gossip that might interfere with the go-between's mission. In chapter 226, Pleasure-of-my-life speaks to Carmesina:

My lady, cast ill will from your mind, since if anyone is virtuous, it is noble Tirant. What wretch could persuade you that the best knight alive might compete with him in honor and courage or that Tirant speaks of anything but your virtues? Pay no heed to evil tongues, and love the man you should love, as it is glorious to possess such a brave and gentle knight.¹⁹

Curiously, this go-between does not only nurture love in the couple. Immediately after the positive accolades she bestows upon Tirant, she then states her true intentions: "May he rule your bed as you will rule his person which cannot be corrupted by gold or silver."²⁰ Pleasure-of-my-life has a double function in this romance, as the go-between of idealized love and the warrior of sexual conquest. The latter role is further established two chapters later when she gives Tirant explicit instructions: "Tomorrow after her bath I shall put her to bed, where

you will find your noble princess naked. It will be especially easy because I now sleep with her, and I assure you that shame will seal your lady's lips."²¹ She continues encouraging Tirant in their mutual quest stating "Oh God, what a wonderful thing it is to hold a soft, naked, fourteen-year-old damsel in one's arms, and still better if she is of royal blood." After enticing our hero she promises to help, declaring that "whoever offers counsel should help carry it out."²² The narrator then explains the following:

Once it was dark, Tirant went to the duchess's room. . . . Pleasure-of-my-life greeted our knight, who had donned a red satin cloak and doublet and held his naked sword aloft. She took his hand and led him to the princess's chamber, where there was a big chest with a hole cut in it to admit the air, in front of which stood Carmesina's bathtub.²³

After watching Carmesina bathe, Pleasure-of-my-life puts the princess to bed and helps Tirant out of the chest, telling him to undress. Tirant is shaking and terrified, but Pleasure-of-my-life relentlessly responds "How now? No man alive is brave in arms but afraid of women. In battle you are not daunted by all the knights in creation, and here you tremble at the sight of a mere damsel. Have no fear, for I shall remain at your side."²⁴

The hero's meekness in this passage is construed as effeminate by Pleasure-of-my-life, who scorns Tirant for his lack of resolve. Tellingly, the go-between is, in this instance, patently undermining this knight's *fortitudo*, one of the foremost attributes of masculinity and knightly prowess. The irregularity of this episode cannot be overemphasized. Here Tirant is refusing to perform his role as knight. He is acting abnormally and is therefore portrayed as "queer", which seriously undermines his knightly stature.²⁵ Peggy McCracken states: "The knight who refuses sexual reward for his exploits disrupts the cycle in which chivalric prowess is rewarded with a sexual love that, in turn, inspires chivalric prowess."²⁶ The lady-in-waiting, on the other hand, is the true agent here; therefore, she is the one acting as a male, according to the distinctions established by Karras. Thus, both characters are "queer" in terms of the genre since they do not follow the conventions of the

chivalric romance as well as in terms of gender because Tirant acts as a female and Pleasure-of-my-life acts as a male. Consequently, the scene clearly evokes the anxiety of a gender reversal.²⁷

Tirant's apprehension and fear during this scene might be attributed to nervousness or timidity, but it is equally plausible to posit that it stems from the troublesome moral implications of what he is doing. After all, this scene is entirely reminiscent of the biblical passage where David furtively spies on Bathsheba as she bathes. Medieval Christians were cognizant of the calamitous effects of gazing upon a naked female body precisely through the biblical account of the story of David and Bathsheba, constantly repeated in medieval sermons and illustrated in medieval manuscripts. Its exemplary value as a moral fable intended to discourage gazers from such sinful behavior is attested in one particular illumination of the tale found in a Psalter made for King Louis IX of France and cogently interpreted by Michael Camille:

Here in the opening initial to Psalm I, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly," two different kinds of look are contrasted in the figure of the biblical king David as exemplars for the royal reader of the improper use of the eyes. In the top half of the letter David looks down on an improper object—the naked body of Bathsheba—while below he kneels looking up to the proper object of contemplation—God.²⁸

According to this, Tirant's behavior mirrors that of David, and he is, thus, engaged in an improper contemplation of Carmesina. Tirant's action, however pleasing to him, is not entirely voluntary. He is acutely aware of the impropriety of his action and, in fact, expresses his objections to the deception discursively: "I want to win her through love, not force, and when I see such impropriety caused by my devotion, my will ceases to accord with yours."²⁹ But in the end, it is Pleasure-of-my-life who takes charge, coercively manipulating the lovers, and ushering Tirant into Carmesina's bed. The princess, however, wakes up and upon seeing Tirant lets out a scream that awakens the entire palace. Tirant is forced out a window onto the roof and falls to the ground breaking his leg in the process. So for now, our go-between's intentions are thwarted and the princess remains unconquered.

As can be seen, Martorell has given his go-between, a woman in this case, a rather disconcerting voice. As Sheila Tuttle Hanson aptly expresses it “for a male author to write women in these periods was to refer not to women, but to men—to desire not relationship with women, but relationship to the traditions of male textual activity, and, by extension, of male social and political privilege.”³⁰ While Mieszkowski’s study mentions that romances include some powerful, positively presented women and are less obviously misogynistic than stories about going between for lust, these exchanges between Tirant and Pleasure-of-my-life prove otherwise. Although she doesn’t fit perfectly into the Old Woman category like Celestina, as she is young and noble and even becomes a princess, Tirant’s go-between definitely has similar and blatantly misogynistic ambitions. In fact, she personifies a male sexual fantasy. She expresses this fantasy discursively throughout the text as we can see in the episode where she admonishes Tirant for not forcing Carmesina:

Are you unaware that every lady, great or humble, always longs to find love and gives the prize to whoever can find the most honorable—that is, the most discreet—path to her by night or day through windows, doors or rooftops? Do you think I would be angry if Hyppolytus³¹ acted thus? I would love him forty times more and hope he would seize my hair if I resisted, dragging me across the room till I shut up and obeyed him. May he act like a man and not like you.³²

The vivacious lady-in-waiting affirms not only that she expects to be treated with violence by her lover, but also that a lover’s brutality is a sign of his manliness and is, therefore, an attribute which women view positively.³³

In the chivalric world, the warrior or knight has certain duties and expectations that he (or she) must abide by. This code of conduct was first established in writing around 1170 by Etienne de Fougeres, bishop of Lisieux in France. Fougeres’s manual, *Livre des manières*, was written for knights as a type of guide. In it appear words associated with the virtues of all good knights: *prouesse*, *loyauté*, *larguese*, *courtoisie*, and *franchise*. These characteristics of chivalry were displayed in the romances of

Chrétien de Troyes in the twelfth century, and they set the foundation for the archetype of a chivalrous warrior until the end of the Middle Ages.³⁴ Around 1260 the Majorcan Ramon Llull wrote *Llibre de l'orde de cavalleria*. This influential and widely disseminated treatise (which is, as mentioned earlier, the very treatise, rewritten and inserted into chapters 33 and 34 of *Tirant lo Blanc* that the hermit uses to instruct the young Tirant) defines the origins of chivalry, its purposes, and the important obligations of all knights. These expectations include defending the faith of Christ against all pagans and infidels, protecting and defending the weak of the world, most importantly women and orphans, and staying in good physical shape by hunting savage beasts or by engaging in competitions such as tournaments. Above all a knight must value honor and avoid treason, pride, and excess.³⁵

In *Tirant lo Blanc*, however, the text includes several instances of sexual violence inflicted upon helpless females precisely by the knights who pledged to protect them. The first instance in which such uncourtly behavior is attempted in Martorell's romance takes place at the Court of Sicily: the protagonists of the episode are the knight Tirant himself, Felip, prince of France, and Ricomana, princess and heiress of the Kingdom of Sicily, where the knights are sojourning on their way to Constantinople. In chapter 111, Ricomana, after overcoming serious reservations, finally agrees to marry Felip and puts herself in the hands of Tirant, whom she trusts completely: "Tirant, my lord, I trust your great nobility and virtue so much that I am entrusting this entire affair to you and everything you decide will be fine with me" (our translation).³⁶

Tirant, however, betrays this confidence. The knight introduces Felip into the lady's chambers, dismisses the princess's ladies-in-waiting, and urges Ricomana to kiss Felip. When Ricomana protests, Tirant instructs Felip to seize the lady and take her to bed and, once there, he helps Felip by holding Ricomana's hands while the prince tries to forcefully obtain "that glory that he has so desired."³⁷ Ultimately, the sexual act is not consummated because the princess's screams alert her attendants, and they interrupt the two knights. The scene clearly demonstrates that Tirant does not regard his and Felip's actions as a crime but as acceptable amorous behavior. In fact, Tirant tries to disguise their unchivalrous conduct under the courtly rubric of "service": "My lady, neither Felip nor

I are here for anything other than to serve you. Please, your Highness, have a little patience.”³⁸

Later on in the narrative there are two clear representations of sexual violence: the first sexual encounter between Estefania, a lady-in-waiting of Princess Carmesina at the Court of Constantinople, and Diafebus, Tirant’s lieutenant, and Tirant and Carmesina’s sexual consummation in chapter 436. The first of the two episodes exemplifies the characteristics and elements of every subsequent case of rape, literal or figurative, in the novel. First, there are instances of *bodes sordes* or clandestine wedding.³⁹ Second, the lady is forcefully taken, and she expresses her physical suffering as well as her sadness about the loss of her virginity. Thirdly, the required secrecy of the encounter has been violated by a witness, Pleasure-of-my-life, who, together with the voyeuristic reader, has been spying through the keyhole.

In spite of the fact that the female expresses very vividly her complaints about the violence inflicted upon her, her discourse is disregarded and ultimately suppressed both figuratively and literally; figuratively with Tirant’s observation about the need to silence Estefania’s screams: “Sister Estefania, why do you want to incriminate yourself in such manner? Don’t you know that often the walls have ears?” (296) and, later, literally by Diafebus who covers her mouth with his hand so that she cannot scream any more. The discourse uttered by Pleasure-of-my-life, who happens to be the one who relates the episode as she witnessed it through the keyhole, is supposed to depict feminine sexual desire, but what it actually does is to verbalize male sexual fantasies.⁴⁰

Pleasure-of-my-life is indeed a peculiar female character, especially considering her position as a go-between in a chivalric text, because as Mieszkowski reminds us, go-betweens of the chivalric genre are usually associated with idealized love only. Pleasure-of-my-life, like Pandarus, is a literary amalgamation. She operates inside the appropriate disguise of a go-between of idealized love in order to coach both the hero and his love interest toward one important goal, the sexual conquest of the princess.

Much like Pleasure-of-my-life, Minerva,⁴¹ the woman warrior of Beatriz Bernal’s chivalric romance, acts as go-between for Cristalián, the hero, and his love interest, the beautiful princess Penamundi. She defies,

however, the pattern of the established female go-between as found in the previously mentioned texts, as we will see. Minerva is a woman warrior, a *virgo bellatrix* who, as Judith Whitenack⁴² reminds us, becomes a knight because she desires to do so and has a natural predisposition to it, and not in order to follow a lover and win back her honor.⁴³ Donatella Gagliardi agrees, noting that Minerva is an exceptional female warrior because she dedicates herself to a bellicose lifestyle not for love or a need to vindicate her honor, but simply for the pleasure of traveling the world in search of adventure.⁴⁴

Minerva and Cristalián meet on the road one day and square off in combat. When Cristalián defeats the unknown knight and discovers her female identity, Minerva affirms: “The Gods endowed me with such good fortune that until today I have not found a knight that could withstand me in battle.”⁴⁵ Seeing that she finally has met her match, she devotes herself to Cristalián and to his quest to save Penamundi who has been kidnapped and enchanted. After the two save the princess, Minerva then renews her commitment to Cristalián by serving as the pair’s go-between.

During his major quest, *La demanda de los Hondos Valles* (The Quest of the Deep Valleys), Cristalián acquires the precious treasures of King Midas. So great is our hero’s desire to see his love interest if only even for a moment that he and Minerva devise a plan. Among the spoils of King Midas is a giant golden statue, “la jayana de oro.” Cristalián hides himself inside the statue, and Minerva takes the treasures to Penamundi’s palace. When she is received by the emperor and he inquires about her visit, the warrior responds:

The gods guided me so well that one day I was traveling aimlessly when I bumped into the Knight of the Lion [alias Cristalián] and these gentlemen, and it wasn’t little the pleasure and happiness that my heart felt; and the Knight of the Lion likewise felt the same, and he begged me earnestly that with these gentlemen I would come to Persia and give a gift to the princess Penamundi on behalf of him; and so I ask Your Majesty for permission to do so.⁴⁶

The princess welcomes Minerva with open arms, and the scene continues as the warrior presents the Midas treasures to Penamundi: a silver trunk

filled with gold bars, a beautiful harp, a chess set, and finally the life-size golden statue. Much like Martorell's Tirant and Boccaccio's Florio, Bernal's Cristalián is able to enjoy the contemplation of Penamundi undetected and secure inside the golden statue.⁴⁷

As he entered the palace, the Knight of the Lion saw his lady, the princess, and so great was the happiness he felt that his heart failed him and he was dumbfounded; but afterward he recovered and he was saying in his heart: "Oh, how blessed is one who enjoys this sovereign princess if only by sight! So much do I owe the princess Minerva for bringing me to this state in which I find myself."⁴⁸

Minerva explains to Penamundi that the very sight of the golden statue is so pleasing that she would like nothing more than to have it brought into the women's private chambers so she can have it before her eyes at all times, and the princess complies. Chapter fifty takes us inside the princess's chamber where Penamundi, the princess Sandalina, and Minerva are all preparing to retire for the night and with them is, of course, the golden statue. Minerva speaks to the princess about its beauty. When Penamundi agrees, the go-between then tells her of the beauty inside the statue and how all the treasures of king Midas together cannot compare to the value of the statue's contents. Minerva then reveals that the hidden treasure is none other than the Knight of the Lion ("Caballero del León"), and with these words Cristalián emerges from the golden giant through a hidden door and kneels down before the princess. Penamundi is at first angry for being deceived, but once she sees the knight's handsome face, she calms down enough to speak with him.

He reveals himself as Cristalián, son of the emperor Lindedel of Trapisonda. Penamundi is delighted to learn his identity, and the two are left alone to share a few moments. At one point the knight gets overly confident and takes Penamundi in his arms and kisses her. The princess becomes incensed at Cristalián's boldness and refuses to forgive him. The knight is so devastated at her anger that he threatens to take his own life by throwing himself onto his own sword. Luckily, Minerva re-enters the room to disarm the situation and with her help, Penamundi is pacified and forgives Cristalián's behavior. It is notable that Bernal has given sexual power and control to the princess who, as

a result, establishes the sexual boundaries between her and Cristalián. The evening passes quite comfortably while the two lovers converse until the princess announces that it is time to retire:

And so these two that so truly loved each other spent the time talking about the things that gave their hearts the most ease, until it was past midnight and the princess called her ladies and told them that now it was time to sleep.⁴⁹

Cristalián is allowed to stay in the chambers but only under the conditions that Penamundi sets forth: “Let a bed be made in that room and he will sleep there while I have the key to the door with me.”⁵⁰ Minerva adheres to Penamundi’s wishes, and all four of the party go to sleep but not before the narrator mentions how Penamundi “alone in her bed spent the majority of the night awake and thinking about Cristalián, about his high lineage and her great fondness of him.”⁵¹

While this scene between Cristalián, Penamundi, and the go-between Minerva echoes that of Tirant, Carmesina, and Pleasure-of-my-life, as well as Florio and Glorizia, a few important differences should be noted. First is the most obvious, that Beatriz Bernal does not include any of the sexually suggestive or aggressive content as does Martorell in *Tirant lo Blanc*. While Pleasure-of-my-life’s role as go-between supports sexual conquest, Minerva remains steadfast in advocating idealized love. Carmesina evades rape and the loss of her honor from chapter 231 to chapter 435. But the hero and his go-between finally triumph in chapter 436 which is appropriately entitled “How Tirant Won the Battle and Forced His Way Into the Castle.” Although the two are married in a secret ceremony in chapter 277 and betrothed officially in chapter 452, Tirant dies before a public wedding is ever celebrated.⁵²

Quite different is the case between Cristalián and Penamundi. The closest Cristalián comes to sexual conquest is a stolen kiss, an action for which he is chastised, and even though the couple is joined officially in marriage at the end of book four, Bernal includes no details of their wedding night. Taking this absence of sexual content one step further,⁵³ Whitenack maintains that unlike male-authored chivalric novels, the heroes in *Cristalián de España* “are among the most faithful and the most chaste of all Castilian romance heroes: not even any secret marriages,

with the inevitable sexual relations before marriage”⁵⁴ appear in Bernal’s novel. In fact, those secondary characters that do give in to their desires pay for their unchaste behavior. Whitenack cites as examples Sinelda, who after having relations with Dismael suffers a horrible death, and Felisidonia and Fermosiliel, who are transformed into crows after their tryst.⁵⁵

Another difference that should be noted is the relationship between the go-between and the female love interest. Pleasure-of-my-life, although she is one of Carmesina’s *donzellas*, doesn’t hesitate to cross enemy lines and align herself with Tirant, acting more like one of the boys instead of an intimate friend of the princess. Her intentions are quite transparent, and even when Tirant himself questions for a second time the tactics being used to conquer Carmesina, the go-between responds ruthlessly and unsympathetically: “Glorious captain, take off everything but your shirt, and hurry to the side of one who loves you more than life. Dig in your spurs and show her no mercy, for if you spurn my advice you will never enjoy her favors.”⁵⁶ Carmesina is given little control over the issue of her virginity. Although her pleas stall her conquerors for a few chapters, she is, in the end, forced into sex with Tirant. Pleasure-of-my-life is a dominant go-between whose misogynistic voice is, in the end, triumphant. It is equally relevant to point out that because it is the female go-between who sanctions this behavior, the act of violence is in some sense erased and in turn cannot be construed as sexual violence by the audience, a statement that has profound implications regarding how Martorell has constructed sexual power in his novel.

Pleasure-of-my-life is funny, witty, and expressive but also a highly peculiar female character. Neither her behavior nor her discourse conforms to the expectations of a chaste woman delineated by numerous treatises of the period.⁵⁷ On the contrary, she shares the sexual drive observed in Tirant, Diafebus, the Emperor, and Hippolytus; she helps the male characters fulfill their sexual goals, blatantly disregarding important concerns expressed by the other female characters (the safeguard of honor, social position, royal obligations, etc); she spies and fantasizes about the sexual encounters between the lovers, and she constantly antagonizes Carmesina by facilitating Tirant’s entry into Carmesina’s bedroom against her wishes. Pleasure-of-my-life does not

correspond to the static and passive identity of female characters in medieval chivalric romances. Her actions demonstrate, in fact, that the construction of a gendered identity in medieval texts is constantly fluctuating and, thus, challenging the norms of a patriarchal society.⁵⁸ But it also evinces that gender in *Tirant lo Blanc* constitutes, as Judith Butler argues “a social representation, a recursive gesture of convention, a product of custom and a perception naturalized through discursive adaptation.”⁵⁹ Pleasure-of-my-life should never be construed as a real woman but as a socially constructed representation of woman.⁶⁰

The case of Penamundi and Minerva, on the other hand, is entirely different. Minerva is the only female go-between voiced by a female author of the chivalric genre. This being said, when we turn a gender-conscious lens on this unique character we can make some striking observations. Minerva’s primary goal as go-between is to orchestrate idealized love, and interestingly enough, to protect Penamundi’s honor and monitor Cristalián’s social *decorum*. Although a fierce warrior in battle and more than capable of over-powering the princess, she is humble and respectful, giving Penamundi the authority and control deserving of her royal status. Although it would seem more appropriate that Minerva be part of the “boy’s club,” because she is Cristalián’s close companion and fellow warrior, she comes to the princess’s aid when Cristalián becomes too assertive and threatens the princess’s honor, and even when she conspires with Cristalián and smuggles him into Penamundi’s chamber, it is she who reveals the hidden knight and takes responsibility for her part in the deception. Control is then handed back over to Penamundi who decides how the night will end. Quite unlike Martorell’s Carmesina who is at the mercy of her lover and go-between, the message that Penamundi communicates is quite clear: it is she who holds the key to her virginity and honor.

Because Pleasure-of-my-life’s and Minerva’s roles as go-between are integral in regards to their hero’s ultimate quest of love, it would be tempting to end our focus here. But when we pause to unravel each woman’s voice, to listen to the motivation behind their actions, and view their conduct through the prism of gender, some startling questions surface regarding the second identity, that of the warrior, and we as readers begin to question the nature of their conduct and deeds.

While at first glimpse Pleasure-of-my-life does not appear to fit into the category of warrior, we see that symbolically she is indeed a powerful one, capable of coercing a fierce knight, Tirant, into raping his future wife. Although she never wields a sword, her position as one of the princess's ladies-in-waiting, as well as her ability to manipulate and compel both active and passive partner, aid her in Tirant's successful storming of Carmesina's "castle." Also notable is Tirant's transformation into a passive participant. Although he planned and assisted in the rapes of Ricomana and Estefania, Tirant is reluctant to force Carmesina into the same situation. When he becomes weak and passive, Pleasure-of-my-life steps up and assumes his role of active "doer" both verbally and physically. She thus becomes the knight in the scene, forceful and determined to conquer and subdue Carmesina, while Tirant is rendered ineffectual.⁶¹

In consequence, if we return to Karras's assertions about sex, gender, and sexuality, we find that Martorell has taken a female character and made her masculine, despite her outwardly feminine appearance. We could then posit that the gendering of her actions has been for the benefit of the other males in the text. As a warrior of sexual conquest, she is quite successful, but by the standards of the code of chivalry, this knight leaves much to be desired.

Minerva, on the other hand, wears her knightly identity in plain view. She is Cristalián's loyal companion, fighting to uphold those ideals set forward by Fougeres's *Livre des manieres* and Lull's *Llibre de l'orde de cavalleria*. At the same time she protects Princess Penamundi by safeguarding her honor, abiding by her wishes and coaching Cristalián in matters of the heart. Minerva maintains the integrity of a true warrior and whether donning armor or a dress, her identity remains the same; that of a knight abiding by the chivalric code. Much like Martorell's Pleasure-of-my-life, Bernal has gendered Minerva's actions, creating a female character who acts like a male. The difference between the two, however, is extraordinary. Quite unlike Pleasure-of-my-life, Minerva is a woman who acts like a male to benefit the women in the text.⁶² By adhering to knightly expectations, she becomes an honorable companion, trustworthy go-between, and honest *donzella*, as well as an exemplary warrior.

Beatriz Bernal had one child, daughter Juana de Gatos. Upon Gatos's death, a public inventory of property and wealth was recorded which suggests that both Bernal and her daughter might have lived quite comfortably.⁶³ The inventory documents more than expensive furniture and fine porcelain; a notable private library of both secular and religious books was also listed.⁶⁴ This treasure trove of private literature suggests that both women were educated, avid readers who likely belonged to the upper class and who took advantage of the opportunity to buy and read books of both religious and secular nature.

It is thus possible to conjecture that Bernal was very familiar with the chivalric genre because she herself wrote one romance comparable to the well-known chivalric novels of the time, such as *Amadís de Gaula* (1508) or *Palmerín de Oliva* (1511). It is equally worth noting that Bernal lived and published her book in Valladolid, site of the royal court and the editorial powerhouse of Castile at the time. As the capital of the kingdom, in the middle of the sixteenth century this city was at its apogee, and it became a center of power, prestige and human resources that had no precedent in Castile.⁶⁵ Gagliardi asserts that proof of the city's preeminence is the extraordinary expansion of the publishing industry in the period 1544-1559, and that "la aparición de la novela de Beatriz Bernal se remonta precisamente a la época de máximo esplendor del arte tipográfico vallisoletano, además de coincidir con un momento de gran boga de los libros de caballerías."⁶⁶ (Beatriz Bernal's publication of her romance coincides with the zenith of the typographical arts in the city of Valladolid as well as with the period where chivalry novels were most in vogue in Spain.) Moreover, it was also in Valladolid that the Castilian translation of *Tirant lo Blanch* was published by Diego de Gumiel in 1511. This edition is the one which Miguel de Cervantes, and possibly Beatriz Bernal, read and the one to which Cervantes refers in his famous masterpiece *Don Quijote de la Mancha*.

In chapter 6 of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* titled "The Inquisition in the Library" Cervantes refers to the most disseminated and esteemed body of peninsular chivalric texts. Regarding *Tirant lo blanc* we read "Good heavens! . . . Is *Tirant the White* here? Give it to me, friend, for to my mind that book is a rare treasure of delight and a mine of entertainment."⁶⁷ Whether Cervantes was a true admirer of Martorell's text

or whether this comment was part of his parody of the chivalric genre is still in debate today. What we are certain of, however, is that *Tirant* was a popular and well received text of its time, and those authors who embarked on the task of writing within the genre would have most likely been familiar with it.⁶⁸

Given the likelihood that Bernal was acquainted with the famous Catalan chivalric romance *Tirant lo Blanc*, a comparison of the medieval Catalan text and the early modern Castilian text is an appropriate means to explore the different ways a male and female author have gendered the actions of their female characters in a similar episode, despite the different social environments in which they were individually composed. Although the author's intentions behind the literary lives of these go-between/warriors will never be known for certain, Bernal's text is a treasure to those studying the chivalric genre because it is the only resource available from which to glean a female-authored perspective on perceptions of chivalry and chivalric gender construction in the Iberian Peninsula.

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END NOTES

1. E.J. Burns, *Body Talk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 6.
2. The Valencian aristocrat Joanot Martorell composed this romance between 1460 and 1464. The novel was well known by Martorell's contemporaries and frequently discussed among intellectuals and at social gatherings (Joan Fuster, "Consideracions sobre el *Tirant*," *Obres completes, VII: Llengua, literatura, historia* [Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1994], 256-77, 267).
3. Jodi Shearn is currently working on a critical edition of *Don Cristalián de España* for her doctoral dissertation at Temple University.
4. In 1537 Beatriz Bernal from Valladolid, Spain, composed her romance *La Historia del los invitos y magnánimos cavalleros don Cristalián de España príncipe de Trapisonda y del infante Luzescanio su hermano, hijos del famosísimo emperador Lindedel de Trapisonda*. This extensive prose text containing 304 folios or 2000 printed pages was published eight years later in 1545. Five copies of this original publication are still in existence today. Thirty-nine years later in 1584, Juana de Gatos, daughter of Beatriz Bernal, requested

permission to republish and sell *Cristalián de España*, and in 1587 the novel was re-released in Alcalá de Henares by Juan Iñiquez de Lequerica (Gagliardi 158). Still extant today are nine copies of this second edition. See Donatella Gagliardi, “Quid puella cum armis? Una aproximación a Doña Beatriz Bernal y a su *Cristalián de España*” (PhD Diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2003), 158.

5. Beatriz Bernal is the only confirmed female author of a chivalric romance in the Iberian Peninsula. See the discussion of other possible female authors (Catalina Arias, Teresa de Jesús, Leonor Coutinho) in Gagliardi, 109-117. Aurelio Vargas Díaz-Toledo maintains that the Portuguese lady Leonor Coutinho is without a doubt an author of chivalric romances in his article “Los libros de caballerías manuscritos portugueses,” *Caballerías*, 223—online only at www.destiempos.com/n23/vargas.pdf and also in his oral intervention at the 13th International Congress of the Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval, Valladolid, September 2009.

6. We borrow the terms “masculinist” and masculinity from the theoretical current that studies the construction of masculinity from the perspective of gender studies (epitomized by the collection *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees and Jo Ann McNamara [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994]). In this particular instance, however, we use the term “masculinist” to qualify a pattern of “traditional” male values, practices, and behaviors which usually define the identity of knights and chivalric heroes.

7. In order to instruct the inexperienced Tirant, the hermit avails himself of a fictional manual which is clearly indebted to the well-known treatise, *Llibre de l'orde de cavalleria*, by the Majorcan author Ramon Llull ca. 1279-1283.

8. Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

9. *Ibid.*, 27.

10. Although the terms “warrior” and “knight” do not denote exactly the same, for the purpose of our analysis we are using them interchangeably. We are cognizant of the fact that the term “warrior” and the *topos* of the woman warrior have more ample chronological and geographical manifestations than the concept of “knight.” Nevertheless, we focus on those traits that are shared by the universal archetype of the warrior and the medieval European knight because they are founded on the same *ethos*. It is when Minerva and Pleasure-of-my-life adopt this ethos (literally, figuratively or discursively) and depart from conventional feminine conduct that we speak of them as warrior/knights.

11. For an in-depth examination of the *virgo bellatrix* in chivalric romances see Carmen Marín Pina, “Aproximación al tema de la *virgo bellatrix* en los libros de caballerías españoles,” *Criticón* 45 (1989): 81-94.

12. Guinevere intervenes for her lady-in-waiting Soredamores and her lover Alexander.

13. Alexandrine in *William of Palerne* goes between for her two best friends Melior and William.

14. Gretchen Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1.

15. *Ibid.*, 2.

16. *Ibid.*, 3.

17. *Ibid.*, 4.

18. *Ibid.*, 105.

19. Joanot Martorell, *Tirant lo Blanc*, trans. David H. Rosenthal (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1984), 363.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, 366.

22. *Ibid.*, 367.

23. *Ibid.*, 370.

24. *Ibid.*, 371.

25. This is not the only instance in the Catalan romance where Tirant is depicted as “queer” for breaching the boundaries of expected manly behavior. In one of the most amusing episodes of the romance the knight will wear, on top of his armor, a piece of Camesina’s undergarment. Although such unbecoming dressing up of the knight will provoke raucous laughter among the courtiers, Tirant will very proudly parade the intimate garment. The construction of masculine identity in this episode is fraught with contradictions and signals the hero as female or a woman.

26. Peggy McCracken, “Chaste Subjects: Gender, Heroism, and Desire in the Grail Quest” in *Queering the Middle Ages*, ed. Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 123-42, 125.

27. In the Iberian context, the anxiety provoked by gender reversal is nowhere more unmistakably visible than in the cultural production during the reign of Isabel the Catholic. In order to strengthen and refashion her sovereignty, Queen Isabel encouraged her official historians to portray her as a *muger varonil* or manly woman (*virgo bellatrix*). Barbara Weissberger has amply analyzed these aspects of gender ideology in Isabelline literature in her study *Isabel Rules: Constructing Queenship, Wielding Power* (Minneapolis:

University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

28. Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (London: Lawrence King, 1998), 29-30.

29. Martorell, *Tirant lo Blanc*, 372.

30. Quoted in Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens*, 72.

31. Hyppolytus/Hipòlit is Pleasure-of-my-life's love interest. He is one of Tirant's companions. Despite Pleasure-of-my-life's best efforts to attract Hyppolytus' amorous attentions, the young knight pays no heed to the spirited go between and prefers to engage in an adulterous and torrid liaison with the old Empress, Carmesina's mother.

32. Martorell, *Tirant lo Blanc*, 373.

33. This definition of masculine behavior as depicted by Pleasure-of-my-life clearly accords with masculine ideals found in other medieval texts of the Iberian Peninsula. Louise Mirrer has demonstrated that aggressive behavior, sexual assertiveness, and menacing speech figure prominently in the literary texts of medieval Castile. In many of these texts, another layer of gendered differentiation is added: Christian manly warriors are contrasted to effeminate and weeping Muslim warriors. See Mirrer, *Women, Jews and Muslims in the Texts of Reconquest Spain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

34. Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (London: Yale University Press, 1984), 2.

35. *Ibid.*, 10.

36. "Tirant, senyor, yo confie molt en la vostra gran noblea e virtut, per què yo pose tot aquest fet en vostre poder. E tot lo que vós fareu yo u tindrè per fet e, si ara voleu que's faça, també m'i fermaré de bon grat" (*Tirant lo Blanch*, Chapter III, page 212).

Although throughout the article we quote from David Rosenthal's English translation of *Tirant lo Blanc*, in this particular instance we have decided to provide our own translation because Rosenthal's version does not do justice to the Catalan original. A more exact rendition of the original text here, as well as in other passages of the romance, does, in fact, support our reading and interpretation of Martorell's text. Rosenthal's translation reads thus: "I leave everything in your hands, for whatever you do will please me" (172).

37. Martorell, *Tirant lo Blanc*, 173.

38. *Ibid.*

39. See Rafael Beltrán Llavador's illuminating article, "Las bodas sordas en *Tirant lo Blanc* y *La Celestina*, *Revista de Filología Española* 70 (1990):

91-117, on the *bodes sordes* in *Tirant lo Blanc* and their connections with Fernando de Rojas's *Tragedia de Calisto y Melibea*, another fifteenth-century work devoted to a notorious and influential go-between, Celestina.

40. For a more detailed explanation, see Montserrat Piera, "Com *Tirant vencé la batalla e per força d'armes entrà lo castell: Rape and Conquest in Tirant lo blanc*," *Actes del Vuitè Col·loqui d'Estudis Catalans a Nord-Amèrica* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1995), 259-80.

41. Daughter of Jupiter and Metis, Minerva was considered the goddess of warriors but also the goddess of wisdom, poetry, commerce, and crafts and the inventor of music. In other words, she was the creator of all those things which constitute human civilization. For a more detailed discussion of the symbolic connotations of the use of Minerva in the romance of Beatriz Bernal, see Piera, "Minerva y la reformulación de la masculinidad en *Don Cristalián de España* de Beatriz Bernal" (unpublished manuscript forthcoming in *Tirant*).

42. Judith Whitenack, "Emphasis Added': An Introduction to Beatriz Bernal's *Don Cristalián de España*." *Monographic Review* 13 (1997): 32.

43. There are an abundance of studies on the cross-dressing female characters of early modern Iberian literature or historical transvestites such as Catalina de Erauso, la Monja Alférez. See Teresa Scott Soufas, *Dramas of Distinction: A Study of Plays by Golden Age Women* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997); *Gender, Identity, and Representation in Spain's Golden Age*, ed. Anita K. Stoll and Dawn L. Smith (Lewisburg, Pa: Bucknell University Press, 2000); María Carmen Marín Pina, "Aproximación al tema de la *virgo bellatrix* en los libros de caballerías españoles," *Criticón* 45 (1989): 81-94; Carmen Bravo-Villasante, *La mujer vestida de hombre en el teatro español: siglos XVI-XVII* (Madrid: Mayo de Oro, 1988); Beatriz Cortez, "El travestismo de Rosaura en *La vida es sueño* y de Leonor en *Valor, agravio y mujer*: el surgimiento de la agencialidad femenina y la desnaturalización del binarismo del género," *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 52.2 (1988): 371-85; M. E. Perry, "La monja alférez: Myth, Gender, and the Manly Woman in a Spanish Renaissance Drama," *LA CHISPA '87: Selected Proceedings*, ed. Gilbert Paolini. (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1987) 239-49; Stephanie Merrim, "Catalina de Erauso: From Anomaly to Icon," in *Coded Encounters: Writing, Gender, and Ethnicity in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Francisco Javier Ceballos Candau, et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 177-205. For a general overview see Rudolf Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Judy

Marcure and Lotte van de Pol (New York: Saint Martin's, 1989).

44. Gagliardi, "Quid puella cum armis?" 137.

45. Beatriz Bernal, *Cristalián de España*, ed. Sydney Park (Diss. Temple U, 1981. Modernized version of Alcalá, 1587 edition), 468. For the purpose of this study we have translated the original Spanish passages into English.

46. *Ibid.*, 761.

47. Although, as we have seen throughout this study, analogous voyeuristic subterfuges as the one examined in *Tirant lo Blanc* and *Cristalián* are discernible in other literary traditions (albeit not in other Iberian texts), the performance of these two scenes presents so many elements in common that it seems plausible to deduce that Bernal had read *Tirant lo Blanc* and had possibly attempted a refashioning of the scene.

48. *Ibid.*, 766.

49. *Ibid.*, 779.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.* 781.

52. Martorell, *Tirant lo Blanc*, chap. 467, *How Tirant caught the disease that killed him*. "Tirant's company set out for his wedding feast in Constantinople, where the emperor made a breach in the walls so our knight's triumphal chariot could enter. The army halted in Adrianople, which is a day's ride from the capital because His Majesty had asked them to wait there until he sent word. He suddenly felt a sharp pain in his side, his two friends carried him back into the town, where they put him to bed and summoned their doctors, who tried many remedies but to no avail," 601.

53. We are mindful of the fact that these two texts were created in different chronological periods and thus were determined by differing cultural paradigms. As a result, some of the discrepancies observed between the texts can be attributed not only to the author's gender but also to the author's social and religious context. For example, *Tirant lo Blanc* was composed before the upheavals of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation while *Don Cristalián de España* was penned exactly during the period of the backlash against Protestantism. Thus, the middle of the sixteenth century in Spain was characterized by a virulent conservatism, the repression of sexual mores, and the establishment of artistic censorship. Whitenack's observations here open up a different, yet important conversation regarding questions of chastity and sexual activity that the space of this present study will not allow.

54. Whitenack, "Emphasis Added," 28.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Martorell, *Tirant lo Blanc*, 574.

57. The medieval construction of femininity was built on three foundations: silence, marital obedience, and chastity. Medieval and early modern moralists insisted on the importance of chastity in women and the deleterious effects of feminine lust in society. Francesc Eiximenis in *Llibre de les dones*, for example, upheld the notion that feminine promiscuity would pollute society and cause illness and pestilence. Even those authors (Alvaro de Luna, Christine de Pizan, Rodríguez del Padrón) who wrote in defense of women in the context of the *querelle des femmes*, employed chastity as the key element in their apology of the weaker sex. For an assessment on the preeminence of chastity in the gender debate tradition, see Rina Walthaus, "Gender, Revalorización y marginalización: La defensa de la mujer en el siglo XV," in *Literatura Medieval. Actas do IV Congresso da Associação Hispanica de Literatura Medieval*. ed. A. A. Nascimento and C. Almeida (Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 1993), 269-74.

58. We do not intend to use the concept of "patriarchy" as a universalist and essential category. Our theoretical stance is in accord with the formulations of materialist-feminism and, consequently, we believe that identities are always socially constructed, not innate, and we reject the notion that there exists an essential "woman" or "patriarchy."

59. Cited by Michael E. Gerli, "Gender Troubles: Juan de Flores's *Triunfo de Amor*, *Isabel la Católica*, and the Economies of Power at Court," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (2003): 169-84; 169.

60. Very often the opposite has been the case. Many readers of Martorell's romance have seen in the character of Pleasure-of-my-life the archetype of the sensual, uninhibited, emancipated female who resembles a modern woman from post-feminist times (Pierce, Beysterveldt, Miralles, and, more recently, the film director Vicente Aranda). Others have interpreted Pleasure-of-my-life's sexual proclivities as equally modern but of a lesbian nature (Vargas Llosa).

61. There is yet another episode where Pleasure-of-my-life performs a remarkable role reversal that brings to the fore the instability and ambiguity of the go-between's sexual identity. Disguised as Carmesina's black gardener, she frolics in the garden with the princess. Here Pleasure-of-my-life is not only dressed as a man, but she also "acts" as a male, chasing Carmesina, trying to overpower her and obscenely touching her breasts and her genitalia. Pleasure-of-my-life is also performing gender in this instance. Her performance is so convincing that Tirant, who is spying through a window,

becomes so jealous that he kills the real gardener (chap.283).

62. Of course, men benefit as well, if it is indeed love they seek. Minerva's chief concern, however, appears to always be the welfare of the lady, which is precisely, as we have seen, one of the obligations of a knight.

63. For a complete inventory, see Gagliardi, "Quid puella cum armis?," 69-70.

64. For a list of books conserved in Gatos' private library, see Gagliardi, 15-26 and Pedro Cátedra y Anastasio Rojo, *Bibliotecas y lecturas de mujeres. Siglo XVI* (Salamanca: Instituto de Historia del Libro y de la Lectura, 2004), 350-56.

65. Gagliardi, "Quid puella cum armis?," 418.

66. *Ibid.*, our translation.

67. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Luis Andrés Murillo (Madrid: Castalia, 1987), 60.

68. Further evidence of the popularity of the *Tirant lo Blanc* among peninsular readers is a reference to it found in *Tractado de orthographía y accentos en las tres lenguas principales* written by Alejo Venegas in 1531. Venegas decries the pernicious vogue of chivalric romances and mentions Martorell's text: "No nos embiaría a dezir desde Lobayna Ludovico Vives tanto mal de nuestros libros vulgares, si viera él que, en alguna manera, se podia soportar corrupción de costumbres, y por esso allende de los Amadisys y los Tirantes con toda su classe, con mucha razón difunde su satýrica saña en la lena de Celestina; que en mi verdad no hay Marcial que tanto mal haga en latín, quanto esta flora patente desflora la juventud en romance" (66-67). Venegas is no doubt referring here to the Castilian translation of the romance which would have been widely available to Castilian readers, including Beatriz Bernal. For a detailed account of the popularity and wide dissemination (in manuscript form as well as oral performance) of the original Catalan *Tirant lo Blanch* among readers in the Crown of Aragon, especially Valencia, see Fuster, "Consideracions sobre el Tirant."