The sixteenth century was an era of enormous turbulence and danger for those who undertook the uncertainties of travel. But unprecedented numbers did so, often moving permanently from one part of Europe to another. It is this movement of peoples that we have most in mind when we address the subject of migration, not least the enormous numbers of religious refugees who left one part of continental Europe to escape religious persecution.¹ But in fact the issue of migration may be said to encompass three major developments that fell within the intellectual compass of the age.

First, most obviously, was the migration of peoples, much stimulated by the religious convulsions of the age. Secondly we may note the movement of ideas that preceded this. Whatever one thinks of the success or failure of the Protestant Reformation as a European movement, there can be no doubt that the speed with which Luther’s ideas became known across Europe was quite phenomenal.² Luther’s criticisms were taken up or confuted with remarkable speed in centres of learning around Europe, spread both by printed editions and by correspondence among the rather self-conscious humanist scholarly network.

Both of these are relatively well known. This essay will be devoted to a third major trans-national movement, the migration of text. This might be thought to be no more than a natural corollary of the first two. Certainly migrant populations spread knowledge of their own favourite texts, and created demand for a literature of instruction, especially dictionaries, to aid their integration into their new environments.³ There is also no doubt that the Reformation created major new markets for translated theological and controversial texts. But in the realm of

³ Margarete Lindemann, Die französischen Wörterbücher von den Anfängen bis 1600. Entstehung und typologische Beschreibung (Tübingen, 1994).
books the impetus given to the international exchange of ideas by the Reformation only added an extra dimension to a phenomenon that already existed, and had done so since long before the invention of print. Particularly in the field of literature and poetry the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had already seen the development of a lively cross-border and cross-cultural movement of texts, one particularly marked in specific categories of literature that proved appealing to the growing numbers of literate men and women in secular occupations. The invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century gave this cross-cultural flow of texts enormous new impetus. New bibliographical scholarship, which has enabled us to log systematically the growth of a market for printed books in almost all of Europe’s major centres of production, allows us for the first time to gauge the full social importance of this phenomenon.

This present investigation probes some of these issues with relation to one especially popular text: the vast, sprawling epic known as the *Amadis de Gaule*. A text of rather uncertain authorship emanating from the Spain of the *reconquista*, *Amadis* went on to become one of the most popular and sought after texts of the sixteenth century. It was part of a range of Iberian chivalric books that proved a staple of the recreational reading of men and women in large parts of western and northern Europe. In tracing the publication history of this single book (or series of books, since the *Amadis* ran to many volumes) we can also chart changes in public taste, as the work mutated into different formats and sizes to suit a changing reading public. We can also see how the text adapted to suit different local audiences with different expectations of an epic tale of courage, fantasy, and courtly behaviour.

The first known version of the tales of *Amadis* seems to date from the early fifteenth century, to judge from a manuscript fragment rediscovered in the middle of the 20th century. In this earliest version it took its inspiration from the French Arthurian Romances of the thirteenth

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