



42. KNIGHTS, TROUBADOURS AND FAITHFUL OF LOVE

Who were in reality the authors of the novels of King Arthur and the Holy Grail? They were poets who belonged to a category usually known as troubadours¹. They were all of noble or clerical-monastic descent². As already demonstrated, the troubadours were the initiatic knightly brotherhood of the *Faithful of Love*³. At the beginning they were errant knights, but towards the middle of the 12th century they were integrated in the ranks of monastic-knightly Orders, in particular among the Templars and the other branches derived from the Order of the Temple⁴. They represented the true initiatic structure of the Latin chivalry and they gathered in certain castles, meeting in the so-called *Courts of Love*.



1. A Court of Love

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- ¹ *Troubadours* and the *trobairitz* (women) in langue d'Oc or Occitan language; *trouvères* in Old French; *trovadores* in Spanish; *trovatori* in Italian; *minnesänger* (singer of Love) in German. Generally, that etymology of the Romance languages is related to the verb *tróbar*, to find. The glottologists hypothesize its meaning according to their capacity to understand. Therefore, for them, 'to find' means to invent a poem, a song. Instead, as we will see later, for those knights the *tróbar* was related to the quest for the Grail. Therefore, much more plausibly the 'to find' dealt with the path that led to Love.
 - ² They were composers of ballads, songs and sonnets in rhyme. The ones who were not noble by birth could become a minstrel or jester, and wander to different castles singing the works composed by the real *troubadours*. Only later the phenomenon of the bourgeois imitators of the *troubadours*, appeared in the Communes. They were called with contempt 'reveller friars' (*frati gaudenti*) or 'mayor troubadours' (*podestà-trovatori*).
 - ³ *Fiés d'Amors* in Occitan language. The term *Faithful of Love* (*Fedeli d'Amore*) was very widespread in Italy to define this brotherhood of knight-rhymers. Only in Dante's *Vita Nova* (*New Life*) they are evoked seven times with this name. The abuse perpetrated by literary critics is indeed incredible: in the Italian Literature History texts this denomination is almost never found. In its place the critics use the term '*stil novo*' (new style) to define this literary current, although the term '*dolce stil novo*' (sweet new style) appears historically only once, and precisely in Dante's *Purgatory*, XXIV.57. In this context it is clear that this formula applies only to the stylistic change made by Dante, who abolished the *parler cloz* of the troubadour poetry. Instead, literary critics broaden its use to wrongly include both the predecessors of Dante (the Bolognese troubadour poetry current) and his Tuscan successors. In fact, previously the *Fiés d'Amors* used a cryptic language, understandable only among the initiates. Dante, from a certain moment, decided to speak openly, aware that the profanes of his time were completely incapable of understanding even the most clearly exposed things. This is similar to what those who collaborate with this website have decided to do.
 - ⁴ Such as the Teutonic, the Calatrava and the Alcantara knights. "The consequences arising from having determined the 'Faithful of Love' as the direct descendants from the Saint Grail knights, will direct the attention of scholars to the possible relations between these 'Faithful' and the Templars" (Alfonso Ricolfi, *Studi sui "Fedeli d'Amore" 1. Le «corti d'Amore» e i «Fedeli d'Amore» in Francia*, Milano-Genova-Roma-Napoli, Soc. An. Ed. Dante Alighieri, 1933, p. 78).



As it was customary at the time, every morning the Lord of the castle would administered justice for his subjects. As Judge of the fiefdom, he was advised by a Law Court composed of his wife the chatelaine, noble vassals, knights, clerical advisers and some monks. The Court of Love was similarly structured, but all the members had to belong to the same initiatic organization, called the *Holy Faith*. In the eyes of a profane or of the spies of the Inquisition, the Court of Love had to appear as the convocation of the internal fief's Law Court. In reality, it was something else. During the Court of Love sessions, the Judge proceeded to initiate the aspirants. The phases of this ritual took place as follows: the master who presided over the Court and who represented the God of Love, verified the chivalrous quality of bravery¹, the determination and the sincerity of desire of the aspirant to Love².



2. Il Cavaliere, la sua Dama e la Rosa della Sapienza

As it has already been said, Love was the name that the Faithful of Love used to call God. In Latin 'Love' (*Amor*) meant 'Immortality', the state that the knights wanted to reach by uniting themselves with God.

'A' means 'without' and 'mor' means 'death': if we assemble them together, we will obtain 'without death'.³

Once verified the sincerity of the aspirant's desire, the master chose a person who could represent his soul. If the applicant was a knight, the master would point out a lady, or a knight if the aspirant was a lady. This *alter ego* could had never been the husband or wife of the aspirant, because between married nature wants them to be unite in one flesh. Instead the knight had to love the lady with exclusively spiritual love, since she had to represent for him his own purified soul⁴. After this, the master cast his *Dolce Sguardo* (Sweet Look), sharp as a spear, into the applicant's chest, piercing his heart.

1 That meant that he had to be like Lancelot, of the strongest and most skilled knight of the Round Table (A. Ricolfi, *Studi sui "Fedeli d'Amore"*, cit. p. 66).

2 Namely to have "the intellect, the will and the 'appetite' of good" (Luigi Valli, *Il Linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei Fedeli d'Amore*, Roma, Optima, 1928, I vol. p. 248).

3 "'A' senefie en sa partie, 'sans', et 'mor' senefie 'mort': Or l'assemblons, s'aurons «sans mort»". Jacques de Baisieux, *Feudi d'Amore [Fiez d'Amor]*, vv. 94-96.

4 It follows that an already initiated lady was assigned to the aspirant initiate, to help him to overcome the first degrees of initiation. The Dame, therefore, symbolically represented an angelic principle, similar to the *ḍākinīs* and *yoginīs* in the Tantrism. The human representatives of *ḍākinīs*, in certain tantric currents are called *bhairavīs*. However, the latter are actually used as lovers in the paths of the left hand (*vāmācāra mārga*); it does not seem, however, that in the initiatic organization of the Holy Faith something comparable to the *pañca makāra* had ever been practiced. Only among some of the oldest Troubadours there are more crude amorous allusions, as in Guilhèm IX of Poitiers, duke of Aquitaine (1071-1127).



3. The Sweet Look

The 'Sweet Look' then ripped the knight's heart from his chest and handed it to the lady. This ritual, loaded with symbolic meanings, was called '*mercé*' (mercy), which means initiation or grace¹. The ritual ended with the seal by a kiss between the two parties, the only bodily contact between them.



4. Love assigns to every troubadour his celestial fiefdom

The representative of the God of Love, then assigned to the new initiate a heavenly fiefdom, a domain that he had to conquer by means of rituals and their corresponding virtues.

This fiefdom, in the aftermath of the knight's inner experience, had to grow bigger and to advance up to the status of a heavenly Empire. Unlike terrestrial fiefdoms, heavenly fiefs could never be lost if one upheld those virtues². The importance and expanse of the heavenly fiefdoms were commensurate to the

This was an imitation of the Latin lyrics on rural loves with peasant girls and shepherdesses following the style of Virgil and other poets of the Augustan Age such as Horatius, Ovidius and Propertius. In this case we can compare them with the love affairs of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs*, which, although they appear as erotic narratives, they actually must also be considered highly symbolic. However, it is important to emphasize that these poems of folksy loves reveal an uninterrupted initiatic transmission of Roman origin.

1 A. Ricolfi, *cit.*, pp. 66-68. At the beginning of the 13th century, simultaneously with the end of the production of the Grail novel, the Courts of Love began to hide. They were reserved only to members of the same organization, especially after the ecclesiastical condemnation in 1277 of the book *De Amore*, by Andreas Cappellanus, (Andrew the Chaplain) (1150-1220). This book, written by the chaplain (sskrt. *purohita*) of the Court of Love chaired by the Countess Marie de Champagne, represented the fundamental doctrinal text for all the Faithful of Love.

2 Jacques de Baisieux, *Fiefs of Love [Fiez d'Amor]*, vv. 139-159. Love always remained the Lord of the fiefs, and He gave to the Faithful of Love only temporary possession of that dominion; this happened similarly with the terrestrial feuds, whose Lord was the Emperor. It is interesting to note that the etymology that philologists attribute to the word 'feud' is completely inadequate to its true meaning. This is due to the anti-medieval bias of the bourgeois Enlightenment ideology, which



stages of the inner journey of the initiate. The steps were seven, as described by Francesco da Barberino, a Faithful of Love, in one of his famous drawings¹.



5. Seven initiatic degrees of the Faithful of Love

The first two steps marked the transition from the external Catholic religion to the esoterism by means of a dual initiatic death (represented by the figures of a ‘*he religious-dead*’ and a ‘*she religious-dead*’).



6. Wife-husband, the troubadour’s androgynous and Śiva-Śakti Ārdhanārīśvara

The third degree was the rebirth as a ‘*child*’ and ‘*maiden*’ (corresponding to the state of *bāla* in the *hindū* initiatic ways). It followed the ‘*fearless squire-of-honour*’(*donzel*) and the ‘*perfect damsel*’,

considers feudalism a barbarian state system of the "dark ages" compared to the "enlightened" regime like that of the Terror produced by the French Revolution. In fact, they fantasise about an origin from a Gothic word ‘*faihu*’, which would mean ‘property of cattle’. The fiefdom, on the other hand, has nothing to do with cattle and even less with the concept of ‘property’. Instead the Occitan ‘*fiez*’, feuds or fiefs, closely resembles the term used for ‘*Fiēs d’Amors*’. Since the feudal system was based on the concept of fidelity (lat. *fides*), we believe that this was the true meaning of ‘feud’. If someone then considers this as a “false etymology” and relies on the inadequacy of “scientific” etymologies, he is free to do so in harmony to his degree of intelligence. The same holds true for the *Nirukta* of the *Hindūs*, ridiculed as a “pseudo-etymology” by Sanskritists and Indologists who are incapable of understanding its use and meaning.

¹ The drawing is found in his work *I documenti d’Amore (The documents of Love)*. The six figures on the left and right of the viewer, respectively represent the stages on the path of the dames and knights, being the seventh common to the two genders.





corresponding to the degree of spiritual adolescence; then, 'common man' and 'married woman', i.e. spiritually adult ones. The sixth grade depicts the 'merited¹ knight' and the 'widow'. The last and supreme spiritual degree, the character represented in the centre corresponded to 'wife-husband', the realization of the primordial androgyne. It is quite evident the resemblance to the seven *cakras* of the Tantrism: moreover, the 'wife-husband' coincides with the same androgynous union between Śiva-Śakti, the *Ārdhanārīśvara*² that in the seventh *cakra* is represented by the thousand-petalled lotus. When the initiate had reached the highest level of the chivalrous way, he was recognized as identical to Percival, since he had the vision of the Holy Grail³.

The God of Love offers immortality to all who know him:

*Then, who has Love and dwells in Him is without death; whoever has Love has life, and who has envy has death.*⁴

For this reason, the Faithful of Love, ladies or knights, they all are women in relation to God, who is the only absolute male⁵. However, with 'Dame' they defined, in addition to themselves, several other things that we briefly list here: 1) 'Dame' was the name used to call the initiatic organization; 2) More commonly, a 'Dame' indicated their soul, their intellect and their achieved degree of understanding; 3) 'Dame' or 'Madona' represented the Virgin Mary, understood as a mediator between the devotee and God⁶, in the sense of Divine Omnipotence and Holy Wisdom; 4) 'Dames' were also the powers and virtues that acted and were acquired as inner experiences during the initiatory path⁷; 5) This word also designated the lady who had been appointed by the master to represent, for each individual knight, all the senses listed above, namely his virtues, behaviours and words; 6) 'Dame or knight' in general indicated an initiate (*sādhaka*).



7. The Lord and Master teaches his Faithful of Love disciples

1 'Deserved' means that he has fully realized the *Mercy*, the spiritual influence, and thus obtained the rose of wisdom that he carries in his hand. On the symbolism of the rose at the Faithful of Love we will return in the next study.

2 The image proceeds from A. Ricolfi, *cit.*, p. 38.

3 A. Ricolfi, *cit.*, pp. 78-80. The identification with Love still remained to be fulfilled. The God is represented in the drawing as a child standing on a celestial horse, well above all the degrees of the chivalry initiates. As we will see later, only a historical figure has been able to obtain that supreme degree, personifying in this way the Galahad's function of the Grail novels.

4 J. de Baisieux, *cit.*, v. 101.

5 In this aspect the *Holy Faith* closely resembles the *Kṛṣṇa bhakti*. All the *bhaktas* of this particular current, in fact, consider themselves as *gopīs*, the beloved shepherdesses of God Kṛṣṇa, who is the only male (*puruṣdevata*). Thus, the Christian knightly initiation resembles both *bhakti* and *śakta mārgas* of medieval India.

6 In this sense, according to the Templar ideal of Saint Bernard, *Madona* manifests an intermediary function very similar to that of the Śakti towards Lord Maheśvara.

7 We have already pointed out the similarity between these 'angelic women' and the *yoginīs* and *ḍākinīs* of the tantric paths.



8. The Lord and Master represents Love. In his shield the Dame

This introduces a new subject: the Faithful of Love, in fact, preferred to write their rhymes in spoken language, because they considered that Latin had become fixed, with precise meanings consecrated by its use for almost two thousand years. However, in this spoken language they hid secret meanings, allusions and symbols that could be understood only by the initiates. They called this language *parler cloz*, secret language¹. In addition to ‘*Dame*’ some other words of this coded language were: 1- ‘*Love*’, the God to whom the initiate can identify himself by means of the knightly rituals. 2- ‘*Master of Love*’, the one who represented Love, (sskrt. *guru*). 3 ‘*Rose, Flower or Whiteflower*’, the knowledge of Love that had to be obtained. 4- ‘*Gentle*’, which means gentilial², noble, that is the minimum qualification required to obtain the knightly initiation. 5- ‘*Greeting, to greet*’ the rite of initiation (sskrt. *dīkṣā*), to initiate someone. 6- ‘*Mercy*’, the spiritual influence (sskrt. *anugraha*) conveyed by the initiation rite. 7- ‘*Sigh*’, the initiatic teaching or the achieved knowledge. 8- ‘*Sweet Look*’, the ability of the master to recognize the qualifications in an aspiring disciple. 9- ‘*Pride*’, the haughtiness, the innate inclination among the nobles, which must be overcome to access initiation. 10- ‘*Envy*’, ‘*ice*’ and ‘*jealousy*’, the profane environment³. 11- ‘*Without Mercy*’, the uninitiated (sskrt. *adīkṣita*). 12- ‘*False Appearance*’, the papal authority that pretends to be spiritual to affirm itself as a worldly power. 13- ‘*Wind, rain*’, the danger or threat arising from the profane environment. 14. ‘*Death*’, the enemy of Love, the Inquisition. And many other words, whose meaning has remained secret.

1 Even in this case it is surprising a further analogy with the *sādhu bhāṣā*, the secret jargon used by *sādhus* and *sants* of medieval India. Luigi Valli, in the quoted book, did a great job to identify words with a hidden meaning. Unfortunately, his ignorance, of what initiation indeed is, so widespread in the West, did not make him grasp the more spiritual meanings. In fact, he considers the *parler cloz* to be just a conventional jargon, comparable to that of the underworld, assumed by sectarian knights or anti-papal heretics, in order not to attract the Inquisition’s attention. Without completely denying this political-religious interpretation, the real purpose of the secret language was to not divulge spiritual secrets to ignorant and profane people.

2 In ancient Rome only the patricians were recognizable for belonging to one of the *gentes* (clan, sskrt. *gotra*). Therefore, the gentle man has nothing in common with the ‘*gentleman*’ in modern English, who designated just a client of the aristocracy who, without being noble, imitates its behaviour.

3 For the Faithful of Love the use of the terms *gelo* and *gelosia* is a wordplay between ice/cold -that refers to the profane world- and *jealousy* as opposite of love – the sacred dominion.



Initially the Holy Faith mainly flourished in Provence, where the ancient Roman-Celtic transmission interacted with the Imperial Catholicism¹. From the 10th century in the nearby duchies of Aquitaine and Occitania, a heresy began to develop spreading from the Balkan domains² of the Byzantine Empire. It was the Catharism, a religion of Gnostic origin, completely devoid of any esotericism. The secrecy of this religion, which many confuse with the initiatic confidentiality, was motivated by fear of repressions. The structure of Catharism was modelled on that of the Church: in addition to the simple believers, there was an ecclesiastical hierarchy of “perfects” or Cathars (gr. Καθάρτοι, read *cathàroi*, the "pure ones"), headed by their bishops. The Cathars were dualists: they considered that the bodily world was created by an evil God, Satan, identified with the Yehovah of the Old Testament, while the good God, preached by Jesus in the New Testament.



9. The King of France sends cathars and troubadours to the stake

The development of the world was the consequence of the eternal struggle between the two principles of good and evil. The intellectual lack of the Cathar doctrines and their exclusively moralistic interpretation breached into the lower strata of the population.



10. French conquest of Provençal castles

The Catholic Church initially tolerated the spread of Catharism, in many ways so similar to the *Pataria* that the papacy had supported for anti-imperial purposes and to reduce the autonomy of the bishops. However later, due to the generalized apostasy of the Aquitan and Occitan masses, the ecclesiastical

1 Provence was then directly part of the Holy Roman Empire, represented by its third crown, that of the Kingdom of Arles.

2 In Bulgaria and other Balkan countries these heretics were known as Bogomils, “friends of God”.





hierarchy began a repression that led to the crusade of 1209. The crusade gathered a group of feudal lords of Northern France, eager not to suppress heresy, but to conquer new territories¹. In fact, it became a war between feudal lords, interspersed also with brutal episodes of massacres of Albigensian commoners². The crusade ended in 1244 with the last extermination of Albigensians after the conquest of Montségur, the last heretic fortress. In truth, the nobility of Occitane and Aquitaine at first had expressed a lukewarm hostility towards the Cathars.



11. Emperor Frederick II, Alphonse X of Castile, Henry III of England

Feudal lords, knights, troubadours and Templars became very alarmed in front of the ravenous hordes of conquerors from northern France. They realized that the true purpose of the crusade was to seize their territories, so at first, they tried to defend themselves from that aggression. For this reason, they were accused of being Cathars or Cathar protectors³ and therefore reported to the Inquisition. As already mentioned, apart from the fight against the heresy promoted by the Church, the crusade was exploited by the French feudal lords and the King of France as an opportunity to invade the South. Provence was also involved in the invasion, even though there the presence of Albigensians was minimal. This is how Provence eventually was taken away from the vassalage towards the Holy Roman Empire, passing in 1245 under the dominion of the French royal House of Anjou⁴. The knights and troubadours of the vast territories invaded by the barbarian hordes of northern France fled elsewhere. They found refuge in Sicily, at the Court of Emperor Frederick II, in Castile (Spain) near King Alphonse X the Wise, in England under Henry III and other rulers who were excellent troubadours and perfect knights⁵.

1 Count Simon de Montfort himself, leader of the crusade, who had lost his fief of Leicester, usurped as many fiefs as possible during the ruthless war.

2 This is how the Cathars were known as they were very numerous around the city of Albi.

3 There is a literary current, both of the past and today, that obstinately identifies the *Faithful of Love* with the Cathars. This confuses an initiatic elite path of high intellectual profile with a plebeian religious movement, seriously contaminated by anti-traditional concepts (Eugène Aroux, *Dante hérétique, révolutionnaire et socialiste*, Paris, Jules Renouard et C. ie, Lib. Éd, 1854; Otto Rahn, *Kreuzzug gegen den Grail, Die Geschichte der Albigenser*, Freiburg, Urban Verlag, 1933, Maria Soresina, *Libertà vo cercando. Il catarismo nella «Commedia» di Dante*, Bergamo, Moretti & Vitali, 2009).

4 This was possible because of the great difficulties that the Emperor Frederick II had while reigning, provoked by continuous intrigues carried out by the Pope and his allies.

5 Some writers claim that the Christian *Faithful of Love* was an initiatic derivation of Sufi origin. To force this interpretation, some, including Henry Corbin, went so far as to call also the Persian love poets *Faithful of Love*. They give the example of the excellent relations between the Emperor Frederick II and Malik al-Kāmil, Sultan of Egypt, as their only supporting proof.



Similarly, on the basis of the openness of the Court of King Alphonse X, others claim that the *Faithful of Love* derived from the contemporary love poetry of the Spanish Arabs and Jews. The mutual recognition of belonging to an initiatic school, however, is not at all a proof of the derivation of one tradition from the other. It is curious that precisely those who, rightly, criticize the “theory of cultural lending”, then use it to support the subordination of the Christian initiatic tradition to the Islamic one. The only non-war contacts between muslims and crusaders on which they lean, however, are late and do not necessarily involve initiation exchanges. They even supposedly happen at the same time with the concealment of the literary production on the Grail and the retraction of the ‘Courts of Love’. Not even the sporadic military alliance between the islamic heretical sect of the "assasins" and the crusaders can be invoked to demonstrate the passage of any transmission to the *Faithfuls of Love*. These alliances do not prove anything about the alleged initiatic dependence of Christian chivalry on the Muslim one (*futuwwa*). It is instead a fact that there is no trace, neither written nor oral, of transmission and monitoring of Sufism towards the Christian initiation paths. Instead it would have been better to wonder about the appearance on the contemporary historical proscenium of the tantric and *bhākta* love poetry that involved all traditions, from the Far East to the Far West, during what is conventionally called the Middle Ages. It is an authentic cyclic change that has provoked an adaptation of the different forms of the universal Tradition.

