

FROM CASTLE TO BURGH. JOURNEYS AND ITINERARIES IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL NARRATIVES

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The feature that best characterizes medieval awakening of Western civilization-thirteenth century and the previous decades, is the expansion and population mobility. The roads are filled with merchants, pilgrims, knights, crusaders, jugglers, students. Life in general is conceived as a movement. God is conceived as the first engine or stationary engine (Saint Thomas), man is homo viator and life a journey, a way to go. The scholar, in the quiet of his room, sees knowledge as a journey through the universe of knowledge is the immediate and earthly to divine contemplation. No wonder, then, that the trip would constitute the core, or axis on which it develops, or turns, literary narrative, both the twelfth century chivalric as the non Arthurian one of the thirteenth century. The two traveling modes are of great interest because they generate a narrative that determines and will be prevalent in later literature, and also because it opens up a poetic narrative that transcends the literary event as it shows a cultural and anthropological insight.

The knight's tour takes us to a wonderful and symbolic geography where a succession of unforeseeable and unexpected adventures occur, in a gradation of difficulty. The knight will defeat more and more numerous enemies and he has even to deal with supernatural beings and demonic powers. The succession of adventures drive us through a peculiar topography, which is not unconnected with their world and the feudal era. The first set is the *castle*. Although there is no lack of realistic data, the castle in the narrative of the twelfth century is presented as a sublimation of reality. The castle is the sublimation of «the man's house.» Even for the Romanesque church «the tectonic structure is like the one in a castle» (M. Guerra).

The castle and its surroundings is the quintessential chivalrous space. The castle stands on a hill perched high on a hill or a cliff overlooking the forest or plain. It is an open forum for the knight. He leaves one castle to enter another. The rest of areas, inhabited or not, such as forests, rivers, towns are transit areas. In the castle he is eagerly awaited, he is a guest, he is gladly received or is fought, «he is the conjunction point of the desires of those who dwell there» (P. Zumthor). Its height is a sign of power, of unassailable

authority and independence, and the luxury and luminosity of its interior is a manifestation of wealth. Its isolation makes it inaccessible. We can find it surrounded by turbulent waters or air difficult to cross. The castle is the place of trial and adventure. In the one of «Pésima aventura», Yvain will have to fight against two demons to free a hundred maids enslaved and exploited. Perceval will not break the spell of the *Castle of the Grail*. Boores will be magically seduced by a maid in the *Castle of the Mark*. Perleवास will overcome a devil in the *Castillo de la Torre de Cobre*. Lanzarote will pass the trial in the castle of La Dolorosa Guardia, in the one of the Damas, in the one of the Grifos, in the Inexpugnable one, etc. If the castle is a place where the knight can find unexpected enemies, the wild forest represents the wild universe in contrast with the civilized castle, it is «the most symbolic of the fictional spaces and it includes most of the mythical attributes: its ancient trees represent the eternity, life is trembling among its leaves and the death prowls around its shadow «(L. Louison). Before entering it, the «essart» is to be found: the cleared land, plowed, dragged into the forest for cultivation. In contrast with the «landa», it is still wild, it is a place where the knight gets lost, celebrates tournaments or combats. He can get in touch with the extraordinary as he enters a cave, sets sail in a boat at sea, crosses the ford of a river or throws water from a fountain.

The harmonization of the civilized and the wild takes place in the garden. It is in the idyllic garden where knights court the ladies and loving and courteous conquest takes place. As an echo of the earthly paradise and derived from locus amoenus, it becomes a space of «delit», of delight, *hortus conclusus*, a space that is reserved for pleasure and love.

This space is marked by the significance of the trip. In this regard, it is outstanding the role of the crossroads. They are meeting and separation points, crucial places of choice for the fork in the road, paths which lead to the chance, to inevitable destiny, the afterlife, or to get lost in a fruitless search.

If we move from Chrétien de Troyes to Jean Renart, fantastic geography is replaced by a real and known one. The wonderful and symbolic disappears to be replaced by the lived and the usual. The protagonist is not a knight who seeks and finds extraordinary adventures, but lovers separated by force that travel in the search of each other. We could say that the route of chivalric adventure starts to become a travel. The fantastic topography is replaced by the known geography. The imagined castle is replaced by the town of the contemporary traveler.

There is a movement from the confrontation between court and town (Chrétien) to an integration process (Jean Renart). In the courtois narrative, the knight turns the town into a mere passageway into the castle and the Plaza as a mere setting for a tournament. Chrétien not only denies the town a main role but he also considers that the town represents the opposite to the courtois values, asserting that «rather a dead courtois than a town man alive.» The term «cité» responds to an imaginary idealization and a more noble idea, whereas «vile» undergoes a process of rehabilitation as it develops an urban civilization and the narrator and the poet responds to it. So, at a first phase, with Chrétien de Troyes «vile» and «vilain» represent a negative confrontation with the

feudal ideology and courteous, in a second phase, with Jean Renart, in the first decades of the next century and responding to the same ideology the «vile» becomes a privileged place to be leading the protagonists in our stories and to represent an idealized setting for political harmony that overcomes social tensions of historical reality. From the second half of the thirteenth century to the first half of the fourteenth, there will appear an urban narrative responding to the new monarchy and Christian ideology, and is Jean Renart's narrative production the one that favors this new direction, in particular with his story «El Milano».

From the beginning of this story, it is described in detail the Count's departure to the Croussade- Pilgrimage. High Mass with nobility and high clergy, the procession, the rich and generous offerings of the count to the monastery, the liturgical act, the sadness and the pain because of the departure. The places they go to are described: Montjoux, Lombardy, Brindisi where shipped. Arrival at Acre. Preparation of accommodation, subsistence and purchase of horses and vehicles. Resumed the march to reach Jerusalem. Welcome with collective joy. Prayer in front of the Holy Sepulchre and donation of a gold cup. The crowded banquet. Gifts and demonstration of generosity. Victory over the enemy quickly and explosively. He returns to Rome and defeats quickly the internal enemies of the Empire. The emperor rewarded him with the hand of the Countess of Genoa. From this marriage Guillermo was born and he shows few years later such extraordinary qualities that the emperor brings him to court in Rome to be educated with his daughter Aelis, who is the same age. The emperor is committed to his barons to marry both and everything is ready for a happy ending. But suddenly, Count Ricardo dies and the evil counselors get the emperor not to be willing to fulfill the promise of marrying his daughter to the young William. The young Aelis is not willing to accept this forced separation from her lover and takes the lead in preparing the flight travel of the court with Guillermo.

In the second part of the story, the flight of the couple, the accidental separation, the searching path of each one and the final meeting will occupy nearly the rest of the story-more than four thousand verses of the remaining 5500. It is the journey and the vicissitudes of our characters in their journey what is to be highlighted from the story. That journey full of realism, calculated and with urban elements- that seem to engage each other-, start a new narrative form that with transcends the later literature. If the model of Chrétien de Troyes generated a chivalrous itinerary that continues until the novel of the twentieth century, on the other hand, Jean Renart opens the way to another model of travel, the commercial, bourgeois and realistic one of the thirteenth century, in this narrative stance is the mode of travel books that will appear, a decade later, in the second half of this century.

The urban itinerary will characterize an important narrative trend that will gain further narrative precision and realism, as the Manekin Philippe de Beaumanoir and the Roman du Comte d'Anjou by Jean Maillart, in which the journey of the characters reaches startling realism, even crudely, particularly in the latter. In summary, the recognition and identity of the new hero is no longer in the adventure that takes place at the castle, or the in the magical space adjacent to it, but in the town or the noble palace linked to it. The new space makes it difficult, if not impossible, chivalric adventures.

Although elements of the trip, or chivalry search, were kept, other elements change or play a new role. The journey continues being an initiation but its itinerary changes. In contrast with the symbolic, closed and imprecise character of chivalry space, it is now open, accurate and identifiable. In opposition to the unpredictable and wonderful, the planned and realistic become more present. Instead of the graduation of the narrative culminating in the extraordinary adventure, we will have the accidental succession of incidents. Instead of discontinuous space and time with continuous jumps, these will be measured and continuous. Instead of the courteous and feudal gift, monetary benefits and contractual relations appear on the scene. In the first decades of the thirteenth century, a new perception of the story comes to prepare the kind of narrative *travel books* that will flourish in the second half of this century.