



The Royal Art of Love¹

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The diminishment of the Royal Art's contents, and its reduction today to the Masonic Art exclusively, should not stop us from recalling lost components, like the Chivalric Art, which was though the main constituent of the Royal Art in the times when the traditional spirit reigned effectively. We already had the chance to describe the Chivalric Art, when we deciphered in details the symbolism of the Grail tales and of the **Râmâyana**,² where the woman as *Madonna Intelligenza* played a major initiatory role, and we will have other opportunities in the future volumes, which allows our current discourse to be restricted to just a few considerations regarding the symbolism of Love, an inexhaustible subject, it is true, but unavoidable in the *oikonomia* of the present work.

It must be strongly uttered that the Royal Love, like the Sacerdotal Knowledge (that included the Love), had God as supreme goal, and, of course, *Madonna Intelligenza*, as Its face, was part of this goal³; even though it seemed to be a contradiction between the chivalric love, as propagated by the troubadours of Occitania, and the pious love of the monks, we should have no doubts that the goal was the same, and only an anti-traditional mentality could suggest a profane type of love; nonetheless, the human society at the end of *Kali-yuga* was far from perfect, which imposed a hierarchical difference between the religious or exoteric love and the initiatory one, even though they often used the same language.⁴

¹ Chapter 3 from **René Guénon and the Traditional Spirit**.

² See our **Free-Masonry: A Traditional Organization**, *The Center and the Holy Grail*, Rose-Cross Books, 2010.

³ René Guénon specified that, in some cases, the same symbols represented both the Virgin Mary and Christ, and the solution to this enigma is the relation between *Shekinah* and *Metatron* (René Guénon, **Aperçus sur l'Ésotérisme chrétien**, Éditions Traditionnelles, 1983, p. 64).

⁴ When the gap between the official Church and the initiatory organizations became too wide, a *jargon* was used like in the case of the *Fedeli d'Amore*. Boccaccio and Rabelais employed the abuses regarding "love" to cover their esoteric data, criticizing at the same time, following St. Bernard and Dante, the decadence of the medieval Christian civilization. However, the opinion that a genuine initiatory organization could oppose the exoteric establishment is totally wrong, and suggestions like the one describing the Templars fighting the Church are malevolent. René Guénon explained how esotericism is not contrary to "orthodoxy" (not even against the religious one), because it is above the religious viewpoint; consequently, even if the word *Amor* is the reverse of *Roma*, it does not mean that initiatory love is the antithesis of Rome, but only that *Roma* is a visible image, reversed like in a mirror (like the *per speculum in Ænigmate* of Saint Paul). Mr. Valli's confusion, Guénon added, between esotericism and "heterodoxy" is surprising since he understood that *Fedeli d'Amore's* doctrine was not at all "anti-

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In the legend of the Grail, the Knights worshipped the Virgin; the Order of the Temple and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux had a special veneration for “Our Lady” Virgin Mary; and the Teutonic Knights belonged to the “Order of Our Lady,” but we should not forget that such an extraordinary love did not suggest a disregard for Jesus Christ or God, as some exponents of the inhuman mentality fantasized, more or less wittingly, and it is enough to remember that the battle cry of the Templars was “Vive Dieu, Saint Amour,” and their device “Non nobis Domine, non nobis, sed Nomini Tuo da gloriam.”⁵ Regarding the Virgin Mary, Nennius, the Welsh monk of the 9th Century, said about king Arthur, “The eighth battle was in Guinnion fort, and in it Arthur carried the image of the holy Mary, the everlasting Virgin, on his shield, and the heathen were put to flight on that day, and there was great slaughter upon them, through the power of Jesus Christ and the power of the holy Virgin Mary, his mother”; Gawain, “the courteous knight,” “had that queen [Queen of Heaven]’s image etched on the inside of his armoured shield”⁶; and

Catholic,” but it was, like the one of the Rose-Cross, rigorously “catholic.” Valli accepted also the opposition between *Amor* and *Mors* as illustrating the conflict between *Fedeli d’Amore* and the Church: “la Chiesa carnale e corrotta, detta convenzionalmente ‘la Morte’ [Death] o ‘la Pietra’ [Stone, Peter] e che è dipinta come avversaria della setta dei ‘Fedeli d’Amore’ e come occultatrice di quella Sapienza santa che i ‘Fedeli d’Amore’ perseguono sotto la figura della donna,” even though he underlined that *la Morte* or *la Pietra* is the “corrupted and carnal church” (the clergy of this corrupted church was “un ‘clergé’ exotériste qui ne possède que la lettre et s’arrête à l’écorce de la doctrine. – Selon l’ordre hiérarchique normal, l’initié est au-dessus du ‘clerc’ ordinaire (fût-il théologien), tandis que le ‘laïque’ est naturellement au-dessous de celui-ci,” Guénon, **Aperçus sur l’Ésotérisme chrétien**, p. 84). In fact, an initiatory mentality is needed to understand that, as Guénon explained, in this association *Amor-Mors*, on the one hand, the death should be the “initiatory death,” and, on the other hand, *A-mor* (like in Sanskrit *a-mara*, *a-mrita*) symbolizes the “immortality” (Guénon, *Ibid.*, pp. 60-1, 66-7). Similarly, St. Bernard of Clairvaux did not condemn the Church, which was for him the Bride of Christ, but only some of its servants: “Let the clerics, let the ministers of the Church, who are guilty of impious conduct in their benefices, be filled with fear. Discontented with the stipends that ought to suffice them, they sacrilegiously retain the surplus income that is meant for the upkeep of the needy; they are not afraid to squander the sustenance of the poor in pandering to their own pride and luxury. They are guilty of a double wickedness: they pilfer the property of others and prostitute the goods of the Church to serve their lusts and vanities” (*Sermon 23, On the Song of Songs*); and, even stronger: “This world has its nights – not few in number. I say the world has its nights, but it is almost all night, and always plunged in complete darkness. The faithlessness of the Jews, the ignorance of pagans, the perversity of heretics, even the shameless and degraded behavior of Catholics – these are all nights. For surely it is night when the things which belong to the Spirit of God are not perceived” (*Sermon 75*). St. Bernard, Dante and the *Fedeli d’Amore* blamed the “corruption” within the Church, a “corruption” leading to “solidification,” similar to the hardening of the Pharisees and Sadducees’ hearts, in the time of Christ; therefore, *Amor* was beneficent in comparison to *Pietra* (stone; Peter) (Luigi Valli, **Il linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei “Fedeli d’Amore”**, Optima, 1928, p. 240), not to say that, as we mentioned, the initiatory domain is above the religious one. About this “corruption” Guénon said: “the Medusa’s head, which changes the men in ‘stones’ [Greek *petra*] (a word that plays a very important role in the *Fedeli d’Amore*’s language), represents the corruption of the Wisdom” (*Ibid.*, p. 62).

⁵ “Not for us, Lord, not for us, but to Thy Name give glory.” Guénon stated: “Ce sens profond de l’‘Amour,’ en connexion avec les doctrines des Ordres de chevalerie, pourrait résulter notamment du rapprochement des indications suivantes: d’abord, la parole de saint Jean, ‘Dieu est Amour’; ensuite, le cri de guerre des Templiers, ‘Vive Dieu Saint Amour’; enfin, le dernier vers de la Divine Comédie, ‘L’Amor che muove il Sole e l’altre stelle’” (Guénon, *Ibid.*, p. 66).

⁶ **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**, Penguin Books, 1968, p. 50.

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Saint Bernard, the legend affirms, received milk (a symbol of spiritual knowledge) from the breast of the Virgin Mary.⁷

Many churches and orders dedicated their love to the Blessed Virgin, and the Knights Templar in particular, but it is expected to see this love raised to pure knowledge, when, from an initiatory viewpoint, the Virgin is *Madonna Intelligenza*. As there were interminable discussions about the differences between the courtly love and devotionally love,⁸ so there were on the difference between love and knowledge; yet we should stay away from these types of discussions, while bearing in mind that for the super-individual journey all the “human” elements (human love, devotion, memory, reason, etc.) are helpless. Coomaraswamy tried to elevate *bhakti-mârga*, the “way of dedication,” to the level of *jnâna-marga*, the “way of gnosis,”⁹ admitting though a distinction that “is certainly not without meaning insofar as it corresponds to one of mysticism from gnosticism, that is, of devotional faith and religious exercises from initiatory teaching and metaphysical practice.”¹⁰

Let us repeat what we said before:

“It is interesting to compare the name of the Near-Western and Middle-Western churches. In Western Europe, the cathedrals are usually called ‘The Church of Our Lady,’ or in French, *Notre Dame*. Orthodoxy praised the Virgin equally, calling her ‘the Mother of God,’ the Orthodox icons with the Mother of God being famous. There are also churches bearing the name ‘Mother of God,’ yet the most important church was called *Hagia Sophia*. Obviously, ‘Holy Wisdom’ is the equivalent of *Notre Dame*. In the Middle Ages, in Western Europe, the Virgin was a symbol for esoteric spirituality, she was *Madonna Intelligenza*. Much

⁷ It took place, it is said, in 1146, at Speyer Cathedral. René Guénon wrote about St. Bernard: “He liked to name the Holy Virgin *Notre-Dame*; under his influence, this name was generally used after that. St. Bernard was a genuine ‘knight of Mary’ and he considered St. Mary his ‘dame,’ in a Chivalric sense” (**Saint Bernard**, Éditions Traditionnelles, 1984, p. 20).

⁸ However, in the 13th Century, it was obvious that the majority of *chansons pieuses* were paraphrases of *chanson courtois* and *chansons de femme*, and having as subject almost exclusively the Virgin Mary (even those texts about Christ or God were often fused with Mariological poems); *amour courtois* (courtly love) was considered a mediation between St. Bernard’s spirituality and the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, both influenced by the lyric tradition of the troubadours (see Mark Everist, **French Motets in the Thirteenth Century: Music, Poetry and Genre**, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004, p. 131). As usually, the initiatory data were used at a lower level by the exotericism, and then, with the fall of the cycle, were debased by the profane world. “The influences of the initiatory world descend to the profane world, but the reverse is not possible, because a river never goes uphill, back to its source; that source is the ‘fountain of learning,’ which is so often mentioned in the poems studied here [of the *Fedeli d’Amore*], and which is generally described as located at the foot of a tree, which, of course, is none other than the ‘Tree of Life’; the symbolism of the ‘Garden of Eden’ and of the ‘Heavenly Jerusalem’ must find its application here” (Guénon, *Ibid.*, p. 59).

⁹ Shankarâchârya, the greatest and most intellectual exponent of nondualistic (*advaita*) metaphysics, was at the same time a *bhakta* and a *jnânî*, Coomaraswamy specified.

¹⁰ **Metaphysics**, Princeton Univ. Press, 1977, *Bhakta Aspects of the Âtman Doctrine*, p. 387. “A perfected Gnosis necessarily involves a Beatification” (p. 396). René Guénon wrote to Coomaraswamy: “Pour ce qui est de ‘bhakti,’ vous avez tout à fait raison en ce qui concerne le sens originel; mais, dans les époques plus récentes, le sens de ‘dévotion’ ne paraît-il pas malgré cela avoir prévalu, avec la prédominance de l’élément sentimental qu’il implique comme vous le dites très justement?” (Letter of September, 5, 1935).

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earlier, in the Near-West, the divine Sophia became part of the Christian tradition, expression of an esoteric core. Yet only secondarily 'Holy Wisdom' was in the Near-West an equivalent for the Mother of God; in the first place, it represented Jesus himself, as *Logos*.¹¹ 'Wisdom has built herself a house, she has erected her seven pillars'¹²; in the same way, Constantinople on its seven hills was the "city of wisdom" and the Orthodox Church was the house of God's Wisdom. The Holy Sophia came down as Jesus, the first earthly 'house of wisdom' being the Mother of God, the Virgin, the holy womb of the *Logos*. An old Syriac manuscript presented an icon of the Mother of God carrying Jesus inside an oval form (the World Egg), the Virgin having king Solomon at her right and Holy Wisdom at her left.¹³ Solomon himself is an emblem of Wisdom, being considered the wisest king and the builder of the Temple. And his name is related to Peace."¹⁴

The involvement of Solomon is not a coincidence; Gawain's shield, with the Virgin Mary's image etched on the inside, is also described as "the shield with its shining gules, with the Pentangle in pure gold depicted thereon... [the Pentangle] is a symbol which Solomon conceived once... and it is endless everywhere, and the English call it, as I have heard, the Endless Knot."¹⁵

However, before to follow St. Bernard in his teachings regarding Solomon and the Art of Love, and to look into Solomon's love for the "strange woman," we would like to present a 19th Century Christian Orthodox icon of the Mother of God¹⁶:

¹¹ John Meyendorff, **Byzantine Hesychasm**, Variorum Reprints, London, 1974, pp. 259 ff.

¹² **Proverbs** 9:1.

¹³ Meyendorff 263.

¹⁴ **The Wrath of Gods**, *The Near West*, ch. XI.

¹⁵ **Sir Gawain**, p. 49. The "endless knot" looks like this:



René Guénon was asked: "Is it correct to call the double triangle or the five-pointed star the 'Shield of David'? I heard this name applied to two symbols without distinction, which is then the 'Seal of Solomon'?" He answered: "The Kabbalists call the double triangle indifferently 'Seal of Solomon' and 'Shield of David,' and also 'Shield of Mikael' (Mikael-Malaki, 'My Angel,' that is, 'The Angel in which My Name is'); equally, in Arabic, it is designated as 'Khâtem Seyidnâ Suleymân' and 'Dir'a Seyidnâ Dawûd.' None of these designations can be properly applied to the five-pointed star, the pentagram or pentagon of the Pythagoreans, which is the Masonic blazing star. This last one, in its general significance, is a 'microcosmic' symbol, while the double triangle is a 'macrocosmic' symbol. There is another Arab symbol, called 'Ugdat Seyidnâ Suleymân' or the 'Knot of Solomon,' whose meaning is very similar to the Seal of Solomon's, in connection to the Hermetic adage: 'As above, so below'" (*The Speculative Mason*, 1935, Volume XXVII, pp. 77-78; see René Guénon, **Recueil**, Rose-Cross Books, 2013).

¹⁶ From our collection.

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This type of icon derives from the one known as *Theotokos Oranta*,¹⁷ designated so because the early Christians¹⁸ (and others, before them) used to pray standing, with the elbows close to the sides of the body and with the hands outstretched sideways; the type presented above is usually called the *Theotokos of the Sign* (Our Lady of the Sign).¹⁹ The fame of the *Theotokos Oranta* (or the *Theotokos of the Sign*) developed in the Byzantine Empire, where the Mother of God became so central that Constantinople metaphorically changed to *Theotokoupolis* (the “City of Mother of God”).²⁰

¹⁷ *Orans* (“praying”) comes from Latin *os*, “mouth,” and relates to *oratio*, “speech,” *oratus*, “prayer” (and from here we have in English *oral* and *orator*).

¹⁸ Frescoes of the *Theotokos Oranta* have been found in the catacombs, dating back to the 4th Century (see the catacomb of Calyxtus, or the cemetery of St. Agnes).

¹⁹ It is considered to depict Isaiah’s prophecy: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (**Isaiah** 7:14).

²⁰ About Constantinople and the Mother of God see also our **The Wrath of Gods**. Some byzantine icons are legendary for their spiritual powers, like, for example, the *Theotokos Nicopeia*, which was taken from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade and resides now in St. Mark Cathedral, in Venice. One of the most illustrious byzantine icons was the so called *Theotokos of Blachernae*, where Blachernae is a quarter of Constantinople with the church of Mother of God (*Theotókos tón Blachernón*) as a place of pilgrimage and a major Marian shrine, a church that was second-most important after Hagia Sophia and – we should stress – built near a sacred spring (*hagiasma*) (about the symbolism of the Fountain of Life see René Guénon, **Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée**, Gallimard, 1980, p. 109 and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, **What is Civilisation?**, Lindisfarne Press, 1989, the special article called *Khwāja Khadir and the Fountain of Life*). The *Theotokos of Blachernae* protected, it is said, the emperor Heraclius in his campaign against the Persians (see about Heraclius our **Free-Masonry: A Traditional Organization**, 2010, pp. 182-185), but nobody knows what type this icon was, *Orans* or *Hodegetria*; it seems that originally it has been a *Theotokos Oranta* (as it can be seen on coins and seals), which disappeared during a fire that destroyed the church in 1434 (a similar fire destroyed, in 1194, the romanesque basilica of Chartres, which was the center of the cult of Mary in France, if not in Western Europe, and the fire and disappearance of the relics – the main relic was the shirt that the Virgin Mary

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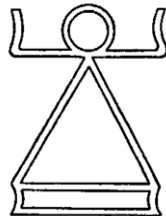
The symbolism of the outstretched hands is universal, and the religious explanation is a part of it, translating the same fundamental and primordial idea accurately expressed in the Daoist *Book of Huang Di*, the mythical Yellow Emperor, where it is said: “everything [in the universal manifestation] is covered by Heaven and supported by the Earth.”²¹ The “supporter” is also a “receiver,” because the outstretched hands describe a container, a chalice ready to receive the spiritual influences, the indispensable “rain” needed by the “ten thousand beings.”²² There are other remarkable aspects worthy to be contemplated, including the question “is Shakti, Prakriti or Geb (or Fu Xi, the master of the square) the supporter-receiver?” but we intend to direct our exposé to the geometrical symbolism of the 19th Century icon shown above, which is in accord with René Guénon’s discourse about the symbolism of Janus Bifrons and the solstitial gates, based on this description from the Masonic ritual: “in every well regulated and governed lodge there has been a

was said to have worn at the birth of Christ – were considered as a sign of divine wrath, when the Virgin had abandoned her shrine; the miraculous recovery of the relic was therefore interpreted as a sign from the Virgin that “she wanted a new and more beautiful church to be built in her honour”; see our **Free-Masonry**, p. 183). The *Theotokos of Blachernae* miraculously reappeared on Mount Athos, but as *Hodegetria*; there is, nonetheless, a different legend describing how a Constantinople widow discovered the icon in her house, and we should make a note that it was a widow who recovered the icon. As example, we present a coin of emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (year 1042):



²¹ The Free-Masonry preserved the formula as a sign of the Entered Apprentice, where the hands are held horizontally in front of the body, palms apart and facing each other, the right hand covering and the left supporting. René Guénon said at the beginning of the third chapter of his *La Grande Triade*: “‘Heaven covers, Earth supports’ [‘*Le Ciel couvre, la Terre supporte*’]: this is the traditional formula that defines, with the greatest accuracy, the roles of these two complementary principles, and symbolically defines their positions, respectively above and below [*supérieure et inférieure*], in relation to the ‘ten thousand beings,’ that is, to the totality of universal manifestation.” In Orphism, the god Phanes is born from the World Egg as Universal Man, the Egg being the Zodiac; the superior half of the World Egg, which is Phanes’ hood, represents *Tian*, Heaven that covers, and the inferior half is *Di*, the Earth, supporting the god, who symbolizes *Ren*, the Mediator and the Grand Triad’s middle term (see our **About the Yi Jing**, p. 91).

²² The both famous “sign of Tanit” and the Egyptian Geb’s image distinctly show the hands suggesting this idea of “supporting” and “receiving.”



René Guénon wrote in a letter to Charbonneau-Lassay: “À propos de symboles phéniciens, j’ai vu en Algérie des monuments de l’époque romaine sur lesquels étaient associés la croix et le croissant, et qui pourtant n’étaient ni chrétiens ni musulmans (le croissant était l’emblème de Tanit)... Astarté, Istar et Tanit sont en effet identiques (les deux premiers noms n’en sont d’ailleurs qu’un sous deux formes un peu différentes)” (25 février 1925 and 23 janvier 1926).

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certain point within a circle, which circle is bounded on the east and the west by two perpendicular and parallel lines, representing the anniversary of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, who were perfect parallels, as well in Masonry and Christianity.”²³

We don’t suggest a new interpretation for the above icon of the *Theotokos of the Sign* with the intent to contest its religious sense or to unveil a secret message; what we suggest is a fundamental geometrical symbolism, very visible, which, at one moment, provided the Christian sacred art and thinking with a traditional support in expressing its specific teaching, without its primeval meaning to be affected²⁴: we can see the two tangents (the outstretching hands), the circle, and Christ as the central point. From a Masonic viewpoint, we may well accept the hands as emblems of the two columns, while the Mother of God would be then the Widow.²⁵

²³ William Morgan, **Freemasonry Exposed**, pp. 47-8; “Our Brethren add that, ‘this circle is embordered by two perpendicular parallel lines, representing Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist, and upon the top rest the Holy Scriptures’ (an open book)” (Albert Pike, **Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry**, Charleston, 1871, p. 16); the diagram of the circle with the two tangents is also given in Oswald Wirth, **La Franc-maçonnerie rendue intelligible à ses adeptes** (see the *Fellowcraft Book*). Prichard mentioned from the beginning the syntagm “Lodge of St. John” that refers to the Johannite aspect of the Masonry (Samuel Prichard, **Masonry Dissected**, Poemandres Press, 1996, p. 9). René Guénon wrote: “In relation to the two Saints John and their solstitial symbolism, it is of interest to consider a symbol which seems peculiar to Masonry in the Anglo-Saxon world, or which at least has only been preserved in that Masonry: this is a circle with a point in the centre, placed between two parallel tangents; and these tangents are said to represent the two Saints John. In fact, the circle is here the annual cycle, and its solar significance is made more evident by the presence of the central point, for this same figure is also the astrological sign of the sun; and the two parallel lines are tangents of the circle at the solstitial points, which they thus define as ‘limit-points’ [*marquant ainsi leur caractère de « points-limites »*], these points being in fact bounds beyond which the sun can never pass in the course of its journey; it is because the lines thus correspond to the two solstices that they can also be said to represent precisely the two Saints John... In this special case, therefore, a certain modification has been brought to the general symbolism of the annual cycle, one that is easy enough to explain, for it is obvious that it could only have been introduced by an assimilation established between the two parallel lines and another double symbol, that of the two columns; these columns, which by their nature can only be vertical, have thereby, as well as by their being situated respectively to the North and South, an actual relationship with the solstitial symbolism, at least from a certain point of view” (**Symboles fondamentaux**, p. 255).

²⁴ When René Guénon established a link between the Holy Grail and the Sacred Heart of Christ, his universal view was contested, and he answered, among other things, that “It is of little importance that Chrestien de Troyes and Robert de Boron did not see in the ancient legend (of which they were only the adapters) all the significance contained in it; this significance was really there, nevertheless [*cette signification ne s’y trouvait pas moins réellement*], and we claim only to have made it explicit without introducing anything ‘modern’ whatsoever into our interpretation” (*Ibid.*, p. 46).

²⁵ We saw Guénon mentioning the “assimilation established between the two parallel lines and another double symbol, that of the two columns.” He even compared the two tangents and the two Masonic columns with the pillars of Hercules, saying: “In the geographical representation that places these two pillars on either side of the actual straits of Gibraltar, it is obvious that the pillar situated in Europe is the column of the North, and the one situated in Africa is the column of the South” (*Ibid.*, p. 256); and, in the following footnote, Guénon referred to the coin’s symbolism: “A representation of the pillars of Hercules can be seen on ancient Spanish coins, in which they are joined by a kind of streamer [*banderole*] on which the motto *non plus ultra* is inscribed; ...the usual sign of the American dollar is derived from this figure. But here, all the importance has been given to the streamer, which originally was only an accessory and which has been changed into the letter S whose form it approximated, while the two

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In a fairy tale, there is a curious expression, like an incantation: “In the evening, maiden / Over night, mommy / In the morning, little widow,” which suggests one and the same woman, the image of the Feminine Principle, as Aditi, Shakti, Shekinah, Virgin Mary or Prakriti. From a supernal viewpoint, the Widower or the Widow, as they often are found in fairy tales and myths, represents the Non-Being as Void,²⁶ but mainly the “one without a second,” like Shekinah that is not only the Maiden but direct the Widow in exile. There is something subtle here, alluding to a duality embedded in unity, that is, implying, on the one hand, a polarization in man-woman, yet reminding, on the other hand, that, in reality, there is no duality but only unity; from an initiatory perspective, to be a widow or a widower means “lacking” not only etymologically, but foremost spiritually, forcing a quest, which aims also to One, but an One fulfilled by a sacred Wedding.²⁷

columns which constituted the essential element were reduced to two parallel strokes, vertical like the two tangents to the circle in Masonic symbolism, which we have just explained; this is not without a certain irony, for in fact it was precisely the ‘discovery’ of America that canceled the ancient geographical application of the *non plus ultra*.”

²⁶ The word “widow,” like the Sanskrit *vidhava*, the Latin *viduus*, the Gothic *viduva*, comes from a root *vidh* = “to be deprived of,” but the Latin *viduus* meant also “bereft, void.”

²⁷ The *Fedeli d’Amore* illustrated this Wedding with an “androgynous figure [la figura ‘moglier e marito’ del *Tractatus amoris* di Francesco da Barberino] with the head of a man and of a woman, signifying the spirit reunited and unified with the supreme Wisdom (*Dunque io son ella*),” suggesting the connection with the Alchemy (and its *Rebis*) (see Valli) (“ce dernier, qui porte dans ses mains la rose symbolique, a deux têtes, l’une masculine et l’autre féminine, et est manifestement identique au *Rebis* hermétique. La seule différence notable avec les figures qui se rencontrent dans les traités alchimiques est que, dans celles-ci, c’est le côté droit qui est masculin et le côté gauche féminin, tandis qu’ici nous trouvons la disposition inverse; cette particularité semble avoir échappé à M. Valli, qui pourtant en donne lui-même l’explication, sans paraître s’en apercevoir, lorsqu’il dit que ‘l’homme avec son intellect passif est réuni à l’Intelligence active, représentée par la femme’, alors que généralement c’est le masculin qui symbolise l’élément actif et le féminin l’élément passif,” Guénon, **Aperçus sur l’Ésotérisme chrétien**, p. 76).



Dai «Documenti d'amore»
del Barberino

This Wedding also suggests that a spiritual realization compels the neophyte to reach the status of “widow(er)” with regard to the world, that is, to have the heart void and emptied of all the mundane elements. The soul has to be prepared to receive God’s presence, and, for Meister Eckhart, this was the meaning of the merchants’ expulsion from the Temple; in his sermon, *Intravit Iesus in templum et coepit eicere vendentes et ementes*, Meister Eckhart regarded the Temple as the human soul, and God, Who created and formed the soul after His resemblance, wants this temple to be empty, that is, only when this temple is liberated of all obstacles, will God come and reside in it. The same idea is found in the *Fedeli d’Amore*’s initiatory doctrine about the cuore gentile (the “purified heart” that has to be void of all the external objects) (Guénon, *Ibid.*, p. 58). In a religious sense, for the Christians of the Middle Ages, the widow was an image of the Church, humble, poor and merciful, yet perseverant in praying and in its

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In Masonry, even though there are only men in the lodge, the woman is raised to the *principal* level, as Widow; and it is connected to the symbolism of *Madonna Intelligenza*. Francesco da Barberino, who belonged to the *Fedeli d'Amore*,²⁸ mentioned a mysterious widow, symbolizing *Sapienza*, the Wisdom.²⁹ Guénon, referring to Barberino's widow, added that the same symbolic widow was important for Gioscchino di Fiore and Boccaccio³⁰; he also underlined the similarities between the "Court of Love" (*Cour d'Amour*) and Masonry: the Court of Love and Solomon's Temple (or the Masonic Lodge) are both symbols of the Center of the World, both have a shape of a double square, both have the Northern door (or window) closed, the Court of Love's king (representing *l'Amour*) is equivalent to the Masonic "Prince of Mercy," and the birds (the angelic states) populating the Court use a language known to Solomon.³¹

pursuit of justice (see **Luke** 7:11-12, 20:45-47, 21:3-4 and **Mark** 12:41-44); this widow was seen at the same time a maiden and a bride ("In the evening, maiden/ Over night, mommy/ In the morning, little widow"). Doubtless, this is an ideal definition, together with the Knights' vow to protect the widow, a definition the human factor increasingly corroded, as suggested by Bonichi who wrote at a period when the Order of the Temple was destroyed: "Widows and orphans are very safe/ on account of the oaths knights take,/ but everyone makes sure they lock their doors."

²⁸ There are strong reasons to accept that the *Fedeli d'Amore* were close related to Dante and the Templars (Valli 274, 423-428, Guénon, *Ibid.*, p. 68). Valli said, among other things: "Ho accennato qualche volta all'importanza che assumono, proprio nel momento in cui fiorisce la poesia d'amore, i Templari, e il problema dei loro rapporti con Dante non è nuovo... Il loro [Templari] centro è in Francia e verso la Francia noi sappiamo orientati parecchi di questi 'Fedeli d'Amore' che vi vanno sempre per ragioni molto misteriose: Guido Cavalcanti che va a Tolosa a innamorarsi di una donna 'accordellata e stretta' che somiglia a quella di Firenze; Dante che va a Parigi (e non ne parla mai e nessuno sa bene che cosa ci sia andato a fare) proprio nel momento della grande tragedia dei Templari; Francesco da Barberino che si trattiene lungamente in Francia e scrive là gran parte dei *Documenti d'Amore*, ecc., sono tanti indizi che, messi insieme, fanno pensare a un qualche rapporto tra questo movimento e i Templari."

²⁹ Valli 242.

³⁰ Guénon, *Aperçus sur l'Ésotérisme chrétien*, p. 75: "Chose remarquable, Joachim de Flore parle dans ses œuvres d'une 'veuve' symbolique, tout comme Francesco da Barberino et Boccace, qui appartenaient l'un et l'autre aux 'Fidèles d'Amour'; et nous ajouterons que, de nos jours encore, cette 'veuve' est bien connue dans le symbolisme maçonnique. À ce propos, il est fâcheux que des préoccupations politiques semblent avoir empêché M. Valli de faire certains rapprochements pourtant très frappants; il a raison, sans doute, de dire que les organisations initiatiques dont il s'agit ne sont pas la Maçonnerie, mais, entre celle-ci et celles-là, le lien n'en est pas moins certain; et n'est-il pas curieux, par exemple, que le 'vent' ait, dans le langage des 'Fidèles d'Amour,' exactement le même sens que la 'pluie' dans celui de la Maçonnerie?" Perseval, like Tristan, was the "widow's son."

³¹ "Il y a aussi des choses assez étranges dans le livre d'André, chapelain du roi de France; ...il y est dit que le palais de l'Amour s'élève 'au milieu de l'Univers,' que ce palais a quatre côtés et quatre portes; la porte de l'Orient est réservée au dieu, et celle du Nord demeure toujours fermée. Or il y a ceci de remarquable: le Temple de Salomon, qui symbolise le 'Centre du Monde,' a aussi, d'après la tradition maçonnique, la forme d'un quadrilatère ou 'carré long,' et des portes s'ouvrent sur trois de ses côtés, celui du Nord seul n'ayant aucune ouverture; s'il y a là une légère différence (absence de porte d'une part, porte fermée de l'autre), le symbolisme est exactement le même, le Nord étant ici le côté obscur, celui que n'éclaire pas la lumière du Soleil. De plus, l'Amour apparaît ici sous la forme d'un roi, portant sur la tête une couronne d'or; n'est-ce pas ainsi que nous le voyons également représenté, dans la Maçonnerie écossaise, au grade de 'Prince de Mercy,' et ne peut-on pas dire qu'il est alors le 'roi pacifique,' ce qui est le sens même du nom de Salomon? Il y a en core un autre rapprochement qui n'est pas moins frappant: dans divers poèmes et fabliaux, la 'Cour d'Amour' est décrite comme composée entièrement d'oiseaux, qu'on y voit prendre la parole tour à tour; or nous avons dit précédemment ce qu'il fallait entendre par la 'langue des oiseaux'; et serait-il admissible de ne voir qu'une pure

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to be continued

coïncidence dans le fait que, comme nous l'avons indiqué, c'est précisément en connexion avec Salomon que, dans le *Qorân*, cette 'langue des oiseaux' se trouve expressément mentionnée?" (Guénon, **Aperçus sur l'Ésotérisme chrétien**, p. 93).