
*RIQUER, IN THE PATH TO CHIVALRY***José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec**

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Resum

Un análisis de la aportación de Martín de Riquer al estudio de la caballería. Se extiende el análisis desde mayo de 1965, en el que pronuncia su discurso de ingreso en la Real Academia Española hasta 2003 en que reedita el último de sus libros donde habla de este tema. Este período se divide a su vez en dos subperíodos; en el primero traza su tesis central sobre la figura de los caballeros andantes y la distinción entre novelas de caballería y libros de caballería, así como la necesidad de analizar el armamento militar; en el segundo, razona su aportación al estudio de la caballería a partir de un estudio biográfico y de la valoración de algunas obras señeras de este tema.

Paraules clau: Historia de la caballería medieval; literatura castellana y catalana de los siglos XV y XVI; estudios sobre Cervantes y la tradición literaria medieval.

Abstract

This is an analysis of the contribution of Martín de Riquer to the study of chivalry. This analysis spans from May 1965, when he uttered his entry speech at the Real Academia Española, to 2003 when he republished the last of his books in which he deals with this topic. This period is divided into two sub-periods; in the first one he draws up his central thesis about the figure of the knights-errant and the distinction between chivalry novels and chivalry books, as well as the necessity of analysing military weaponry; in the second one he argues his contribution to the study of chivalry on the basis of an autobiographical study and the assessment of some unequalled works on this topic.

Key words: History of medieval chivalry; Spanish and Catalan literature of the 15th and 16th centuries; studies Cervantes and the literary medieval tradition.

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Martín de Riquer was an exceptional figure in the field of Romance literatures. He is usually included in the category of outstanding Catalan authors, such as Milà i Fontanals, who belong to the variety of erudite scholars capable of analysing texts in different neo-Latin languages: Provençal, French, Catalan, Spanish or Italian. However, there is one aspect that turns Riquer into a bit of a dissident when it comes to the strict world of philology: his unusual interest in pursuing the path of medieval chivalry in order to better understand Joanot Martorell's *Tirant lo Blanc*, which he edited in 1947.¹ That personal passion of his turned into a long and fruitful research that brought him closer to the historians influenced by the *Kulturgeschichte*, a methodology put forward by Johan Huizinga in the early twentieth century with his studies on Burgundian society, published in 1919 in a famous book, initially written in Dutch, *Herfstje der Middeleuwen*;² a methodology that quickly began to gain followers in some European countries.³

In the seventh chapter of his book, Huizinga outlined a text he later delivered during an important address before the general assembly of the Société d'Histoire Diplomatique on 16 June 1921 on *the political and military meaning of the chivalric ideal*.⁴ His thesis is both clear and direct: "The history of culture must be concerned La historia de la cultura debe interesarse tanto por los sueños de belleza y por la ilusión de una vida noble, como por las cifras de población y de tributación» (HUIZINGA 1945: 133).

Riquer pursued that path painstakingly and wholeheartedly. Sometimes—when he defended his liberal humanism against the sociological trends of the sixties—his standpoint, even with the discretion that was his trademark, was fairly radical, following the path of the analysis of the social

¹ Barcelona, Biblioteca Perenne, 1947. Followed by its Castilian translation in 1511: *Tirante el Blanco*. Barcelona, Asociación de Bibliófilos, 1947-1949.

² The international impact materialized after the appearance of the German version, which is the most renowned, *Herbst des Mittelalter, Studien über Lebens- und Geistesformen des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts in Frankreich und in den Niederlanden* (1919), and was translated into English, French, and other languages; the Spanish translation was entitled *El Otoño de la Edad Media* and was published by Revista de Occidente. The passages in this article are Citaré por la segunda edición en un solo volumen Madrid, 1945. HUIZINGA 1945

³ As the series of studies conducted by the members of the King's College in London shows: *Chivalry. A series of Studies to Illustrate Its Historical Significance and Civilizing Influence* edited by Edgar Prestage (Londres, Kegan Paul, 1928). The part devoted to the Spanish case was written by A.R. Pastor—who was Cervantes Reader at the University of London at that time—and presented huge gaps concerning fifteenth-century sources, despite studying the *Victorial*. In the United States, the pioneer was the renowned professor of the Johns Hopkins University, Sidney Painter, who had published a study on William Marshal in 1935 (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press), and years later his famous and magnificent book *French Chivalry. Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Medieval France* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940).

⁴ First published in the *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, vol. XXXV, 1921, pp. 126-138 and later included in his book *Men and Ideas. History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance: Essays* (Nueva York, Meridian Books, 1959) with an introduction by Bert F. Hoselitz. It was translated into Spanish under the title *Hombres e ideas. Ensayo de historia de la cultura* (Buenos Aires, Compañía General Fabril Editora, 1960, pp. 173-182).

background of Arthurian literature set in motion by Eric Köhler in Germany (KÖHLER 1970),⁵ which obviously conditioned the study of chivalry (BORST 1976). On other occasions—as the warmth and originality of his literary taste shows—that line of action seemed the most adequate to tackle the problems related to the effect of literature on society.⁶ Armed with his practical mentality, he analysed to the detail the behaviour of the characters of novels, convinced that there was much more than literature to them. In this way, he proved one of his most remarkable traits: he never believed in the death of the novel, which, already in his fifties, led him to read contemporary narrative without harbouring any animosity against his colleagues of the previous and subsequent generations; that character also prompted him to maintain calm in moments of unrest, he never thought that his homeland was ruined, his language condemned to extinction or that incompetents were in charge of institutions.

Understanding Riquer's approach to chivalry is coming to terms with the combination of realism and textual analysis, as he himself proposed at a key point of his career, on 16 May 1965, during his acceptance speech before the Spanish Royal Academy, which he devoted to the topic *Vida Caballescica en la España del siglo XV* (DE RIQUER 1965). This volume contains the decisive expression of Riquer's idea of chivalry. The reasons that led him to take such an important step in his career are difficult to determine.⁷ At any rate, his address to the Spanish Academy is a statement on a problem that ignited don Quijote's indignation when he faced the attitude of a discreet canon from Toledo who tried to convince him that knights errant never existed. According to him they were just the product of the fiction of writers who were passionate about the adventures of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. Riquer's goal, he confessed, was to prove don Quijote partially right and deprive the canon from Toledo, and Miguel de Cervantes himself, of some of their arguments, because, without a doubt “el siglo XV español está lleno de verdaderos e históricos caballeros andantes que llevaron sus empresas por reinos alejados, tantos cristianos como paganos, y concluyeron aventuras brillantes y temerosas” (DE RIQUER 1965: 14).⁸ His analysis is certainly erudite, without any theoretical pretension, a simple

⁵ Second extended edition of the 1959 original. This work obtained international recognition after the appearance of its French translation: *L'aventure chevaleresque. Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois* (Paris, Gallimard, 1974), which included an enlightening prologue authored by Jacques Le Goff.

⁶ In a way reminiscent of the work of Hugo Kuhn in the field of German studies in his work “Soziale Realität und dichterische Fiktion am Beispiel der höfischen Ritterdichtung Deutschlands”, originally published in *Soziologie und Leben*, hrsg. Von Carl Brinkmann, (Tübingen, Rainer Wunderlich, 1952, p. 195-219), and later republished in *Dichtung und Welt im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1969, pp. 22-40).

⁷ To be precise, he was working on this research topic since 1962, when he published *Caballeros catalanes y valencianos en el Passo Honroso* (Barcelona, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1962), later followed by “Andanzas del caballero borgoñón Jacques de Lalaing por los reinos de España y los capítulos del siciliano Juan de Bonifacio”, in *Acta Salmaticiensis*, XVI, 1962 and “Los caballeros Francí Desvalls y Johan Boixadors en Ceuta (1429)”, in *Anuario Histórico de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de Barcelona*, vol. XXX, 1963-64.

⁸ “The Spanish fifteenth century is full of real and historical knights errant who took their exploits to

brilliant sociological analysis of numerous cases of knights errant with the purpose of showing that “literatura y vida se mezclan y se influyen recíprocamente, y los seres reales obran como personajes de ficción y los personajes de ficción actúan como seres reales” (DE RIQUER 1965: 14).⁹

In this address, and with the accuracy of a goldsmith, Riquer shows not only the way of life of the noblemen who acted as knights errant all over the Iberian Peninsula, but also the role those individuals played as doctrinal laboratory in the creation of the State undertaken by the Catholic Monarchs, and how the ideals of chivalry present in novels became values for a society that strived to understand its part in the wars of the southern border, against the Nasrid kingdom of Granada. This is how his detailed research study on chronicles and archive documents rescued from the limbo of social history a category of individuals: knights errant. For a long time, they were indispensable to grasp the functioning of power that enabled the dynastic bond between the Crown of Castile and the Crown of Aragon through the marriage of Isabel and Fernando, thus profoundly modifying the perception of fifteenth-century Spain.

Riquer was a renowned philologist and was interested in the studies on Cervantes, which led him to outline a series of issues that had to be dealt with; particularly, the undeniable fact that “los caballeros reales del siglo XV eran asiduos lectores de las novelas que tienen como héroes a los caballeros andantes fabulosos e inventados” (DE RIQUER 1965: 14).¹⁰ Here lies his breaking point with the Romance philologists of his time, in his elaborate notion of the world of nobility, in his need to think about the literary work as related to its audience.

And he certainly did so.

2

Austral Publishing proposed him to sum up his way of approaching the world of chivalry in a work of popularization, a challenge he accepted, totally disregarding those who advised him against it in order to spare him the criticism of the most conservative scholars. The result was *Caballeros andantes españoles*, his most complete work on chivalry and its world (DE RIQUER 2008).¹¹ The ideal reader was himself, there lay his commitment, in becoming the witness to a community of readers. He wrote (DE RIQUER 2008: 11):

remote kingdoms, both Christian and pagan, and undertook bright and frightening adventures.”

⁹ “Literature and life blend and influence each other, and real people act like fictional characters, and fictional characters act like real people.”

¹⁰ “The real knights of the fifteenth century were regular readers of novels whose heroes were knights errant, fabulous and made up.”

¹¹ Published by Espasa Calpe in Madrid in 1967, (Col. Austral). I will quote after the 2008 edition (Riquer 2008). This work was translated into Italian by M. Rostaing y V. Minervini *Cavalleria fra realtà e letteratura nel Quattrocento* (Bari, Adriatica, 1970).

Somos muchos los que, cuando en nuestra juventud leímos el maravilloso libro de J. Huizinga *El otoño de la Edad Media*, vimos cómo se abría ante nuestros ojos un mundo brillante y fastuoso que alucinaba por su colorido, su gesto y su señorial gallardía, envenenado por la literatura y empeñado en mantener unas formas de vida de un pasado que, por serlo, parecía más bello.¹²

Therefore, this book responded to the yearning of a reader, but also to the need of the scholar who is forced to complete the task begun by such an illustrious master (DE RIQUER 2008: 11):

El mundo tan sagazmente retratado por Huizinga se basa en documentos, en crónicas y en datos, procedentes la mayor parte de Francia, de Borgoña y de Flandes, y son tan escasas las referencias a los hombres y las cosas de España en el libro del historiador holandés que era lícito concluir que aquella tan típicas características del otoño medieval se daban en nuestras tierras con un perfil más inseguro o con una intensidad mucho menor. No obstante, así que nos asomábamos a algunas de nuestras crónicas, como la de Juan II de Castilla, o recordábamos el Passo Honroso, de Suero de Quiñones, o leíamos las magníficas páginas de *El victorial*, de Gutierre Díez de Games, el mundo caballeresco español del siglo XV adquiría consistencia y emergía perfectamente vinculado a unos ideales y a unas costumbres generales en la Europa occidental.¹³

Thus, it was the suitable book at the most suitable moment, for the Spanish historiography of the mid-sixties was opening up to European historiography. It was probably necessary to bear in mind the worth of the *Kultur* in the essential transformation of the knowledge of the past that the Spanish academic world had to undergo. Hence the addition, with a dash of his well-known irony (DE RIQUER 2008: 11-12):

En gran parte está todavía por hacer el estudio del “Otoño de la Edad Media española”, tarea necesaria desde muy diversos puntos de vista. En primer lugar se trata de una realidad social, tan social y tan realidad como pueden serlo los salarios de los albañiles medievales o las quiebras de las bancas a finales del siglo XV. Porque es perfectamente lícito y digno de todo encomio trabajar sobre la problemática que presentan albañiles y banqueros, y en este sentido admiramos los avances que ha hecho nuestra ciencia histórica en estos últimos años. Pero se suele olvidar, o no se advierte, que en este mismo mundo de obreros y de financieros existen otros hombres, tal vez eco de ideales de un tiempo pasado, tal vez aventureros o soñadores, que gozan de la admiración de sus contemporáneos y que con gesto orgulloso y viril, quieren mantener a todo trance unos principios que les otorgan una superioridad ante el resto de los humanos, superioridad que raramente se ve discutida.¹⁴

¹² “Many of us, when we read Huizinga’s wonderful book, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, in our youth, saw unfolded before our eyes a bright and splendid world enticing because of its colourfulness, gestures and its noble gallantry, poisoned by literature and determined to maintain lifestyles of a past that, for being past, seemed more beautiful.”

¹³ “The world so cleverly portrayed by Huizinga is based on documents, chronicles and data, coming mostly from France, Burgundy and Flanders. The references to the Spanish people and things are so few in the book of the Dutch historian, that it was fair to conclude that the typical features of the waning Middle Ages were present in our lands more uncertainly or much less intensively. However, as soon as we looked over some of our chronicles, like that of Juan II of Castile, remembered the Passo Honroso of Suero de Quiñones, or read the magnificent pages of *El Victorial*, by Gutierre Díez de Games, the Spanish chivalric world of the fifteenth century acquired consistency and emerged perfectly linked to the ideals and general customs of Western Europe.”

¹⁴ “Much remains to be done to study the “The Waning of the Spanish Middle Ages”, a necessary task

Following the exploits of these figures, so close to literary heroes, with their diverse capability for greatness and war, love and spite is fascinating: they make Riquer's idea of the Spanish fifteenth century understandable.

Riquer soon claimed a distinction within chivalric literature that became a very personal trait of his author over time. It was certainly his most celebrated finding (DE RIQUER 2008: 13):

Se impone hacer una distinción que precisa de un punto de vista no exclusivamente castellano sino europeo. El *Amadís de Gaula*, a pesar de su evidente originalidad, se sitúa en una clara línea artística que podemos seguir desde las novelas artúricas en verso de Chrétien de Troyes y que encontró su más amplia y resonante expresión en el larguísimo *Lancelot* en prosa francés, llamado "la Vulgata". Esta línea se caracteriza, si queremos sintetizar sin duda alguna precipitadamente, por la presencia de elementos maravillosos (dragones, endriagos, serpientes, enanos y gigantes desmesurados, edificios construidos por arte de magia, exageradísima fuerza física de los caballeros, ambiente de misterio, etc.) y por situar la acción en tierras lejanas y exóticas y en un remotísimo pasado. Pero otra gran novela del siglo XV, el *Tirant lo Blanc*, "el mejor libro del mundo" según Cervantes, carece de elementos maravillosos, tiene un protagonista muy fuerte y muy valiente, aunque siempre dentro de una medida humana, transcurre en tierras conocidas y perfectamente localizables, en tiempo próximo y ambiente inmediato y los nombres de personas reales que vivieron en el siglo XV en Valencia, Inglaterra, Francia, Italia y el Imperio bizantino. En principio, y solo desde un punto de vista metodológico, nos será útil llamar "libros de caballerías" a las narraciones al estilo del *Amadís de Gaula* y "novelas caballerescas" a las que reúnen las características que tan rápidamente he señalado en el *Tirant lo Blanc*.¹⁵

from very different viewpoints. First, it is a social reality, as social and as real as the wages of medieval masons or the bankruptcies of banks in the late fifteenth century. Because it is perfectly legitimate and worthy of all praise to work on the problems of builders and bankers, and in this sense we admire the progress that our historical science has made in recent years. But it is often forgotten or not noticed, that in this world of labourers and financiers there were other men; perhaps men who echoed ideals of a bygone era, perhaps adventurers and dreamers, who enjoyed the admiration of their contemporaries and with proud and manly gesture, wanted to maintain at all costs principles that gave them superiority over other humans, a superiority that is rarely discussed."

¹⁵ "It is imperative to make a distinction, which requires a European and non-exclusively Castilian perspective. *Amadís de Gaula*, despite its obvious originality falls within a clear artistic line that can be traced back to the Arthurian novels in verse of Chrétien de Troyes, and found its broadest and most resonant expression in the long *Lancelot* written in French prose, called "the Vulgate". To sum it up briefly, this line is characterized by the presence of fantastic elements (dragons, serpents, snakes, disproportionate dwarves and giants, buildings magically constructed, the exaggerated physical force of knights, mysterious atmosphere, etc.) and place the action in distant and exotic lands and a very remote past. But another great novel of the fifteenth century, *Tirant lo Blanc*, 'the best book in the world' according to Cervantes, lacks fantastic elements, has a very strong and courageous protagonist, but always within a human scale, is set in known and fully traceable lands, in a near time and immediate environment, and includes the names of real people who lived in Valencia, England, France, Italy and the Byzantine Empire in the fifteenth century. In principle, and only from a methodological point of view, it will be helpful to call 'chivalric romances' the narrations in the style of *Amadís de Gaula* and 'chivalric novels' those that have the characteristics that I have so quickly pointed out in *Tirant lo Blanc*."

Here Riquer is too modest: he knew much more about this distinction of literary forms than this brief taxonomy based on two important works of literature of the fifteenth century suggests. But he sensed the importance of his discovery and the reasons of that significance (DE RIQUER 2008: 14):

Para que el lector comprenda adónde voy a parar, puedo asegurarle que si una persona que desconoce la historia de Francia del siglo XV lee el *Jehan de Saintré* y el *Livre des faits* de Jacques de Lalaing puede llegar a diversas conclusiones erróneas: o bien creer que ambos libros son narraciones inventadas (el de Lalaing es rigurosamente histórico), o que los dos son históricos (el de Jehan de Saintré es pura invención); o bien puede sospechar que las aventuras de Jacques de Lalaing son mera novela y las de Jehan de Saintré una veraz crónica.¹⁶

The prologue of *Caballeros Andantes* signed in August 1966 perfectly defines Riquer's thoughts on chivalry. A mixture of empathy and erudition sustains a thesis that is both attractive and daring (DE RIQUER 2008: 14-15):

Lo que en verdad ocurre es que la novela caballescica refleja una auténtica realidad social, sin desfigurarla ni exagerarla, y que las crónicas particulares del siglo XV narran los hechos históricos que llevaron a término caballeros que luego fueron modelos vivos para novelistas. Pero estos caballeros reales e históricos estaban, a su vez, intoxicados de literatura y actuaban de acuerdo con lo que habían leído en los libros de caballerías. Es un círculo vicioso que nos lleva a una especie de proceso de ósmosis que nada tiene de particular. En nuestro tiempo mismo existen actitudes y modas que la sociedad ha tomado del cine, el cual, a su vez, refleja actitudes y modas de la sociedad.¹⁷

Thus, with a little bit of common sense, Riquer goes on in his analysis of chivalry in his resolute, intuitive and scholarly manner. He is trying to educate a generation that is entering college in the sixties, but surreptitiously, unlike the texts written by other innovators of the humanities, his arguments are never sprinkled with neologisms. The *leggerezza* of his prose frees him from the prevailing jargon of that time. Riquer always had in mind those who knew less. He worried that if an argument was expressed in a complex way it would only reach a few specialists. He often approached his own historiographic standpoint by means of a sentence placed in the middle of his discourse; for instance, when he justified his *Caballeros andantes* with the following—and,

¹⁶ “For the reader to understand my point, I can assure you that if someone who is not familiar with the history of fifteenth-century France reads *Jehan de Saintré* and the *Livre des faits* of Jacques de Lalaing they could reach several erroneous conclusions: either believe that both books are invented narratives (Lalaing's book is strictly historical), or that both of them are historical (*Jehan de Saintré* is pure invention); or they may even suspect that the adventures of Jacques de Lalaing are mere novel whereas those of Jehan de Saintré are a truthful chronicle.”

¹⁷ “The truth is that chivalric novels reflect a genuine social reality, without disfiguring or exaggerating it, and that fifteenth-century chronicles recount the historical events experienced by knights who then became living models for novelists. But these real and historical knights were, in turn, intoxicated with literature and acted according to what they had read in chivalric romances. It is a vicious cycle that leads to some sort of osmosis, which is nothing special. In our time, there are attitudes and fashions that society has taken from movies, which, in turn, reflect attitudes and fashions of society.”

in my opinion—decisive statement: “Este libro (que se limita al siglo XV) no tiene pretensiones históricas sino que intenta desbrozar un camino que tal vez hará comprender mejor algún aspecto de la literatura en los últimos momentos de la Edad Media” (DE RIQUER 2008: 12).¹⁸

Riquer pushes his interest in chivalry into new territories. And so on 4 December 1968, Ariel Publishing released *L'Arnes del cavaller. Armes i armadures catalanes medievals* (DE RIQUER 1968),¹⁹ a book that outlines his idea of chivalry. He reminds his readers of the importance of weaponry in the world of chivalry and, in particular, of the importance of setting a glossary of military terms in order to better understand the Catalan chronicles of the Middle Ages—starting with the work of the chronicler Ramon Muntaner—and the references included in literary texts. Riquer accepted the challenge in his own way, gathering textual materials and supplementing them with a rich iconographic production. Again, he defended the interest in the *lletres de batalla* [battle letters] to which he devoted an appendix to several texts he had already published in three volumes of the series *Els Nostres Clàssics* entitled: *Lletres de batalla, cartells de deseiximents i capitols de passos d'armes* between 1963-1968. These texts also appear in a popular collection under the title *El combate imaginario. Las cartas de batalla de Joanot Martorell* (DE RIQUER 1972). This book consists of two parts: in the first one, the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa assesses the figure of Martorell on the basis of his *lletres de batalla*, “un hombre de acción, malhumorado y belicoso” [a man of action, cranky and belligerent] and later turns his attention to the “other” passion that fuels these texts: “las de las formas de la acción, la del ritual que adorna la matanza. Es una pasión sutil, abstracta, inofensiva y puntillosa, que, simplificado, consiste en entender la vida como un juego de reglas laboriosas y estrictas y en preferir esas reglas al juego mismo y a sus resultados” (DE RIQUER 1972: 25).²⁰ The second part, formed by the chivalric correspondence of Martorell, was written by Riquer. His goal makes it clear (DE RIQUER 1972: 31):

La edición de los textos precedida de un comentario, pieza por pieza, en el que pretendo, del modo más claro y ordenado posible, hacer ver al lector moderno la esencia de los conflictos que suscitaron estos epistolarios, los problemas jurídicos y caballerescos que surgen a cada paso, el sentido de determinadas actitudes y expresiones de la época y distinguir aquellos momentos de todas estas cartas en que los que las firman usan fórmulas corrientes en esta clase de documentos a fin de resaltar aquellas líneas en las que mejor se transparentan su personalidad y su estilo.²¹

¹⁸ “This book (which is limited to the fifteenth century) has no historical pretension but attempts to clear a path that perhaps will allow a better understanding of some aspects of the literature in the last moments of the Middle Ages”

¹⁹ Re-edition. Barcelona, RBA, 2012

²⁰ “[The passion for] the forms of the action, the ritual embellishing of the slaughter is a subtle, abstract, harmless and punctilious passion, which, simplified, consists in understanding life as a game of laborious and strict rules, and preferring those rules to the game itself and its results.”

²¹ “[...]the edition of the texts preceded by a commentary of each piece, in which I intend to show the modern reader the essence of the conflicts that originated these correspondence as clearly and orderly as possible; the legal and chivalric problems arising each step of the way, the meaning of certain attitudes and expressions of the time. I also aim to distinguish the moments in all these letters when those signing them use formulas characteristic of this type of documents to highlight the lines that best reflect their personality and style.”

In 1972, Riquer was more aware than ever that the absence of a comprehensive research work on chivalry was undoubtedly due to the resistance of historiography against the history of little things. At that time, analysing the private life of medieval nobility was still considered a simply descriptive task, unable to explain the background of things, their main causes. That approach to the past was still negligible compared to the evolution of the economy or the institutions. The proposal to read the *lletres de batalla* of an author as significant as Martorell falls within the renewal of social analysis that by then was starting to approach the study of family, marriage alliances and kinship customs. In this context, it is easy to understand that Riquer read Martorell's *lletres de batalla* not only to see how the rituals leading to a combat to the death were performed, but also to highlight the recurring features in the composition and functioning of political societies.

3

Riquer did not turn back to chivalry for quite some time. He did so in 1984, a key year for this type of studies, due to the commemoration of the anniversary of the publication of *La Chevalerie* of Léon Gautier,²² a work significantly dedicated to the memory of Cervantes “qui raiulla la Chevalerie dans ses livres et fut un vrai chevalier dans sa vie” (GAUTIER 1884). This was the year that witnessed the extraordinary success of Georges Duby's beautiful book, *Guillaume le Maréchal ou le meilleur chevalier du monde* jointly published by Fayard and Radio France within the series directed by Jean Montalbetti on “Les Inconnus de l'histoire”.

Assigning it a position midway between the memories of a noble and those of a knight who is passionate about the *guerra guerrejada*, that is, guerrilla war, Riquer writes *Vida i aventures del cavaller valencià don Pero Maça*. It is a rather unique book, with very descriptive parts, and other vibrant sections, as befits the character. It places him in his lively world, the fifteenth-century noble Valencia, with a particularly interesting paragraph about the behavior of these individuals (DE RIQUER 1984: 9-10):

Des de molt petit aprenia equitació i el maneig de les armes; i en tot això s'ensinistrava practicant la cinegètica, car aquests cavallers no caçaven pel mer plaer de fer-se amb peces més o menys apetitoses, ans per sotmetre el cos a cavalcades pel camp i les mans a l'eficaç ús de les armes. Les bandositats entre parcialitats enemigues i la guerra privada amb persones de llinatge veïns i de la mateixa condició, autèntica plaga del regne de València, tot i els assassinats i excessos que provocava aquest furiós terrorisme senyorial, tenien l'avantatge de mantenir aquests homes amb les armes parades i l'ànim tibant i escometedor i propici a la pràctica de guerra. Sovint encara, interrompudes aquestes animositats personals i faccions de grup, els cavallers es lliuraven al sumptuós deport dels torneigs i de les justes, nous estímuls per a la lluita i excel·lent entrenament militar en temps de pau.

²² On the role of this year within the production of studies on chivalry, see RUIZ-DOMENEC 2010, which includes a description of the studies from 1751 with J.B. La Curne de Sainte-Pelaye up to 1984.

Si don Pero Maça fou un brau militar al setge de Balaguer i a les llargues guerres amb el rei de Castella és perquè des de molt jove intervingué en audaços cops de mà i en sagnants encontres quan, formant en la parcialitat dels Centelles, lluità contra els Vilaragut, bregues nascudes d'odis personals, d'orgulls insatsifets i de diferents actituds polítiques i, per tant, violentes i cruels.

Is education in an atmosphere of personal hatred and family feuds what led some fifteenth-century noblemen to reject the human types that were accepted by the literary culture? It would be better, in my opinion, to attribute that rejection to a fierce obstinacy against the ideals present in novels and chronicles. It is wrong to believe that appreciating the glamorous world of chivalry turned noblemen into knights, they needed to put some effort into it and individuals as Pedro Maça were not willing to do so. Moreover, it is difficult to think that many of these noblemen were desensitized by their continued participation in guerrilla wars. Pedro Maça, and those like him, hated the love many knights had for gestures. When he was captured by the Genoese at the naval battle of Ponça, on 5 August 1435, the memories of the Passo Honroso organized by the Leonese nobleman Suero de Quiñones at Puerto Órbigo (from 10 July to 9 August 1434) were still vivid; there were two different ways of understanding the use of arms.

Maça strove to avoid the lifestyle of knights errant, first due to his natural tendency and then through permanent irritation, a receptivity to violent acts dangerously bordering on brutality. He did not believe in the game as “the driving substance of life”, as Vargas Llosa puts it, merely on the grounds of irritability, personal prejudice or family preferences. The Marquis of Santillana—Riquer studied his figure—described in his *Comedieta de Ponza* that lifestyle and related it to the manner in which he and many others in his homeland «quando sus linajes e alcuñas llamavan/a facer ningunas las lides pasadas» (DE RIQUER 1984: 116). That is why he fulfilled his sense of life only during wartime, radiating a moderate faith in the king of Aragon, who not for nothing was Alfonso the Magnanimous, but deriding his opponents since the early thirties, attacking the Spanish court of Juan II, defending lineage feuds against passages of arms on the border with the kingdom of Granada, and speaking in support of violence. He was a hero who defined himself through the values of the antihero.

Also coinciding with the centenary of Gautier, in the same sphere of medievalism, an English historian renowned since the publication of *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages*,²³ and especially, *The outlaws of Medieval Legend*,²⁴ Maurice Keen, published an overview with Yale University Press: *Chivalry*.²⁵ The book soon caught the attention of Riquer, who decided to sponsor its Spanish translation by Ariel Publishing.²⁶

²³ Londres,

²⁴ Londres & Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977

²⁵ New Haven & Londres, Yale University Press, 1984

²⁶ KEEN 2008. 2nd edition of the 1986 original, revised and updated.

In the prologue to this translation, Riquer claims that “desde 1984 ‘el Keen’ por antonomasia es *La caballería*, que el lector tienen en sus manos en traducción castellana. Este libro es ahora ‘el Keen’, muy digno de figurar al lado ‘del Gautier’ y ‘del Huizinga’”.²⁷ He immediately adds, as a general assessment of the work (KEEN 2008: 5):

En la caballería de Keen el lector encontrará una interpretación segura y viva de los principales elementos que configuran esta importantísima parcela de la sociedad medieval: expone con claridad los problemas que plantea el estudio de los orígenes de la caballería y su relación con la Iglesia; documenta con amplitud el rito de armar caballero, los torneos, justas y pasos de armas; da relevancia a algo tan injustamente olvidado e imperdonablemente ignorado como es la heráldica; da una acertada visión de las órdenes caballerescas, y brinda al lector ceñidas y diáfanas precisiones sobre el concepto de nobleza.²⁸

It is true that Keen’s book has the gift of synthesizing complex ideas with simplicity, but that simplicity does not become a dogma. He understood and defended the expression of complexity in his inquiries into chivalry. According to Riquer, his research “ [se] fundamenta en tres fuentes principales: las rigurosamente históricas, como las procedentes de documentación de archivo y de cronistas en historiadores medievales de fiabilidad probada; en los tratados de caballería y en textos literarios”.²⁹ It was a way of valuing his own approach to chivalry—which he did not need to do in the first place, but did anyway—moving forward on an idea that had been his starting point for the study of chivalry when he legitimizes Keen’s use of literary texts. (KEEN 2008: 7):

Una novela como el *Jean de Saintré* ofrece al historiador de la caballería datos tan seguros como una biografía tan rigurosamente real como el *el Livre des faits* de Jacques de Lalaing; y el *Victorial* de don Pere Niño, que narra hechos y aventuras que sucedieron de veras, nos proporciona una visión de la vida caballeresca tan fiel como las novelas *Curial e Güelfa* y *Tiranch lo Blanc*, t relegar su autoridad en este sentido sería como negar a Balzac o a Proust su valor como documento de la sociedad francesa de los siglos XIX y XX.³⁰

²⁷ “Since 1984 Keen’s book par excellence is *Chivalry*, that readers have now in their hands in its Spanish translation. This book is now known as ‘el Keen’ [the Keen]worthy of being included next to ‘el Gautier’ [Gautier’s book] and ‘el Huizinga’[Huizinga’s book].”

²⁸ “In Keen’s Chivalry readers will find a reliable and lively interpretation of the main elements that make up this very important piece of medieval society: he exposes the problems posed by the study of the origins of chivalry and its relationship with the Church with clarity; he amply documents the ritual of knighting, tournaments, jousts and passages of arms; he gives relevance to something as unjustly neglected and inexcusably ignored as heraldry; he provides an accurate picture of the knightly orders, and gives the reader tight and clear details of the concept of nobility.”

²⁹ “[...] was based on three main sources: the strictly historical, including archival documentation and medieval chroniclers, historians of proven reliability, treatises on chivalry, and literary texts.”

³⁰ “A novel such as *Jean de Saintré* provides the historian of chivalry with data as reliable as those conveyed by a rigorously actual biography such as the *Livre des faits* of Jacques de Lalaing. Don Pere Niño’s *Victorial*, which recounts events and adventures that really happened, gives us a vision of chivalric life as faithful as that depicted in the novels *Curial e Güelfa* and *Tirant lo Blanc*. Ignoring their authority in this regard would be like denying Balzac and Proust their value as a document of the French society of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”

Riquer returned to his thesis: the testimony of literature was required for its realistic nature but also for its educational character. His explanation for this unique fact is enormously representative of his idea of chivalry (KEEN 2008: 7):

Los héroes de las novelas medievales, fieles trasuntos de la caballería de su tiempo, fueron a su vez modelos que siguieron con fidelidad sus lectores-caballeros, sobre todo en el siglo XV, cuando los caminos de Europa eran transitados por caballeros andantes de verdad, que también vagaban en demanda de aventuras, lo que supone una nueva “internacionalidad” de la caballería.³¹

Keen was not Riquer but like him he advocated the recourse to literary texts for the study of chivalry. That is why Riquer understood him so well and applauded the beauty of his narrative, especially where he saw coincidences with the classic authors that had forged his own thinking. He cited in this regard *Claros barones de Castilla* by Fernando del Pulgar, as proof of the legitimacy of Keen’s presentation of the universe of chivalry.

The effect of this work is evident in the book Riquer wrote in 1990 on *Tirant*, which is by no means an adaptation of his old texts but emphasizes his new arguments: *Aproximació al Tirant lo Blanc* (DE RIQUER 1990). We see in this book the peculiar way in which he understood literary criticism: he insists on realism and explains the grounds for its validity. Unlike many modern critics, Riquer had the gift of recognizing good narrative at first sight. He praises the story of the knight Tirant enthusiastically but stresses that it is a moral tale, thus deepening the understanding of the value of games in fifteenth-century chivalric society.³²

This brings to mind the greatest and simplest legacy that Riquer’s studies on chivalry have left: from *Vida caballeresca en la España del siglo XV* in 1965 to *Aproximació al Tirant* in 1990; he is right in what he says about the existence of knights errant in fifteenth-century Europe that follow the models of literary heroes; he is right in what he says that in that century it is difficult to distinguish a real chronicle such as the one by Jacques de Lalaing from a novel such as *Jehan de Saintré*.³³ When he organized the Symposium on Tirant lo Blanc in November 1990 to mark the fifth centenary of its publication in Valencia, Riquer made a gesture of elegance staying on the sidelines, allowing others to talk about chivalry.

³¹ “The heroes of medieval novels, faithful reflection of the chivalry of their time, were in turn models that were faithfully followed by their knightly readers, especially in the fifteenth century, when the roads of Europe were traveled by actual knights errant, who also roamed in search of adventures, representing a new “internationality” of chivalry.”

³² Michel Stanesco was undoubtedly the scholar that studied this aspect in greater depth in his beautiful book *Jeux d’errance du chevalier medieval. Aspects ludiques de la fonction guerriere dans la litterature du moyen age flamboyant*. (STANESCO 1988)

³³ Aldo Scaglione accepts it and proves it, (SCAGLIONE 1991: 38, 133, 283, 327) as well as Jesús D. Rodríguez-Velasco, (RODRÍGUEZ-VELASCO 1996: 26, 37, 149,206, 225, 304, 388, 405 y J. E. Ruiz-Domènec, (RUIZ-DOMENEC 2011, I: 175), in contrast with Michelle Szkilnik, (SZKILNIK 2003).

Indeed, 1990 was a turning point in Riquer's approach to the subject. But readers would still have occasion to consider his views.

In 2003, he published *Para leer a Cervantes* (DE RIQUER 2003). In the foreword, Riquer indicates that "se editan algunos de mis estudios cervantinos, centrados en el Quijote, que publiqué en diferentes ocasiones, seguidos de otros dos hasta ahora inéditos".³⁴ The publisher merged several works that somehow shaped a theory of how and why a novel like *Don Quixote* arises. I imagine Riquer was no stranger to this arrangement and he would not have accepted any but his own. For my current purpose I want to emphasize the section entitled *Los libros de caballerías* that follows the prologue by Dámaso Alonso (DE RIQUER 2003 21-34). I deem this book his last work on the topic, even though it includes previous materials. Riquer was not one to publish his texts without further consideration. He was a solid writer and, at the time, he was a popular author after the success obtained by his 1998 book *Quinze generacions d'una familia catalana*. Who could claim he was not an undisputed master in the topics he had dealt with? And that in a manner far from the unimaginative ways of several other mentors within the academic world. His writings on chivalry show conviction and arguments, and a certain confidence that he was right in his assumptions. Many are those who respect him for it. I could end this reading of his works on chivalry with the overview included in the few pages he published in 2003, when he was about to turn ninety and in top shape—to which I can attest (DE RIQUER 2003: 21):

Los libros de caballerías, tan leídos y admirados por los españoles del siglo XVI y que ocasionaron la locura de don Quijote y de algunos quijotes de veras, de quienes ya tendremos ocasión de tratar, y que provocaron la concepción de la gran novela de Cervantes, son unas narraciones en prosa, por lo común de gran extensión, que relatan las heroicas aventuras de un hombre extraordinario, el caballero andante, quien vaga por el mundo solo, luchando contra toda suerte de personas o monstruos, contra seres normales o mágicos, por unas tierras las más de las veces exóticas y fabulosas; o que al mando de poderosos ejércitos o escuadras derrota y vence ejércitos de paganos o de naciones extrañas. Es el caballero andante de los libros un ser de una fuerza considerable, muchas veces portentosa e inverosímil, habilísimo en el manejo de las armas, incansable en la lucha y siempre dispuesto a acometer las empresas más peligrosas. Por lo común lucha contra el mal —opresores de humildes, traidores, ladrones, déspotas, infieles, paganos—, pero su afán por la acción, por la "aventura", es también una especie de necesidad vital y un anhelo por imponer su personalidad en el mundo. Además de su valentía, una de las virtudes del caballero es el sentido de la justicia, muchas veces exagerado y desquiciado. Y este constante luchar del caballero constituye una serie ininterrumpida de sacrificios y de esfuerzos que son ofrecidos a una dama, con la finalidad de conseguir o conservar y acrecentar su amor.³⁵

³⁴ "[The book contains] the edition of some of my Cervantine studies focused on Don Quixote, published on different occasions, and followed by two hitherto unpublished texts."

³⁵ "Chivalric romances, so widely read and admired in sixteenth-century Spain, caused the insanity of Don Quixote and of some other actual Quixotes as well, about which we will talk later. These romances that led to the conception of Cervantes's great novel, are prose narratives, usually of great extent, which recount the heroic adventures of an extraordinary man: the knight errant. He wanders the world alone, fighting all sorts of people or monsters, against normal or magical beings, mostly through exotic and fabulous lands; or commands powerful armies or fleets and defeats armies of pagans or foreign nations. He is the knight

But this brief summary has a purpose, it prepares the reader for the value judgment that Riquer established on the literary texts that welcomed chivalry into their midst. Naturally, as a good Romanist, he started from Chrétien de Troyes and the thirteenth-century prose cycle known as “the Vulgate” to then delve into this matter once it reaches the Iberian Peninsula and affects its literatures. In Castilian, the Matter of Britain ended up creating the most famous and original Spanish chivalric romance, *Amadís de Gaula*, whose origins Riquer traced back to the “primitive” version of the fourteenth century, even though he also studied the version of Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, *regidor* of Medina del Campo, published in 1508. *Amadís* is the reference work of a literary genre that enraptured the Spanish society of the sixteenth century. This observation allowed Riquer to return to his central thesis about chivalry and chivalric literature (DE RIQUER 2003: 25):

Pero en el siglo XV aparecen también narraciones de aventuras de caballerescos que retratan con gran fidelidad la sociedad y la costumbres de aquella centuria, desprovistas de inverosimilitud y situadas en tiempo próximo y tierras conocidas. La más destacada de estas narraciones, que llamamos “novelas caballerescas” para diferenciarlas de los “libros de caballerías”, es el *Tirant lo Blanc*, escrito en catalán hacia el año 1460 por el valenciano Johanot Martorell, el cual era un auténtico profesional de la caballería. En 1511 se publicó en Valladolid traducido al castellano, con el título de *Tirante el Blanco*. Esta novela, sin perder las características esenciales de heroísmo y amor, se diferencia de los libros de caballerías por su verosimilitud, que aparta todo elemento maravilloso, y por su fino sentido de la ironía, aspectos que le convierten en una especie de antecedente del Quijote. No obstante, en el *Tirante el Blanco* la caballería es algo serio, vital y válido, como lo era para su autor Johanot Martorell. Una actitud crítica respecto a la caballería se advierte en *Las sergas de Esplandián*, continuación del *Amadís* escrita por el ya citado...³⁶

In this sort of summary of his ideas about chivalry, Riquer pushes readers of chivalric romance towards an awareness of this attitude: the loss of judgment, the madness that seized the hidalgo who believed himself to be Don Quixote of La Mancha stalks all those readers “que llegaron

errant of romances, a being of considerable strength, often portentous and implausible, skilful in handling weapons, tireless in the fight and always ready to undertake the most dangerous enterprises. He usually fights against evil—the oppressors of the most humble, traitors, thieves, tyrants, infidels, pagans—but his desire for action, for ‘adventure’ is also a kind of vital need and a desire to impose his personality in the world. Besides his courage, one of the virtues of the knight is his sense of justice, often exaggerated and deranged. And this constant fight of the knight is an uninterrupted series of sacrifices and efforts that are offered to a lady, in order to obtain or retain and increase her love.”

³⁶ “But in the fifteenth century there were also narrations of chivalric adventures that portrayed with great fidelity the society and customs of that century, devoid of implausibilities and set in a near time and known lands. The most prominent of these stories, that we call ‘chivalry novels’ to differentiate them from the ‘romances’ is *Tirant lo Blanc*, written in Catalan around the year 1460 by the Valencian Johanot Martorell, who was an authentic professional of chivalry. In 1511 it was published in Valladolid translated into Castilian, with the title of *Tirante el Blanco*. This novel, without losing the essential characteristics of heroism and love, is different from chivalric romances due to its plausibility, which eliminates all fantastic elements, and its fine sense of irony, aspects that turn it into some sort of precedent of Don Quixote. However, in *Tirante el Blanco* chivalry is something serious, vital and valid, as it was for its author Johanot Martorell. A critical attitude towards chivalry is evident in *Las sergas de Esplandián*, a continuation of *Amadís* written by the already mentioned...”

a creerse que la ficción es historia verdadera” [who came to believe that fiction is real history] (DE RIQUER 2003: 31). They fall under the spell of these books. Sometimes with a melodramatic flare, as in the example extracted from the *Arte de la galantería* of Don Francisco de Portugal, in which a principal gentleman cried inconsolably because “hace muerto Amadís” [Amadís is dead] (DE RIQUER 2003: 32); on other occasions, such as in the novel *Guzmán el Bueno* by Lope de Vega, for example, the boundary of delirium is overstepped when an Italian gentleman, reading the passage of the Peña Pobre, where Amadís changes his name to Beltenebros, cries out loud “Maladetta sia la donna che tal t’ha fatto passare!”, without noticing the presence of his servants, which leads Riquer to comment—in his own style and fashion: “De ahí a la locura hay poco trecho, y en efecto tenemos noticias de personas reales que, como don Quijote, mostraron perder el juicio leyendo libros de caballerías” (DE RIQUER 2003: 32).³⁷ But let us be clear, we are talking about chivalric romances and not chivalric novels; that is, literature like *Amadís de Gaula* and not *Tirant lo Blanc*, which is but an assessment of textual criticism characteristic of Riquer, after the rules he himself created for the study of the literature whose subject was chivalry. Through an example drawn from the *Filosofía antigua poética* of Alonso López Pinciano, a work written in 1596, Riquer shows the effect of chivalric romance on the conscience of the Spanish readers of the sixteenth century, and their propensity to folly. There is no social reality here to play with; only an improbable fiction, with no foothold in the world of facts, whose adventures can only be imagined, never proved. Within the framework of the anxiety produced by this unreliable literature, a novelist forged in Humanism like Cervantes tends to measure certain characters ironically, such as the lady who thinks that Amadís is a real person. After recovering from the archive of the Count of Guimerá the testimony of a student of Salamanca absorbed by reading chivalric romance, who thus “sufre un ataque de locura exactamente igual a la demencia de don Quijote” [suffers an attack of insanity exactly like Don Quixote] (DE RIQUER 2003: 34), Riquer perceives the existence of two groups of readers in the Spanish Golden Age, those who believed in chivalric romances and those who opted for the criticism present in the work of Cervantes, two groups divided by literary taste and unable to understand each other.

Two groups, and maybe two Spains. Riquer is something of a host in a literary party, which is at the same time political: he fears that the readings resulting from a terrible literary education might condition the future of a people. At times, his image of mentoring figure to several generations of scholars of literature as well as artists who acknowledge his influence, as in the case of Pere Gimferrer, is recognizable in his effort to match the fact and meaning of chivalry. Who can warn about the misuse of reading better than a philologist interested for decades in determining the effect of a text in the mind of a reader? To conclude, and by way of example, I will quote

³⁷ “It’s a short trip from there to insanity, and indeed we hear from real people who, like Don Quixote, lost their mind by reading chivalric romances.”

one Riquer's sentences, which, with the narrative simplicity that characterizes him, seems to summarize in a narrative tone all he sought to understand about the universe of chivalry: "Creído de que ya es caballero, satisfecho y alegre, sale don Quijote de la venta que tomó por castillo" (DE RIQUER 2003: 131).³⁸

And that's that.

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³⁸ "Believing that he is already a knight, content and cheerful, Don Quixote leaves the inn that he mistook for a castle."

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