

# EUROPEAN ROMANTIC PERCEPTION OF THE MIDDLE AGES: NATIONALISM AND THE PICTURESQUE

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## ABSTRACT

The aims of this study<sup>1</sup> are theoretical and comparative. It contains a theoretical section describing the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries visions of the Middle Ages (admirable, critical and indifferent). Then, the relationships with the European romantics, including the Catalans, are studied. The folkloric and nationalism are presented as bridges between the two epochs. The history of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries Picturesque is reviewed and a new view of it is presented. Instead of conceiving it as a minor aesthetic, I propose it as a precedent for the avant-garde given its defence of the irregular and the badly done. Furthermore, the 19<sup>th</sup> century idea of paradise lost was conceptualised around four axes (past, infancy, nature and art) and I propose a fifth (ethnicity)<sup>2</sup> for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## KEY WORDS

Picturesque, Nationalist, Romantic Medievalism, Paradise Lost, Catalan.

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Mirifice describere, Nationis ratio, Romanticum Medium Aevum, Paradisus Amissus, Catalaunienses.

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1. This article is developed within the framework of the research project "Identity, Memory and Ideology in the Middle Ages" (HAR 2009-08598/HIST)

2. Although the concept of "ethnicity" is anti-scientific and outdated, I mention it because it was a relevant concept in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that, unfortunately, continues to be used in the 21<sup>st</sup>, as I explain below.

## 1. The Renaissance against the Gothic, the Enlightenment against Romanticism

In 1567 Philibert de l'Orme did an allegory about the good and the bad architect that illustrates the conflict between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>3</sup> The wise architect (depicted among Renaissance mansions with four hands and three eyes to represent his knowledge and skill) followed a classic order, while the bad one (blind and handless in a desolate knightly landscape) remained rooted in the Gothic forms that so displeased Montesquieu.<sup>4</sup> We could exemplify this duality putting the clean symmetry of the Palladian architecture on side of the scales and, on the other, *Gargantua* (1534) and *Pantagruel* (1532) where Rabelais defended the new times (Erasmist humanism) by ridiculing the old: a crude, rural Middle Ages inhabited by bigoted and deformed monks and knights.

This clash between straight (apollonian) forms and twisted and over-decorated forms was repeated between Neoclassicism and Romanticism at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Neoclassical aesthetics and Enlightened thought distanced themselves from the medieval world. With the historical alternation between simple and baroque aesthetics, the next aesthetic style and ideology, Romanticism, turned back towards the medieval. Table 1 shows these historical swings.<sup>5</sup>

3. de l'Orme, Philippe. "Livre IX", *Le premier tome de l'Architecture*. Paris: F. Morel, 1567.

4. *L'architecture gothique paroît très-variée mais la confusion des ornements fatigue par leur petitesse; ce qui fait qu'il n'y en a aucun que nous puissions distinguer d'un autre, et leur nombre fait qu'il n'y en a aucun sur lequel l'oeil puisse s'arrêter: de manière qu'elle déplaît par les endroits même qu'on a choisis pour la rendre agréable. Un bâtiment d'ordre gothique est une espèce d'enigme pour l'oeil qui le voit, et l'âme est embarrassée comme quand on lui présente un poème obscur*. Montesquieu [Secondat, Charles-Louis, baron de]. *Essais sur le goût* (1757). Genoa: Droz, 1967: 73.

5. Among those who defend the historical swings are Heinrich Wölfflin, Thomas Samuel Kuhn, Hans-Robert Jauss, Harold Bloom and Felix Vodicka. Garry W. Trompf considers that History is marked by alternate cycles (Trompf, Garry W. *The idea of historical recurrence in western thought, from Antiquity to Reformation*. California: University of California Press, 1979). In 1942, in *Literární historie, její problémy a úkoly* ("The Literarian History: problems and duties"), Felix Vodička states: "The principle of the contradiction is the power behind literary history in all the milestones of its evolution" (Vodička, Felix. "Literární historie, její problémy a úkoly". *Struktura vývoje*, Felix Vodička, Miroslav Červenka, dirs. Prague: Odeon, 1969). The inventor of the paradigm, Thomas Samuel Kuhn emphasised that there are historical moments open to change and progress; when the right conditions arise, changes are drastic and in a zig-zag shape. Kuhn explains these oscillations through social and cultural factors (Kuhn, Thomas S. *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962; Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). Heinrich Wölfflin had observed this rise and fall but justified it for formal internal motives. (Wölfflin, Heinrich. *Renaissance und Barock: Eine Untersuchung über Wesen und Entstehung der Barockstils in Italien*. Munich: Ackermann, 1888; Wölfflin, Heinrich. *Die klassische Kunst: Eine Einführung in die italienische Renaissance*. Munich: Bruckmann, 1899). Wölfflin established formal binary differences, like the contrast between the principle of unity (the Renaissance) and that of multiplicity (the Baroque). In Wölfflin's understanding, the changes of style in the history of art occur for artistic reasons (tiredness with the previous style; because the forms become exhausted) rather than the socio-political reasons we tend to think of in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries due to a more or less veiled Marxist influence. Wölfflin was influenced by 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas and, as a good intellectual of his time, he applied biological concepts to humanist studies. Thus, it seemed to him that the styles would evolve similarly to any living being: birth-growth-death. A decadent, moribund style will be replaced with the opposite. The parallel with



**Table 1. Topics of the historical swings**

<b>Symmetry and purity</b>		<b>Complexity and excess</b>
Classic	vs.	Medieval
Romanesque	vs.	Gothic
Renaissance	vs.	Gothic-medieval
Renaissance	vs.	Baroque <sup>6</sup>
Neoclassicism	vs.	Romanticism

Both the enlightened and the romantics conceived the Middle Ages as an irrational and spiritual epoch (in other words, they coincided in the description of the fact, or rather, the *mal feyt*), but while this disgusted the enlightened, it attracted the romantics. The historical Middle Ages have little in common with the image held of them in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this study, I do not evaluate whether the romantics' evocation of the medieval were right or not, but rather, assuming that they were generally false and not very true to the literary texts and historical facts, we will find out which were the fantastic images the romantics had of the Middle Ages.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we find artists like John Ruskin<sup>7</sup> who describe Gothic architecture in similar terms to Philibert de l'Orme. But now, they valued it in reverse. De l'Orme had a negative idea of the medieval world (beginning with its untidy and insalubrious urbanism), while Ruskin idealised its artisanal imperfection. The British intellectual considered that the characteristic morals of Gothic architecture were, in order of importance, wildness, its changeable, spontaneous and grotesque nature, its rigidity and its redundancy. Its stones would only reflect the spirit of late-

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nature does not fully justify the stylistic changes (an organism, an painter can be born, flourish and die and, then, another organism of another species appears, another painter who does the same), except if Wölfflin was thinking about sudden accelerated and radically different mutations that have never occurred in the history of evolution. The theoretical support for historical swings come more from psychoanalysis and Marxism than from natural history. Three key 20<sup>th</sup> century essays are good evidence of this: Thomas S. Kuhn and the paradigm shift; Harold Bloom's interpretation of the Romantic poets who "kill" their fathers and face the previous generation (Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); and the theory by Hans R. Jauss of the horizon of expectations that would only be broken by the great revolutionary writers capable of altering the System. (Jauss, Hans R. "La història de la literatura com a provocació a la teoria literària" (1967). *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970).

6. Given that the Baroque falls outside the scope of this article, I only mention one author who cannot be omitted from any study about the roots of Romanticism: Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), whose paintings are Romanticism *avant la lettre* given the dramatism of his wild landscapes full of witches and lightning and dominated by nature's chilling grandeur.

7. Ruskin, John. "The Nature of Gothic", *The Stones of Venice*. London-New York: J. Wiley, 1851.



medieval man who was characterised by: coarseness, a love of change and nature, a disturbed imagination, persistence and generosity. I imagine that the medievalist historians are throwing their hands up in despair. In fact, Ruskin's Middle Ages were nothing like the reality. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore his view, nor that of so many romantics who explained their love of the Middle Ages however badly they did so, because their opinions and way of writing, painting and composing "in the medieval way" had a huge impact at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and into the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and have lived on until the present. Nowadays, journalists filter and manipulate the reality, one that we can normally only enter through what they tell us about it. Unless we are specialists, our vision of the past is also filtered and mystified. More than knowing the past, when we approach it through poets, musicians and painters, as we shall in this article, we do so through misinterpretations of misinterpretations, beautiful but false. As I. Durand-Le Guern states, the Middle Ages in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are uchronic, out of their time, a poetic golden age (Christian, marvellous, innocent, lost): *Ce Moyen Âge apparaît comme le temps mythique d'une quête spirituelle et artistique, et n'a que peu de rapport avec une réalité historique.*<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Romantic admiration for the Middle Ages

One of the most frequent criticisms of Romanticism is its histrionics, presenting us with unlikely works set in cardboard cut-out castles. Both the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Middle Ages emerge battered from these fantastic stories. The playwright Stoppard symbolises the "farce of Romanticism" in an artificial garden, "in a setting of cheap thrills and false".<sup>9</sup>

The romantics have very varied images of the Middle Ages, but with the common denominator of exaggeration. Some were fascinated by their contemplative mysticism, and others by just the opposite: their cavalry always ready to act. Tables 2, 3 and 4 summarise my hypotheses about the different functions of the Middle Ages in Romanticism. In this article, I will focus on the folkloric and nationalist visions from table 2. Among the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries artists, both the ribald and erudite medievalism took very secondary positions. The romantics were pure, and as such, preferred chaste Platonism to the *fabliaux*. Being true to this, they ignored the shameless Middle Ages. At the other extreme, they did not seek intellectual Latinists; for the romantics, the Middle Ages were no model of wisdom. Intellectually, the men of the 19<sup>th</sup> century felt superior to their ancestors (with the exception of the classics). As a result, if my theory holds true, romantic medievalism was not based on eroticism, nor on scholasticism, but rather on chivalry, politics, religion, mystery and populism.

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8. Durand, Isabelle. *Le Moyen âge des romantiques*. Rennes: Université de Rennes, 2001: 263.

9. Stoppard, Thomas. *Arcadia*. London: Faber & Faber, 1993: act I, scene 2.



**Table 2. Romantic images of the Middle Ages**

<b>Admirable Romantic images of the Middle Ages in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries</b>			
<b>Vision</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Tone</b>	<b>Symbol</b>
Folkloric	Picturesque Art Popular songs Tales <i>Costumbrismo</i> <sup>10</sup>	Bucolic Nostalgic Utopian Nationalist Conservative	Noble savage Pure children Paradise lost Elf Picturesque garden Cottage Twisted tree Pottery craftwork
Chivalrous	Epic Romance Adventure novel Historical drama Historical painting	Triumphal Nationalist Nostalgic Idealising Lyrical Literary Sublime	Ruined castle Mythified king Our hero Martyred hero/heroine (fall and ascension) Melancholy knight in love Separated lovers
Religious	Art, poetry, essay	Nostalgic Idealising Mystical	Ruined abbey Crusades Angel Hermit Quest for the Grail
Fantastic	Gothic novel Horror story	Mysterious Terrifying Morbid	Darkness Irrational Seductive, clever and beautiful devil Witch Depraved noble or clergyman Magician, alchemist Eternally condemned Repented sinner Ghost, spectre Risen from the dead Enchanted castle or house Cemetery Hell

10. *Costumbrismo* was a literary genre that emerged in Spain in the 1830s. It concentrated on a detailed depiction of social and regional traditions and customs and often contrasted them with the changes wrought by industrial development.



**Table 3. Critical images of the Middle Ages**

<b>Critical images of the Middle Ages in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries</b>			
<b>School</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Tone</b>	<b>Symbol</b>
Enlightened Rationalist Scientific	Essay Multiple discourses	Rejection Overcoming	Rude barbarian Cruel, dark, ignorant epoch Spanish Inquisition <sup>11</sup> Closed, rigid, religious society, divided into estates

**Table 4. Infrequent images of the Middle Ages**

<b>Infrequent images of the Middle Ages in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries</b>			
<b>Vision</b>	<b>Genres</b>	<b>Tone</b>	<b>Symbol</b>
Vulgar	Erotic Fabliaux <sup>12</sup> Goliard satires in Latin	Lewd Grotesque <sup>13</sup>	Obscene priest
Comic	Parody	Humoristic <sup>14</sup>	Medieval disguise Histronics
Erudite	Scholastic philosophy	Admiration intellectual <sup>15</sup>	Wise man Latin Monastery library University
Exotic	Artistic Architectural	Decorative	Mudejar imitation <sup>16</sup> . Middle Ages = Arab substrate (in Spain)

11. For example, *Torquemada* by Victor Hugo (Hugo, Victor. *Torquemada*. Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882).

12. An example would be *Cent contes drolatiques* by Balzac (de Balzac, Honoré. *Cent contes drolatiques*. Brussels: Libraire de L. Hauman et Compe., 1832-1838) a Rabelaisian, anti-romantic and anti-medieval book, which parodies the fabliaux in archaistic language. It has a twisted, Gothic-picturesque, blasphemous and anticlerical style. The book had little influence in its time due to it being difficult to read and a lack of understanding among the critics.

13. Sainte-Beuve and Michelet did not appreciate Villon at all; they did not consider him either a metaphysical or realist author; for them he was the grotesque author of the "Ballade de la Grosse Margot" (Villon, François. *Ballade de la Grosse Margot*. Méry-sur-Oise: RMQS, 1972).



The romantics dressed themselves up as old. The medieval was in fashion. An enormous number of artists and sympathisers were seduced. The imitators of Scott, of ballads and chivalrous novels proliferated everywhere. The fact that many were mediocre and are nowadays totally forgotten does not detract from the importance of a phenomenon that inspired great creations. Both the geniuses and the amateurs wagered on the anachronism. They put Dilthey's thoughts into practice.<sup>17</sup> According to the latter, the temporal distance could be overcome by projecting ourselves towards the past with empathy, a profoundly imaginative re-experience. Coleridge called it suspension of disbelief: let us not be so incredulous and rational, let ourselves be seduced by the poetry, let us penetrate into the world of fantasy... *Nacherleben* means to relive. It is not a question of explaining (as the sciences do) but rather of *Verstehen*, of understanding (as the humanities should do). Brentano and Arnim mimicked medieval tales. Schlegel let himself go through the tunnel of time and appears more romantic than scientific. The Grimms criticised this and demanded that the historians maintain a distance and be objective. Although the Grimm were partly right, I dedicate this study to the subjective approaches to understand their peers better. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the desired understanding involved sympathetic intuitions with the genius of the poet and a remote epoch. In the 20<sup>th</sup>, with Gadamer<sup>18</sup> at the head, the opposite opinion was held, and instead of seeking a fusion with the past, it was accepted that this was impossible. Instead of mystifying what happened and projecting false ideas about it, we must be aware of our prejudices. As P. Damian-Grint wrote, "Every century since the sixteenth has remade the Middle Ages in its own image".<sup>19</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, we bring the past into the present, consciously modernising the tradition. This also occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but they did not think so, that their love of Greece, Rome and the Middle Ages allowed them to go

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14. An example would be Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Twain, Mark. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Auckland: Floating Press, 1889). The comic register used when writing about the Middle Ages was more common in the 20th century (e.g. the Monty Python films) than in the 19th.

15. Proof that the interest of 19th century writers in the Middle Ages was rather frivolous are some of the recreations of the erudite Ramon Llull, such as the one by Nuñez de Arce ("*Raimundo Lulio*", 1875). Nuñez de Arce was more interested in his romantic and macabre legend, with a *belle dame sans merci* who is turned into a skeleton in the Gothic cathedral in Palma de Mallorca, than in his theological, literary and philosophical masterpieces. Llull is presented as a plaintive lover who sends love letters through a servant in a funereal atmosphere that reaches a peak when Nuñez de Arce makes "*Raimundo*" rhyme with "*moribundo*". (Nuñez, Gaspar. "*Raimundo Lulio*", *Obras escogidas*. Barcelona: Montaner, 1911: 45-67).

16. Nineteenth-century Spanish civil architecture occasionally imitated the Mudejar style of brickwork from Toledo and Granada. This decorative fashion did not mean any ethnic or religious interest in the Muslim world. It was more in line with the interest in the primitive exoticism of North Africa that appeared in painting (Delacroix, Fortuny).

17. Dilthey, Wilhelm. "*Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*" (1910). *Gesammelte Schriften*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1922: VII.

18. Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Warheit and Method*. Tübingen: Siebeck, 1960.

19. Damian-Grint, Peter. *Medievalism and "manière gothique" in Enlightenment France*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2006: 1. An excellent collective work on this subject.



from the present to the past. Their desire was to form part of these past periods aesthetically and spiritually. Let us see how.

### 3. Romantic craftwork and Picturesque medievalism

Let us start with those who were against. Not all the romantics shared the same view of the Middle Ages. Some, such as Goethe, did not regard them favourably. Or not always. His *Faust* was enraptured by a chivalrous and magic medievalism, but when Goethe thinks in the common people who were still as crude as in the Middle Ages, he labelled them as a dark epoch. He had no interest in going either backwards or downwards, which led him to criticise the contemporary romantic artists who longed after, and idealised, the old popular traditions:

From these old-German gloomy times, [...] we can obtain as little as from the Servian songs, and similar barbaric popular poetry. We can read it and be interested about it for a while, but merely to cast it aside, and let it lie behind us. Generally speaking, a man is quite sufficiently saddened by his own passions and destiny, and need not make himself more so by the darkness of a barbaric past.<sup>20</sup>

Goethe's disaffection towards the popular forms reminds us of Dalí's highbrow attitude to popular aesthetics. Dalí distanced himself from the avant-garde's interest in primitive art (African, Polynesian, etc.) for the same reasons as Goethe.

I have begun with authors who criticised the popular aspects of the call of the past. I can continue with authors who did what Goethe and Dalí criticised, those who sought the roots of the people, and their traditions and character national, in the medieval past.

There were three types of tendency that assimilated the Middle Ages positively with the popular past: the craft guild, the picturesque and the nationalist (table 5). As Anne-Marie Thiesse has analysed so well,<sup>21</sup> patriotic feeling feeds off folklore, mythical ancestors and a common national language.

**Table 5. Popular romantic medievalism**

Middle Ages = Popular past		
Craftsman	Picturesque	Nationalist

20. Declarations by Johann W. Goethe on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1828 to Eckermann, Johann Peter. *Conversations with Eckermann; being appreciations and criticisms on many subjects*. Washington: M. W. Dunne, 1901: 266.

21. Thiesse, Anne-Marie. *La Création des identités nationales: Europe XVIIIe-XXe siècle*. Paris: Seuil, 1999.



The implications of the defence of the old world by the English Pre-Raphaelites<sup>22</sup> were not only aesthetic, but also political and economic. They rejected modernity and became purposefully anachronic. William Morris manifested against consumerism and the American technology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, in a kind of utopian socialism, in favour of the British (tradition loving) way of life, craftsmanship and the socioeconomic and urban structure of the medieval guilds. Another example of this tendency against technical progress is John Ruskin, who preferred the medieval city of Pisa to the industrial town of Rochdale, north of Manchester.

The painters of the picturesque genre associated popular elements with the traditional world, which, implicitly, should be understood as medieval. The picturesque paintings portrayed a stable rural world that had remained unalterable for centuries and praised a way of life (shepherds, farmers) to show us how life was lived in the Middle Ages: slowly, with few resources, but—in their opinion—happily. This populist, reactionary,<sup>23</sup> false and idyllic vision speaks of the longing the romantics had for past times. The picturesque painters considered that the paradise lost of nature, of slowness and innocence non-existent in the cities could still be found in the country. The paradises lost of city dwellers and the artists were found in the origins (table 6), in the Middle Ages, in infancy, in landscapes uncontaminated by progress and factories, the traditional ways of doing things and the craftsmanship repeated over the centuries and handed down from father to son. The cities change, the villages do not. The paradise lost longed for the unalterable, that which remained unchanging and faithful to the record, indifferent to historical and personal changes and fashions. This romantic concept of paradise lost was inherited from the classical idea of the Golden Age that Ovid formulated with syncretism and which has reappeared throughout our civilisation, for example, in Erasmus of Rotterdam,<sup>24</sup> for who the Golden Age was a synonym for instinctive, ignorant and happy people. For Ovid<sup>25</sup> the characteristics of this idyllic paradise were: 1) innate goodness with no need for police or legislators (if nothing bad is done, no punishments or trials are needed), where everyone has been born of nature and are all equals, 2) innocent,

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22. The Pre-Raphaelite name of the group of artists made up of John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, among others, indicates their predilection for pre-Renaissance art: the medieval painters and the classical myths; and their rejection of everything that came after Raphael, the Renaissance painter they criticised so harshly and who, in a kind of voluntary martyrdom much in keeping with their character, they carried flagellated in the name of their group.

23. "Tory authors and historians looked to the medieval period for feudal paternalism and an interdependent community as a solution to economic crisis and class unrest.", Fay, Elizabeth. *Romantic medievalism. History and the romantic literary ideal*. New York: Palgrave, 2002: 1.

24. "In the first golden age of the world there was no need of these perplexities; there was then no other sort of learning but what was naturally collected from every man's common sense, improved by an easy experience. What use could there have been of grammar, when all men spoke the same mother-tongue, and aimed at no higher pitch of oratory, than barely to be understood by each other? What need of logic, when they were too wise to enter into any dispute? Or what occasion for rhetoric, where no difference arose to require any laborious decision?", Erasmus of Rotterdam. "chapter XXXII", *Enchiridion moriae seu laus stultitiae (1511) / Erasmus In Praise of Folly*. London: Reeves & Turner, 1876: 61.

25. Ovidius, Publius. *Les metamorfosis*, ed. Adela M<sup>a</sup> Trepal, Anna M<sup>a</sup> de Saavedra. Barcelona: Fundació Bernat Metge, 1932: I, 59.



3) peaceful (no arms are needed to attack or defend anybody), 4) technologically primitive, 5) vegetarian (for its rejection of violence), and 6) closed, where there are no foreigners, nobody leaves; it was a closed and familiar society with no need to travel to seek anything else. This closing of paradise is observable in the recurrent image of the island as a paradise lost we find from Defoe<sup>26</sup> to Huxley.<sup>27</sup> In Romanticism, the paradise lost was more rural and less exotic. Although the Alps were still relatively unknown at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Huxley's tropical island has little to do with Rousseau's European island surrounded by lofty mountains. For Rousseau, an island in a Swiss lake would express the idea of paradise, a place that at once emphasised isolation and protection. It is not by chance that in front of Wordsworth's country house, Dove Cottage in the Lake District, there was also an islet. Sitting on his wooden bench, Wordsworth had a Rousseauian view.

**Table 6. Paradises lost**

<b>Paradises lost</b>			
<b>Past</b>	<b>Infancy</b>	<b>Nature</b>	<b>Art</b>
Independent medieval nation vs. conquered nation	I child vs. I adult	Rurality vs. city	Imperfect craftsmanship and simple oral literature vs. cultivated and refined art
Medieval religion vs. modern materialism	Innocence vs. corruption	Beauty vs. ugliness, machines	Identical vs. changing
Stratified noble society vs. change of classes (revolutionary people and rising bourgeoisie)	Youthful ideals vs. adult betrayals	Simple, modest vs. complex	Utility vs. luxury
Particular, different cultures vs. universal common to the Enlightenment	Beauty vs. physical degradation	Animal, spontaneous, primitive vs. civilised, rational	Anonymous vs. creative genius

26. Defoe, Daniel. *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an uninhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pirates.* London: Taylor, 1719.

27. Huxley, Aldous. *Island.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1962.



If, instead of studying the concept of paradise lost in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we dated it from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, we would have to add a fifth dimension. As well as the lost paradises of the past, infancy, nature and art, we should add the concept of ethnicity and propose that under the actual conservative mentality, one of the paradises most missed is the nation of a single race. In reality, this xenophobic concept of the pure race *vs.* immigration, before globalisation, is false, as from their origins, nations have been made up of multiple ethnic groups, languages and religions (as can still be seen in Africa). Despite this, thanks to the rise in interracial marriages, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a turning point from which we are heading towards a planet free of frontiers between races. This post-colonial vision was unthinkable in the epoch we are dealing with. So would be the idea of the country and nature (including the majority of plant and animals species) with an expiry date that we have (and regret) today. As table 6 shows, the romantics were aware that there were things that change (from the nation to the I that grows and renounces ideals). However, there were many others, like the language and traditions, that in their opinion did not. In contrast with the city, the rural world was considered very stable, like an unalterable patrimony. If nature is included in table 6, it is there for the following reason. The romantics longed after it not because they thought, as we do nowadays, that many parts of the landscape could disappear, but more because they lived in the cities and longed over the bucolic countryside where children could run free. In contrast, nature and rural life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are threatened and in danger of extinction. However, let us leave ecological criticism and go back to earlier centuries.

The pictorial genre called Picturesque appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and flourished in the 18<sup>th</sup>. As well as portraying beauty in the classical manner, eighteenth-century artists could overdo it from top to bottom. Their romantic sensitivity could aspire to the sublime or be pleased with the picturesque. According to C. Hussley, "While the outstanding qualities of the sublime were vastness and obscurity, and those of the beautiful smoothness and gentleness, the characteristics of the picturesque were "roughness and sudden variation joined to irregularity" of form, colour, lighting, and even sound."<sup>28</sup> The first option is the harmonic and classical; the second, the grandiose and terrifying; and the third, the rustic. This triple definition by Hussey is true to the concept of the epoch, as Uvedale Price explained in 1794.<sup>29</sup> The examples Price gave of these three aesthetic tendencies were: Haendel as the sublime, a *pastorale* by Corelli as the beautiful, and a painting of a Dutch landscape as the picturesque.

At the beginning of *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), Henry Fielding presents himself as an anti-romantic, stating that "truth distinguishes our writings from

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28. "While the outstanding qualities of the sublime were vastness and obscurity, and those of the beautiful smoothness and gentleness, the characteristics of the picturesque were "roughness and sudden variation joined to irregularity" of form, colour, lighting, and even sound", Hussey, Christopher. *The Picturesque*. London: Franz Cass, 1967: 14.

29. Price, Uvedale. *Essay on the Picturesque as compared with the sublime and the beautiful and on the use of studying pictures for the purpose of improving real landscape*. London: J. Robson, 1794.



those idle romances which are filled with monsters, the productions, not of nature, but of distempered brains". In other words, the concept of romantic in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century was also triple: either shadowy, delicate or historical-mythological. We have widened the sense and also associate it with the Picturesque, which did please Fielding, although he contrasted Picturesque with Romantic, while for us, the first term is included in the second one. Fielding's tastes tended towards *costumbrismo* (there is a moment when he says it is better to invoke ballads than Greek gods) and away from the Gothic of the "foolish novels and monstrous romances"<sup>30</sup> and its moral depravation. Although nowadays the Picturesque is considered as romantic as the Gothic, in his time they were conflicting tendencies, as Fielding has just told us. A century later, in Spain, Mesonero Romanos was of the same opinion in favour of the Picturesque and rejecting the Gothic.<sup>31</sup>

*Ya no hay ovejas que asistan al cantar sabroso de pacer olvidadas escuchando; hoy sólo figuran buhos agoreros que en cavernoso lamento y profundo alarido interrogan a la muerte sobre su fatídico porvenir. Ya no hay chozas pajizas, quesos sabrosos, ni leche regalada: sólo se ven en el campo del dolor espinas y abrojos, sepulcros entreabiertos, gusanos y podredumbre. Los mansos arroyuelos trocáronse en profundos torrentes; las floridas vegas, en riscos escarpados; las sombrías florestas, en desiertos arenales.*<sup>32</sup>

This taste for craftwork and rural meant that cruder, badly made products started to gain in value, so a rustic bridge, a rusty iron or broken farm implement that is no longer used began to be considered aesthetic. The old was unusable, but just like it is good to keep the romances and traditional ballads near and continue to listen to them especially when the urban, progress and written literature threatened popular literature, the customs and oral culture that had been passed down from time immemorial. The myth of the anonymous poet as the quintessence of a people that expressed itself spontaneously in verse through its songs became all the rage. The Scottish poet, Robert Burns, a farmer's son, drew on this pastoral and collective substrate. Rousseau was undoubtedly one of those most responsible for the rural fashion of the return to nature and the idealisation of the plain, simple and innocent man.<sup>33</sup> As *Emili* said (1762), "Oh, if I ever manage to have a rectory in

30. Fielding, Henri. *The history of Tom Jones. A foundling*. London: Millar. 1749 [London: Bliss & Sands, 1897: 250].

31. Tom Stoppard (Stoppard, Thomas. *Arcadia...*) recreates this contrast through the transformation of a bucolic and picturesque garden (with streams and some sheep to pretty it up) into romantic: "An eruption of shady forest and vertiginous cliff, with ruins". The author, with great ironic skill, adds that there has to be a hermit. And here you have part of the plot: the search for a hermit man to adorn the palace gardens.

32. "No more do sheep graze patiently, their worries forgotten, to the sound of birdsong; Today old doom-saying owls that, in cavernous lament and profound howls, interrogate death about its fateful future. There are no more thatched huts, tasty cheeses, nor free milk: in the field of pain one only sees thorns and prickles [thistles], half open tombs, worms and rot. The meek brooks exchanged for deep streams; the flowery meadows, in steep cliffs; the gloomy forests, in sandy deserts" (Mesonero, Ramón. *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*. Madrid: Boix, 1844).

33. In the tale "Mistress into Maid", Pushkin reflects ironically about the Rousseauian fashion: "Those of my readers who have never lived in the country, cannot imagine how charming these provincial young



our mountains with good people to serve!", a rural utopia of *aurea mediocritas* that works better in theory than in practice. The good savages were good elements for study. They awakened the curiosity and compassion but at a distance. W. Morris' longing, his pastoral vision and love for rural smallness were more ideal than real. However much he affirmed it, Morris was no "idle singer of an empty day".<sup>34</sup> As I. Berlin wrote,<sup>35</sup> the myth of the noble savage only works as an unattainable ideal; no nobles really wanted to become rustic.

This new sensitivity explains why the decorative aspects of English cottages and the rustic wooden architecture in 19<sup>th</sup> century Switzerland imitated medieval models. For Romanticism, this idyllic return to a past time was related, albeit unconsciously, with the desire to go back to the lost infancy (natural and spontaneous), where the rural and pastoral Middle Ages would play the role of paradise lost. It was likewise also associated with a return to the primitive. The medieval was indirectly understood as something nice but primitive. An example is the earthen architecture of the architect François Cointeraux around 1789. However, it is worth noting that, as often occurs in Romanticism, it degenerated into false theatricality. Thus, for example, more than shacks, the rich built cottages ornés. They imitated the irregular and picturesque decorative style of 18<sup>th</sup> century England, but with all kinds of luxuries. However much it sought to imitate the humility of the farmer in the shape of a Swiss chalet, the rusticity was false. The most extreme case was Marie Antoinette's cottage, the Petit Trianon. Built in 1781 near Versailles was surrounded by an artificial Norman-style village with thatched roofs, a mill, a dairy and pigeon lofts that were really billiard halls, ballrooms and salons for informal suppers.

The picturesque looks to nature, both bucolic and spectacular (a waterfall, for example), as long as the rarity is in a soft and civilised context. If it were more dramatic, it would change tendency and become a passionate, sublime or macabre Romanticism. The fashion for the picturesque gardens meant a *deposito della memoria*.<sup>36</sup> The obelisks, temples, columns, towers or hermitages remind us symbolically of where we are from. As Gilpin states, picturesque beauty is "that kind of beauty which would look well in a picture".<sup>37</sup> In other words, the type of touristic

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ladies are! Brought up in the pure air, under the shadow of their own apple trees, they derive their knowledge of the world and life from books. Solitude, freedom and reading develop very early within them sentiments and passions unknown to our town-bred beauties. For the young ladies of the country the sound of harness-bells is an event." Pushkin, Aleksandr Serguèievitx. *The Works of Alexander Puskin Lyrics, Narrative Poems, Folk Tales, Plays, Prose*. New York: Random House, 1936: 532-533.

34. Calhoun, Blue. *The pastoral vision of William Morris. The Earthly Paradise*. Athens: Georgia University Press, 1975.

35. "Like the quest for the Holy Grail (...), the noble savage must be impossible to reach, the unfindable, the infinite, the ideal", Berlin, Isaiah. *The Roots of Romanticism* (1965). Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1999: 144.

36. Bordone, Renato. *Lo specchio di Shalott. L'invenzione del Medioevo nella cultura dell'Ottocento*. Naples: Liguori, 1993: 21.

37. It goes on: "Composed well, harmoniously coloured; rough and broken objects (such as rocks, ruins and shaggy cattle", Gilpin, William. "On picturesque beauty", *Three Essays*. London: Blamire, 1792 [Hussey, Christopher. *The Picturesque...*: 114].



panorama that we would nowadays define as a snapshot. Wordsworth's "Prelude" (1850) combined nature and infancy and recreated our nostalgia for both, and also the distant past where the popular ballads originated, those that must be preserved as sacred relics. As Hoxie N. Fairchild wrote, "Wordsworth returned not only to nature but to the past."<sup>38</sup> Nowadays, for us, the "Prelude" is more than picturesque, it is sublime. But for 19<sup>th</sup> century historians, like Menéndez Pelayo, its author was picturesque and no more, in the most pejorative and crudest sense of the word,

*A Wordsworth, el sentimente le salva y le redime cuando no es sentimiento falso; pero nadie ha llevado el prosaísmo sistemático, no ya de dicción, sino de asunto, a mayores desvaríos y excesos. No fue solamente el poeta de los rústicos y de los niños, empeñándose en imitar hasta su torpe balbuceo, sino el poeta de los estúpidos, de los idiotas, de los estropeados y de los mendigos. Y todo esto lo hizo con gran elevación moral, pero en una especie de prosa rimada, que a la larga llega a ser intolerable por la estéril notación de menudencias sin valor característico.*<sup>39</sup>

We can quote Josep Pla, the Catalan Voltaire, among those who looked down on the picturesque aesthetic. Pla was much closer to the enlightened encyclopaedists than to the romantics, who he was repelled by:

*Les rares cases que es troben al costat de la carretera, rústiques i malcarades, tenen un aspecte desconfiat. Em costa de veure l'idil·li a muntanya, i a tot arreu més aviat trobo la misèria, l'estretor i l'aire mig amagat —un aire clandestí, merament al·lusiú, confús, inextricable.*<sup>40</sup>

With a strong sense of self-criticism, Pla compared the polyglot and aristocratic European culture to Spanish culture: "Our collective apathy has us tied to the lowest and most miserable forms of the picturesque that one can possibly imagine".<sup>41</sup> Pla disliked *costumbrismo* and, by extension, any romantic tendency, whether Gothic or nationalist.

Charles Nodier transferred the picturesque aesthetic to the literary terrain in a mix with traditional folklore and oral and children's literature. In *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France* (1820), Nodier recreated the marvellous

38. Fairchild, Hoxie Neale. "Medievalism of Wordsworth and Coleridge", *The Romantic Quest*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931: 273.

39. "The sentiment saves and redeems Wordsworth when it is not false; but no-one has taken the systematic prosaism, not of diction, but of matter, to greater folly and excesses. Not only was he the poet of the rustics and the children, endeavouring to imitate even their awkward babbling, but also the poet of the stupid, the idiots, of the damaged and the beggar. And all this he did from great moral heights, but in a kind of rhyming prose, that eventually becomes intolerable due to its sterile notation of trifles with no characteristic value" (Menéndez, Manuel. *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España*. Madrid: Pérez Dubrull, 1883-1889; Menéndez, Manuel. *Obras completas*. Madrid: Fundación I. Larramendi, 2009: IV, 359).

40. "The rare cases that are found next to the road, rustic and ugly, have a suspicious air. It is hard for me to see the idyll in the mountain, and what I find everywhere is more misery, narrowness and the half hidden air -a clandestine, merely allusive, confusing, inextricable air" (Pla, Josep. "Cartes de lluny (1921-1925)", *El nord. Obra completa*. Barcelona: Destino, 1967: V, 27).

41. *El nostre desmenjament col·lectiu ens té lligats a les formes més baixes i miserables del pintoresc que es poden arribar a imaginar*, Pla, Josep. "Cartes de lluny...": V, 276.



medieval mythology dressed up in Scottish inspiration. There are fairies and elves (the *lutins*) as members of a hybrid genre, half way between the chivalrous novel and the fairytale. The elf is the symbol of the innocent Golden Age and infancy, with which they harked back to the traditional, irrational and superstitious cultures as an antidote to the technical, scientific and rational materialism of the moment.

Despite its critics,<sup>42</sup> the defence of the popular and craftsmanship of the picturesque had very important consequences for the development of modern art. Prior to the avant-garde, the first to defend an irregular and badly-done aesthetic were the picturesque artists and the critics who backed them. At the same time, the picturesque spirit laid the foundations for the pillars of contemporary thought and art, advocating variety, surprise and a certain tendency towards confusion, as a principle with much more life than the cold order of the neoclassic, as Price stated in his romantic apology for the irregular, "The intricacy in the disposition, and variety in the forms, the tints, and the lights and shadows of objects, are the great characteristics of picturesque scenery."<sup>43</sup> The essayist concluded that the Gothic was more picturesque than Greek art, however beautiful the latter might be.

The fascination that popular art exercised went well beyond the reasonable limits. Many historians and intellectuals (F. A. Wolf, A. W. Schlegel, M. Menéndez Pelayo, etc.) convinced themselves that the ancient and medieval literature should not be interpreted as cultured discourses (as argued nowadays) but rather as popular products, given the enormous weight of the oral tradition. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Provençal poetry, the *Cantar de Mio Cid* and so many others became collective, anonymous, crude and spontaneous products. Their imperfections were outweighed by their "innocence" and "freshness".

#### 4. Romantic nationalist medievalism

One of the most important functions of medieval references in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was nationalist. Popular and epic poetry were its workhorses. This is visible in Germany and Ireland, where underlying Germanic or Celtic substrates (heroic or idyllic)<sup>44</sup> dating from before the Romanisation-Latinisation were sought out. Patriotism was conceived of as a natural sentiment that brought the men of the present together with their ancestors, while it is currently seen as a voluntary

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42. Among the detractors of the touristic picturesque as a primitive form, we can cite the ironic writer Thomas Bernhard: "The Viennese convince the people of Burgenland that Burgenland is a very nice region, because the Viennese are enchanted with the filth of Burgenland and the stupidity of Burgenland, because they consider that filth of Burgenland and that stupidity of Burgenland 'romantic'." (Bernhard Thomas. *Alte Meister: Komödie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985: 14).

43. Price, Uvedale. *Essay on the Picturesque as compared with the sublime and the beautiful...*: 17.

44. Leersen, Joseph. *Remembrance and imagination: patterns in the historical and literary representation of Ireland in the nineteenth century*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1996.



and ideological thought;<sup>45</sup> that does not arise spontaneously, but rather is made. In Catalonia, which reclaimed Catalanism from before the Hispanicization of the Catholic Monarchs in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the Crown of Aragon was unified with the Castilian nobility. Although the 19<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance opted for a sentimental, moderate and pactist patriotism, it exerted a firm and notable pressure in favour of Catalan culture. Despite that, current historians disagree over its political value. I will give but one example: two very different interpretations of its medieval evocations. For ones, the Middle Ages were a golden age of Catalan literature, the model spurred on the cultural revival of the *Renaixença* beginning with the Ateneu and other institutions. The role of the intellectuals in this reconstruction was, as Jordi Casassas states,<sup>46</sup> fundamental. Other historians, such as Michonneau or Josep Maria Fradera<sup>47</sup>, interpret it differently. In their opinion, 19<sup>th</sup> century Catalan medievalism did not long for a long-lost Catalan homeland, but rather a Catalanised Spain that has never been possible; a reiteratedly failed (political and economic) marriage.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one way to evoke the lost national past was through nostalgic popular ballads (table 6). Thomas Percy's collection of ballads (*Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) had a significant influence on literature. Among others, it inspired the famous *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Herder proposed collecting similar material in Germany, as did Walter Scott (*Minstrels of the Scottish border*, 1803). The most famous poetic collection of popular airs is that of Ossian. As many undoubtedly already know, in 1761, James Macpherson (1736-1796) presented a supposed translation into English of an unknown 2<sup>nd</sup> century Scottish poet by the name of Ossian.<sup>48</sup> This was no translation of medieval poems but rather texts that Macpherson had just written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in medieval style, which emphasised the symbiosis between Romanticism and the nation and soul of the people. Macpherson wrote his poems basing them on the songs of the Gaelic bards who played the Gaelic harp. His most famous poems are "Carthon", "Temora" and especially "Fingal" (an epic poem in six books). Macpherson managed to have the prologue written by Hugh Blair, the most renowned 18<sup>th</sup> century intellectual in Scotland, and together they presented "Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected

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45. Beller, Manfred; Leersen, Joseph. *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey*. Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2007; Michonneau, Stéphane. *Barcelona: memòria i identitat: monuments, commemoracions i mites*. Vic: Eumo-Universitat de Vic, 2002; Nieto, José Manuel. *Medievo constitucional: historia y mito político en los orígenes de la España contemporánea (ca. 1750-1814)*. Madrid: Akal, 2007; Thiesse, Anne-Marie. *La Création des identités nationales...*

46. Casassas, Jordi. *Entre Escil·la i Caribdis: el catalanisme i la Catalunya conservadora de la segona meitat del segle XIX*. Barcelona: La Magrana, 1990.

47. Michonneau, Stéphane. *Barcelona: memòria i identitat...*; Fradera, Josep Maria. *Cultura nacional en una sociedad dividida; Cataluña 1838-1868*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003.

48. *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books, together with Several Other Poems composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal, translated from the Gaelic Language*, ed. James Macpherson. Dublin: Richard Fitzsimons, 1762. Years later, Macpherson published *Temora* (Macpherson, James. *Temora*. London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1763) and *The Works of Ossian* (Macpherson, James. *The Works of Ossian*. London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1765), although he apparently only translated and edited them.



in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language" in 1790. Before it was discovered that the beautiful Celtic epic of Ossian was false, it was very widely admired, and not only in Scotland. The Ossianic current spread all over Europe. The poets of the time (such as Herder, Klopstock and Schiller) imitated its folkloric and epic style and the rare beauty of its glorious and misty past. Goethe liked Ossian so much that he translated it into German, despite his reticence about the medieval abuse of his century. Leopardi talked fervently about it in the *Zibaldone* (1820). The name Oscar (Ossian's son), a name that nowadays seems very traditionally Swedish, became all the rage among the Swedish nobility. The majority of the alleged traditions (Our catholic Ladies, dances, customs, etc.) were very recent. Most arose during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Continuing with the Ossianic fashion, Napoleon took his copy of "Ocean" (as he called it) with him on campaigns. And, among other details of its enormous reception, Abate Marchena (1768-1821) translated it into Castilian. After patriotic disputes (whether Ossian had been Irish or Scottish), doubts about his authenticity grew. Samuel Johnson travelled to Scotland to consult the originals, and on not finding these, accused Macpherson of plagiarism. The empiricist philosopher and Scottish nationalist David Hume also ended up withdrawing his support for Macpherson, telling him, "Show us the originals and we will believe you". However, the originals, sadly, did not appear.

From the medieval Scottish pastiche, we move to 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany. The medieval nationalist nostalgia was also channelled through popular channels, beginning with the collections of songs, tales and legends by Brentano and von Archim (*The Boy's Magic Horn / Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, 1806) that inspired Mahler's *Lieds*. The *Children's and Household Tales (Kinder-und-Hausmärchen 1822-1912)* collection by the brothers Grimm should also be mentioned, as should Herder's *The Voices of Peoples in Song* (1779), where Herder compiled popular songs from various countries for nationalistic ends. Herder, a student of the Bible, minted the term *Volkspoesie*, meaning that which expresses the national identity. Biblical poetry, understood as archaic Hebrew poetry, expressed the character of the Jewish nation. Herder's ethno-literary theory was applicable to the birth of any nation, "His theory implied that the original poetries of other nations has just as much relevance for their respective nations, be they Greek, Roman, Celtic or Slavic, because they lead back to the birth of that nation, just as Hebrew poetry led back to the birth of humanity."<sup>49</sup>

The first folkloric fieldwork served to preserve the cultural and linguistic heritage. Apart from collecting tales and poems, Herder and von Humboldt also gathered dialectal forms. In Catalonia, Marià Aguiló<sup>50</sup> also studied this aspect in this same epoch. From the nationalist viewpoint, dialectology serves to remember and preserve popular expressions that have fallen into disuse but have survived in the

49. Oergel, Maike. *The Return of King Arthur and the Nibelungen. National Myth in Nineteenth-Century English and German Literature*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998: 34.

50. The poet and folklorist Marià Aguiló published the following works on popular literary research: *Cançoneres de les obretes en nostra llengua materna més divulgades durant los segles XIV, XV e XVI* (1873) and *Romancer popular de la terra catalana* (1893), which includes the *Cançons feudals cavalleresques*.



rural world, and that represent the origins of the language. In the case of German, which is so dialectalised, as well building the history of a common language, there was a political aim. This was to create a lingua franca that identified the inhabitants of the new German confederation over the dialects. Remember that before the process of unification between 1815 and 1871, there were over three hundred independent German states. In the same way that Catholicism in Scotland had a patriotic reading that separated it from British Protestantism, in the German confederation, the link between language and nation was also reinforced by religion. The commemoration of the third centenary of the translation of Luther's Bible into German had an undoubtedly nationalist anti-French component at the festival of Wartburg in 1817. This is a name that the reader would do well to associate with Wagner. The subtitle of his opera *Tannhäuser* (1845) is "Minstrels' Contest at Wartburg Castle", a mythical place that reinforced the medieval nationalist link. At the same time, Herder and von Humboldt<sup>51</sup> reflected on the relations between language and nation<sup>52</sup> and founded ethno-linguistics,<sup>53</sup> whose essence was the belief that each language had a particular vision of the world (a *Denkungsart* or *Weltanschauung*). This linguistic and cultural personality would have come into being in the Middle Ages just when the vernaculars were born, in such a way that, according to Herder, the language would have become a bastion: the storehouse of a people's tradition and history transmitted down through the generations. As Humboldt states, and it is part of the dogma for nationalists, the language is a nation's spirit. Some nations, despite having existed for centuries (exaggerating) had awoken and become aware of what they were, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Johann Gottlieb Fichte demanded that all schooling be done in German, and that Latin and the Christian culture, which were foreign cultures, be dethroned so the German nation could recover its Germanic character and the lifeblood of its half-dead language in its own fatherland, "because the language shapes men more than men shape the language".<sup>54</sup>

Ethno-linguistic thought also flourished in 19<sup>th</sup> century Catalonia with similar approaches. The works of Torras i Bages, *La tradició catalana* (1892);<sup>55</sup> Joan Cortada,

51. von Humboldt, Wilhelm. "Sobre l'origen de les formes gramaticals i sobre la seva influència en el desenvolupament de les idees", (1822-23), *Brief an M. Abel-Rémusat über die Natur grammatischer Formen im Allgemeinen und über den Geist der chinesischen Sprache im Besonderen*. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1979.

52. Morton, Michael M. "Herder and the Poetics of Thought. Unity and Diversity", *On Diligence in Several Learned Languages*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989.

53. Sapir and Whorf were among those who continued the 19<sup>th</sup> century ethno-linguistic theories into the 20<sup>th</sup>. Sapir, Edward. *Language. An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1921; Whorf, Benjamin Lee. "Science and Linguistics, (1940)". *Language, Thought and Reality*. Cambridge (Mass.): MIT, 1956.

54. Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. "De la esencia de la nueva educación", *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1807). *Discursos a la nación alemana*. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977: IV, 126.

55. "Among all social ties, except for Religion, the language is the one that binds most tightly. (...) A people's language is the demonstration and splendour of its substance, the image of its figure, and he who knows a language, knows the people who speak it, and once the language disappears, the people also fades away, or at least is substantially changed". *D'entre tots els vincles socials, treta la Religió, la llengua és el que estrena més fort. (...) La llengua d'un poble és la manifestació i esplendor de sa substància, la imatge de sa figura, i qui coneix una llengua coneix el poble que la parla, i desapareguda la llengua, queda també esvaït el poble,*



*Catalunya i els catalans* (1859-64); and Valentí Almirall, *Lo catalanisme* (1886) are evidence of this. As its name indicates, the *Renaixença* movement aimed to awaken the slumbering Catalan nation and culture and recover its medieval splendour: Lull, the troubadours, Bernat Metge, the chroniclers, *Tirant lo Blanc*, etc. A series of chivalrous poetry competitions began in 1859. These were the *Jocs Florals* (Floral Games) whose three themes were Homeland, Faith and Love. The ideological weight (nationalist and Catholic) was prominent. The patriotic nostalgia evoked the language, the literature and medieval Catalonia before its unification with the Crown of Castile. Romanesque art, understood as an expression of the austere Catalan character, was added to this. When medievalism is added regionalism (following the 19<sup>th</sup> century terminology that has nowadays become anti-nationalist), the sum tends to be reactionary. This was the case of the folklorist and dialectologist Monsignor Alcover and Bishop Torras i Bages and his endogamic defence of Catalan traditionalism<sup>56</sup> against progress and internationalism:

*Cercar sistemes forans, emmanllevar teories forasteres, enamorar-se d'idees novelles, i fer de tot això la base social, és cosa frèvola, contrària a l'escola regionalista i a la il·lustració internacional.*<sup>57</sup>

Since the Renaissance, the Catalanists have revered their homeland born in the Middle Ages and which they see as essentially similar to the modern country. As if it were an epic narrative, the pragmatic and moderate character of the people is balanced by the courage of their monarchs when defending their territory. One of the most popular medieval myths of Catalan nationalism is that of Saint George, although he was neither Catalan nor medieval. However, in Catalonia, the Roman knight has been medievalised and Catalanised although the great hero who fights the dragon is revered all over Europe. Nationalism needs myths for the people to adore; and if the myths lack their own personality, this must be invented and presented as unique and exclusive however false they are. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, no great care was taken and inventing traditions, from kilts to the heroes of the Spanish Reconquest. A paradigmatic case is the legend of Wilfred the Hairy.<sup>58</sup> In this case, compared with St George, he is less mythologised because he was based on a 9<sup>th</sup> century Catalan historical figure. However, his role in the founding of the country was exaggerated from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on. Such writers as Verdager, Pitarra or Víctor Balaguer magnified his figure and published apocryphal anecdotes (like that of his

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*o almenys substancialment canviat.* Torras, Josep. *La tradició catalana*. Barcelona: Giró, 1892; Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1981: 42-43.

56. Despite this, Torras Bages considered the medieval philosopher Ramon Lull and his "Cyclopians forms" as an exception to the wise and discreet Catalan national character.

57. Seeking foreign systems, borrowing external theories, becoming enamoured with novel ideas, and building the social base on this, is frivolous, contrary to the regionalist school and the international Enlightenment. Torras, Josep. *La tradició catalana...*: 403.

58. The first written evidence of Wilfred the Hairy appears in the *Gesta Comitum Barchinonensium* (1180) from Ripoll Monastery to praise the origins of the House of Aragon. Coll, Miquel. *Guifré el pelós en la historiografia i en la llegenda*. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1990.



four bloody fingers drawing the four red bars of the *senyera*, the Catalan flag).<sup>59</sup> In homage to him in 1982, the bishop of Vic stated “Count Wilfred made an eminent contribution to forging Catalonia, which, since then, has had common ideals and a communal sentiment”.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Catalan nationalist medievalism is linked to the religion. Wilfred was presented as the founder of monasteries and the creator of Catalan resettlement against the Muslims. This triple sentiment (medieval, Catalan and Catholic) was the standard for many Catalan monasteries from Montserrat to Ripoll.

As mentioned above, one of the popular and nationalistic ways to approach the Middle Ages was to rediscover the traditional. This interest was very much alive in Catalonia<sup>61</sup> and all those countries and governments with patriotic feelings (and who does not have these?), beginning with Joan Amades and going through to the regional dances and costumes promoted by the Feminine Section of Franco's regime, not to mention the very medieval Spanish decoration of the government-run Parador Nacional hotels.<sup>62</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Volkslied* fed German identity. The Catalan and Occitanian literature of the Renaissance filled up with the picturesque poetry of the Floral Games (Francesc Bartrina, Mistral,<sup>63</sup> Rubio and Ors). Then, the

59. The legend of the four bars was not invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however popular it was then. We have knowledge of this dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the *Crónica general de España* (1554) by Antoni Beuter.

60. Masnou, Ramon. “Pregària”, *Homenatge a Guifré el Pelós, repoblador de la vall i fundador del monestir*. Girona: Sant Joan de les Abadesses, 1982.

61. Prats, Llorenç. *El mite de la tradició popular. Els orígens de l'interès per la cultura tradicional a la Catalunya del segle XIX*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1988.

62. An article on decoration in the Francoist publication “Arriba” in the 1950s encouraged a return to medieval furniture as much more patriotic than international style furniture: “It is a shame that in our urban homes that the use of the chest has been replaced by furniture with no artistic tradition, of modernist taste and, thus, of little value and permanence, while the chest is a stylish piece with [a] clear and defined function. The ideal, however, would be an old chest, with the popular Basque woodcuts, the Levantine arches, the studded leathers and cloths of the South. The modest pinewood chest may be varied with a decorative goatskin, fixed with golden studs, or go back to our models of quadrooms, of Mudejar influence, so Spanish, from which we can take original themes. This way we will obtain furniture with ties to our history”. *Es lástima que en nuestros hogares urbanos se haya desplazado el uso del arcón y se utilicen muebles sin tradición artística, de gusto modernista y, por tanto, de escaso valor y permanencia, mientras que el arcón es un mueble de estilo y función clara y definidos. El ideal, con todo, sería un arca antigua, con las populares tallas vascas, las arquerías levantinas, los cueros y telas claveteadas del Mediodía. También el arcón de modesta madera de pino podrá variarse con una decorativa piel de cabra, claveteada con tachuelas doradas, o bien volver sobre nuestros modelos de cuarterones, de influencia mudéjar, tan españoles, de donde podremos sacar temas originales. Conseguiremos de esta manera muebles con entronque en nuestra historia.* (Feduchi, Luís M. *La casa por dentro*. Madrid: Aguado, 1952: 24-25).

63. de Caluwé, Jacques. *Le moyen âge littéraire occitan dans l'oeuvre de Frédéric Mistral*. Paris: Nizet, 1974. The *Mirèio* (1859) by Mistral is not original for the typical love story with class differences but rather for the language it is written in, the language of the troubadours. The work is a pro-Occitanist. According to J. Gourc, the medieval material includes, 1. Allusions to historical events (the Albigensian Crusade, court of King René). 2. Courts of love, Floral Games, worship of Clemence Isaure. 3. Medieval poetic forms: sirvants, song, *tençó* (a kind of duel between troubadours), *pastorella*, ballad. 4. Adaptations of lives of troubadours (Jaufre Rodet, Peire Vidal, the story of Guillem de Cabestany's heart being eaten related by Boccaccio, etc.). 5. Quotes of verses by troubadours from the *Parnasse occitanien* and their 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century disseminators like Sainte-Palaye or Sismondi. (Gourc, Jacques. “La renaissance félibréenne”, *La*



music of Swiss shepherds or *ranz de vaches*, which was first collected in the 19<sup>th</sup>, fed the Helvetic nationalism of *William Tell* (1804) by Schiller, who, remember, was also of humble origins.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, composers elevated these tunes to the status of classical music for piano through the *Lieds*, where the simplicity of the themes mixed with the complexity of the sound of the sopranos. From Russia to the Iberian Peninsula, musicians echoed popular melodies in a decorative way and with patriotic intentions. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was full of traditional colourist tones, from the Panslavic claims (Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Glinka, Stravinsky) to the localism of the Zarzuela in Madrid (Barbieri, Chapí, Chueca, Tomas Bretón).

In Menéndez Pidal's opinion, Catalan literature reappeared with strength and character in the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to oral literature. This reductionism of Catalan literature to the popular refers us to the picturesque theory described above (note the symbol of the humble bread yeast in the following quote). Thus, Menéndez Pidal looked down on Catalan literature, which not only stands out for the popular registers but also the classical: "Popular poetry saved Catalan literature. (...) Without this beneficial yeast the resurgent poetry would have wandered off down the easy path of imitation of the French and Castilian romantics."<sup>64</sup> This popular strategy of devaluation was also applied to *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605); Cervantes was an *ingenio lego*, more crude than refined, whose writing imitating romances and borrowing phrases from the proverbs. This historicist thesis nowadays is discredited as the reputation of Cervantes has grown. However, Lázaro Carreter continued to defend the same in the 1998 edition, "Cervantes did not leave the scope of the Romancer when he went from the heroic to the chivalrous or the pastoral."<sup>65</sup> According to this popular thesis, *Don Quijote* was a paradigm of popular medieval Spanish traditionalism, and not the first modern European novel.

Moving on to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Nazis manipulated popular German songs for propagandistic purposes to praise the people and make them favourable to their ideology, exaggerating a communion with the citizens. The National-Socialist youth never stopped singing; the euphoria of the victor and love of the fatherland fed their patriotic exaltation. Medieval festivals were organised with girls dressed up as Valkyries, as in 1937 in Munich with over five thousand people in period costume and where the aim was to resuscitate "two thousand years of German culture".<sup>66</sup>

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*fabrique du Moyen Âge au XIX. Représentations du Moyen Âge dans la culture et la littérature françaises du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Simone Bernard-Griffiths, Pierre Claudes, Bertrand Vibert, eds. Paris: Champion, 2006: 984). *La fabrique...* is another major erudite work about this subject.

64. *La poesia popular salvó a la literatura catalana. (...) Sin esta benéfica levadura la renaciente poesía se hubiera extraviado por los fáciles senderos de la imitación de los románticos franceses y castellanos*. Manuel Menéndez Pidal (1908) cited by: Alsina, Josep Maria. *El tradicionalismo filosófico en España. Su génesis en la generación romántica catalana*. Barcelona: Promociones Publicaciones Universitarias, 1985: 22.

65. *Cervantes no sale del ámbito del Romancero cuando pasa de lo heroico a lo caballeresco o a lo pastoril*. Lázaro, Fernando. "Estudio preliminar", de Cervantes, Miguel. *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605). Madrid: Crítica, 1998: 25.

66. Michaud, Éric. "1933: El triomf de Richard Wagner, la destrucció de la política", *La música i el III Reich. De Bayreuth a Terezin*. Paris: Cité de la Musique, 2004; Barcelona: Fundació Caixa Catalunya, 2007: 66.



Carl Off's choral music<sup>67</sup> also had this role. The Nazis looked back to romanticism<sup>68</sup> and by extension, to medievalism. They promoted picturesque painting over the degenerate art of the avant-garde. The peasant aesthetics of the Arian race came within the current called *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Land). Wagner was enthroned and the scenography of his operas became more medieval than ever, while abstract and avant-garde staging proposals were rejected. In 1943, the set designer Ludwig Sievert, who was close to the Regime, chose a medieval village as the stage for Wagner's *Mastersingers of Nuremberg* (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, 1868), although the work is set in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As the aim was to project Wagner as a great patriot and invent a German nation that was as old as possible, the period the work was set in was manipulated to associate Hitler with Wagner's heroes,<sup>69</sup> nazism with romanticism; and romanticism with the pretended medieval origins of Germanism. Further stretching the machine, Beethoven was also manipulated to make him medieval, although he clearly was not. Thus, in 1938, another stage designer close to the III Reich, Edward Suhr, manipulated Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* (1805), and instead of respecting the historical dating that appears in the *libretto*, he changed the 18<sup>th</sup> century imagined by Beethoven for an undefined medieval century, filling the stage with heroes and castles. I do not believe that, on hearing the call for freedom by the famous choir of prisoners, the audience in 1938 thought about the Jews. After all, freedom can also be interpreted from a nationalist and victimist point of view as if the Germans had been an oppressed people (by the French, etc.) who finally had their say.

The links between Hitlerian nationalism and a badly understood medievalism go beyond this. Hitler dreamed about dying listening to Wagner's Death of Isolde. Among other desires that he was unable to fulfil, there was also the implantation of Gothic script, although for less pure and literary interests than those of the brothers Grimm, who had also defended it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The folklorism of the brothers Grimm (not in vain were they linguists and quickly Indo-Europeanists), that

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67. In 2009, Carles Padrissa staged *Carmina Burana*. It is surprising that an avant-garde theatre company like La Fura dels Baus should choose a piece that is so emblematic of Nazism. I am unaware of whether it was an attempt to strip the work of its ideology. The only objective data I have are some interviews and the critics in the press, who remained silent about the historical context in which Carl Off's piece appeared.

68. Arthur Oncken Lovejoy analysed the concept of romantic as a prefiguration of the Nazi ideology; and observed that the German romantics of the 1790's explained three of the ideas that would feed National-Socialism: *Ganze* (the Whole ≠ enlightened individualism); *Streben* (Nietzsche's Will to Power and his Superman); and *Eigentümlichkeit* (defence of diversity, of nationalism ≠ universal enlightened reason). Without denying this, we should emphasise that we cannot blame the romantic poets and philosophers for the barbarities of the Nazis and we must bear in mind that Lovejoy —an admirable intellectual— wrote this article during the Second World War when he was fighting against the diabolical Hitlerism. (Lovejoy, Arthur O. "The meaning of romanticism for the historian of ideas". *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 2 (1941): 3).

69. Wagner's *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* was chosen to conclude the solemn inauguration of the Third Reich in Potsdam on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1933 and celebrate the National-Socialist victory. As Gerhard Splitt mentions, its main purpose was to identify Hitler with Hans Sachs, the Wagnerian hero, and portray him as he who had forged the new Germany. (Splitt, Gerhard. "Hitler i la música", *La música i el III Reich*...).



reclaimed the Gothic monastic script (the *Fraktur*), was transformed into belligerence in Nazi hands. Defence of the Gothic script became a statement of the Germanic, the *germanische Stammart*, the Teutonic calligraphy. Unfortunately, in their ignorance they failed to realise that the Latin manuscripts of the “enemies” were also written in Gothic. The defence of this pseudo-medieval calligraphy was also a rejection of the internationalist avant-garde of the Bauhaus, whose revolutionary typography was distinguished by its clear letters, like the Universal font. To the long list of those persecuted by the Nazis (Jews, gypsies, the avant-garde, jazz musicians, etc.) we must add modern typefaces like Tschichold. If you will allow me to include two calligraphic anecdotes in such a serious theme as this, it is worth mentioning that, after having exalted the *Fraktur* as the German calligraphy *par excellence*, the Nazis disavowed it when they realised that Gutenberg, the Jewish printer, had claimed it. Moreover, in the midst of the Second World War, it was not easy for pilots to land on aerodromes labelled in Gothic letters.

Nineteenth-century Russian nationalism also looked back to the Middle Ages to mix popular and heroic elements. As well as recovering tales and songs as folklorists, like Aleksandr Afanasyev did, art and literature echoed the folkloric fashion, from Tolstoy's *Ivan the Fool* (1886) to the folkloric costume of Bilbin's characters. In Vasnetsov's paintings (*Bogatyr*s or *Three Heroes*, 1898; *A Knight at the Crossroads*, 1881), both the epic and the popular figures (in example: Sleeping Beauty) symbolised the desire to awaken the slumbering Russian giant.<sup>70</sup> Vasnetsov collected old Russian costumes and objects and was so traditionalist that he supped by candlelight like in earlier centuries. Nicholas Roerich was also a *retro* romantic artist who explored the roots of the Russian soul and wished to transport the spectator poetically to the past. His works show old musicians as a symbol of the past, mystics, heroes, maidens and dragons living together in harmony. Also, Roerich painted in a primitive style in empathy with medieval aesthetic. The 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectual Russia adopted the Slavic idea; the intellectuals were patriots and defenders of *Mother Russia* (“they kneel mystically before the Russian sheepskin”, as Turgenyev said in 1862) and enthused about ethnographic poetry. In Russian, the same word (*narod*) means people and nation. The Russian intellectual minority, of Rousseauian tendency, became nationalist, against the western culture (the Greek-Latin classics, the Roman Church, scholasticism, the Renaissance, the Reform, science, rationalist individualism) that had ignored the Slavic world. This anti-western Slavism promoted spirituality and conservatism, two attitudes that tend to go together, although not always. Writers like Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy defended a spiritualist messianism against European materialism, but not tyranny. Despite these illustrious exceptions, the Pan-Slavic nationalists tended towards authoritarianism, while the westernising Russians sympathised with liberalism and progress, first enlightened and later Marxist. What is curious, however, is that this pan-Slavic nationalism, built on sighs and legends, which was imaginary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like the medieval

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70. *Russian Legends, folk tales and fairy tales*, eds. David Jackson, Patty Wageman. Groningen: Groninger Museum, 2008.



vessels in Roerich's *Guests from Overseas* (1901), surprisingly was put into practice in the Russian civil war that pitted the Soviet revolutionaries against the White Russians. One dreamed of the revolution of the proletariat and the others, of the ancient warrior aristocracy.

Regarding French nationalism, we could cite the literary portrayals of Napoleon as a new Charlemagne or Delacroix's painting of *King John at the battle of Poitiers* (1830) among others. The historical scene refers us to the Hundred Years' War. The choice of this battle is significant. Among the innumerable possibilities for recreating the medieval history of France, Delacroix chose a defeat. The artist, imbibed with the tastes of the epoch, preferred to recreate the *pathos* of the nostalgia more than triumphal trumpets. King John II is more than a historical king, he is an exaggeratedly good literaturised hero (the king stands out for the whiteness of his garb and his horse confronting the enemy army of the Black Prince painted darkly) who fights exaggeratedly alone and died as a martyr in an English prison. The symbol of Joan of Arc also went beyond the historical limits to enter the literary terrain. Although she lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the artistic and popular imagery dressed her in medieval armour. Joan of Arc became a symbol of the defeated motherland. Again, patriotic exaltation was sought through a defeat to provoke rage and melodrama. Moreover, the tastes of the age were combined: a weakness for the naive, visionaries, women and innocent victims. In 1909, the Church withdrew its condemnation of Joan of Arc as a heretic and sanctified her as a martyr. The pressure of popular fervour during the 19<sup>th</sup> century mythologizing Joan of Arc, of the artists extolling her (Schiller, Verdi, Gounod, Tchaikovsky, Liszt, Dumas, Péguy, etc.) and the French Republic, overwhelmed Rome. There can be nothing more romantic than the fall and glorious resurrection of a character.

Refuting the case that nationalism is somehow restricted to small countries and minority languages, we could cite the case of Tennyson, a Victorian poet and English patriot. In "Idylls of the King" (1885) with the excuse of evoking King Arthur, he wrote a long ode to the British monarchy. It is difficult to understand how a Celtic king could be an ancestor of the English royalty. However, this political denaturalisation came about in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The pagan Celtic Arthur was transformed into British and Christian. In an 1848 talk in Queen's College, Charles Kingsley let slip that King Arthur "although originally Celtic" had been "adopted and naturalised by the Saxon".<sup>71</sup>

We could end up by mentioning the popular and medieval substrate of 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish nationalism, because there are patriotisms of nations both large and small, as we have seen with Russia, France, England and Germany. Given that all monarchies wanted to legitimate themselves, they resorted to all kinds of symbolic and propagandistic strategies to be defended and venerated, as Nieto Soria shows.<sup>72</sup> In the case of Spain, I have cited the Franco regime's defence of regional dances and the patriotic-medieval decoration of its finest hotels. I will mention one example

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71. Oergel, Maike. *The Return of King Arthur and the Nibelungen...*: 206.

72. Nieto, José Manuel. *Medievo constitucional: historia y mito político...*



from the 19<sup>th</sup> century: that of historical painting at the national Exhibitions of Fine Arts where artists of the moment competed. Since 1856, the patriotic themes of the contest were the Catholic Monarchs, Columbus, Cardinal Cisneros, the victory in Granada and the reconquest from the Moors. The painters, patriots or not, knowing that the State purchased that kind of painting, were quick to paint them as large as their patrons wanted. Most painters impregnated them with a nationalism around Imperial Spain that harked back to its medieval origins and, more specifically, to the Catholic Monarchs, as in *Queen Isabel "la Católica" dictating her last Will and Testament* (1864) by Eduardo Rosales and *The Capitulation of Granada* (1882) by Francisco Pradilla.

The patriotic search for the medieval origins not only served the conservative traditionalism (in example: Michaud, the historian of the Crusades) but also, occasionally, the progressive spirit. Although those of democratic tendency were fewer in number, they included such influential historians and intellectuals as Montesquieu and A. Thierry. The latter considered that the idea of liberty so deeply rooted in the French nation was born in the Middle Ages. Montesquieu liked the political Middle Ages, but not Gothic art at all (as we saw at the beginning of this article), which shows the complexity of the medieval visions in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that could be as much delightful as abhorred. Montesquieu admired the Middle Ages because the kings' powers were not so absolute as they had become in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but were rather balanced by the power of the nobles. In his opinion, the Gothic Frankish government represented a system where "the civil liberty of the people, the prerogatives of the nobility & clergy, & the power of the kings found itself in such concert, that I do not believe that there has ever been on earth a government as well tempered..."<sup>73</sup>

## 5. Final reflection

Alas, the originals of Ossian never appeared and, in the end, the truth came out: that the romantics liked Ossian so much not because he was medieval (which he was not) but rather because he was romantic. This is the most flagrant case of an invented Middle Ages that enamoured the artists of the time and transported them not to the past, but to a disguise of the past. The medieval tone of romantic art and literature is a perfume, not a document; a fantastic, folkloric and nationalist fragrance that does not take us back to history, but instead to an invented history.

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73. Montesquieu [Secondat, Charles-Louis. De, baron de]. "Chapter VIII", *The Spirit of the Laws*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1989:167.

