



IDEOLOGY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

APPROACHES FROM
SOUTHWESTERN EUROPE

Edited by
FLOCEL SABATÉ

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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	ix
Foreword	xi
Introduction. Ideology in the Middle Ages FLOCEL SABATÉ	1

PART ONE: IDEOLOGY — A DEFINITION OF POWER

Chapter 1. Ideology and Social Order PAUL FREEDMAN	39
Chapter 2. <i>Auctoritas, potestas</i> : Concepts of Power in Medieval Spain ADELINE RUCQUOI	51
Chapter 3. Kingship in Isidore of Seville's Historical Work: A Political Interpretation of the Two Versions SAMUELE SACCHI	73
Chapter 4. The Quest for Ideology in Carolingian Times: Ecclesiological Patterns in the Latin West from the Eighth to the Early Tenth Centuries ALFONSO M. HERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ	91
Chapter 5. Spiritual and Temporal Power in Raymond Llull's <i>Arbor scientiae</i> CHIARA MELATINI	105

**PART TWO:
IDEOLOGY — THE MANAGEMENT OF POWER**

Chapter 6. <i>Regnum Gothorum</i> and <i>regnum Hispaniae</i> in Medieval Spanish Christian Chronicles: Continuation, End, or Translation in their Accounts of the Arab Conquest IVÁN PÉREZ MARINAS	127
Chapter 7. The Duel in Medieval Western Mentality LUIS ROJAS DONAT	175
Chapter 8. Royal Power and the Episcopacy: Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Relics from Oviedo Cathedral RAQUEL ALONSO ÁLVAREZ	203
Chapter 9. Chivalric Ideology in the Late Twelfth-Century <i>Chanson d'Aspremont</i> DOMINIQUE BARTHÉLEMY	235
Chapter 10. Adoration of the Magi and Authority of the Medieval King: An Ambiguous Correlation DOINA ELENA CRACIUN	243
Chapter 11. Ideology and Civic Ideal in French and German Cities in the Late Middle Ages GISELA NAEGLE	261
Chapter 12. Economy and Religion in Late Medieval Italy: Markets in the Christian City GIACOMO TODESCHINI	287

**PART THREE:
IDEOLOGY IN THE MIND**

- Chapter 13. The Relationship between Mentality and Ideology:
Acculturation and Christianization in Galicia, 500–1100
JUAN COIRA POCIÑA299
- Chapter 14. The Foundation of the Franciscan Friary of the Sant Esperit, Valencia:
Rule, Economy, and Royal Power in the Fifteenth-Century Crown of Aragon
CHIARA MANCINELLI321
- Chapter 15. Metamorphosis of the Green Man
and the Wild Man in Portuguese Medieval Art
JOANA FILIPA FONSECA ANTUNES.....333
- Chapter 16. Military Models for Nobles in Zurara’s Northern African Chronicles
ANDRÉ LUIZ BERTOLI.....359
- Chapter 17. Lorenzo the Magnificent:
From Pseudo-Dynastic Polity to the Ottoman Model
SOPHIE SALVIATI.....379
- Chapter 18. Political Ideology and Legal Identity: The Reform of
Juridical Deliberation in Aragon in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries
MARTINE CHARAGEAT.....391

**PART FOUR:
THE MIDDLE AGES AS IDEOLOGY IN LATER ERAS**

- Chapter 19. The Middle Ages: Support for a Counter-Revolutionary
and Reactionary Ideology, 1830–1944
CHRISTIAN AMALVI413
- Chapter 20. The Middle Ages among Spanish Intellectuals
of the First Half of the Twentieth Century
ANTONIO DE MURCIA CONESA.....423

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 8.1: *Act of Opening the Holy Ark* (1075). Thirteenth-century copy. Oviedo, Archivo de la Catedral, serie B, folder 2, no. 9A. 209
- Figure 8.2: *Act of Opening the Holy Ark* (1075). Thirteenth-century copy. Oviedo, Archivo de la Catedral, serie B, folder 2, no. 9B. 210
- Figure 8.3: *Donation from Fernando I and Sancha to San Pelayo de Oviedo* (1053). Oviedo, Archivo del Monasterio de San Pelayo, Fondo documental de San Pelayo, file A, no. 3. 212
- Figure 8.4: *Donation from Alfonso VI to the Infanta Urraca* (1071). Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, CLERO–SECULAR–REGULAR, folder 959, no. 3. 213
- Figure 8.5: (left) Infanta Urraca Fernandez’s monogram (*Act of 1075, copy A*) and (right) Queen Urraca’s monogram. Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, CLERO–SECULAR–REGULAR, folder 1591, no. 17. 214
- Figure 8.6: Holy Ark, Holy Chamber in the Oviedo Cathedral. 215
- Figure 8.7: Alfonso II Worshipping the Holy Ark. Oviedo, Archivo de la Catedral, MS 1 (*Liber Testamentorum Ecclesiae Ouetensis*). 227
- Figure 10.1: Master of the “Morgan diptych,” *Adoration of the Magi*. Left wing of the diptych, ca. 1355. New York, The Morgan Library & Museum. 244
- Figure 10.2: Jaume Huguet, *Adoration of the Magi*. Part of an altarpiece, 1464–1465. Barcelona, Royal Palace, Chapel of Saint Agata. 245
- Figure 10.3: Façade of the Shrine of the Three Kings with Otto IV, ca. 1200. Köln, St. Peter’s Cathedral Choir. 250
- Figure 10.4: Master Theodoric, *Adoration of the Magi*. Fresco, ca. 1365, Karlštejn Castle, Czech Republic, Chapel of the Holy Cross, north-east window frame. 252

- Figure 10.5: Master of the Ortenberg Altarpiece, *Adoration of the Magi*.
Right wing of an altarpiece originally in Our Lady Church in
Ortenberg, 1420–1425. Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum. 254
- Figure 10.6: Jacquemart de Hesdin, *Adoration of the Magi*. Ca. 1385–1390.
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. lat. 18014, fol. 42v..... 255
- Figure 10.7: *Adoration of the Magi*. Fresco, ca. 1390, Libiř, Czech Republic,
Church of Saint James, choir, upper register of the north wall..... 256
- Figure 10.8: Hubertus van Eyck, *Adoration of the Magi*. Ca. 1417,
Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett. 257
- Figure 10.9: Lluís Borrassà, *Adoration of the Magi*. Part of an altarpiece
originally in the Santes Creus monastery, ca. 1411, Tarragona,
Saint Thecla Cathedral, Chapel of the Virgin of Montserrat. 258
- Figure 10.10: Master of Frankfurt, *Adoration of the Magi*. Ca. 1510–1515,
Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie. 259
- Figure 15.1: Dedication stone from the Church of Nossa Senhora
da Oliveira, 1401, Guimarães, Portugal (detail).
Museu de Alberto Sampaio, L5. 338
- Figure 15.2: Two Green Men from the Church of Santa Maria da Vitória,
fifteenth century. Batalha, Portugal. 344
- Figure 15.3: One of the African Green Men carved on the capitals of the
Church of S. João Baptista, sixteenth century, Tomar, Portugal..... 346
- Figure 15.4: Olivier de Gand and Jean d’Ypres, Wild Man at the altarpiece
of the Old Cathedral of Coimbra, 1498–1502, Coimbra, Sé Velha. 350
- Figure 15.5: Wild couple from the renovation of the rotunda.
Convent of Christ, sixteenth century, Tomar, Portugal. 351

THE MIDDLE AGES AMONG SPANISH INTELLECTUALS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ANTONIO DE MURCIA CONESA

INTERPRETING THE DIFFERENT ways Spanish intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century used the Middle Ages issue is a risky and selective task, not without some arbitrariness. The first of these regards the extent and intention of who we classify as “Spanish intellectuals” and which temporal boundaries are relevant for the history of thought. Indeed, if it is difficult to define what a European intellectual is (despite the important contributions of authors like François Dosse or Wolf Lepenies¹), it is much more difficult in the case of Hispanic thought, where the uses of the concept have had no founding myths like the Dreyfus case in France (whose influence dwarfs the scandal of the Process of Montjuïc) nor apostles as energetic as the Frenchman Julien Benda. The second aspect of arbitrariness consists in reducing the role of these intellectuals to a more or less homogeneous discourse, even though almost all of them contributed to the narrative of the “novel of Spain” (*novela de España*).² And finally, equally arbitrary would be to turn the Middle Ages into the core argument of that discourse.

Nonetheless, let us attempt to approach these concepts with these caveats in mind. Thus, notwithstanding its vagueness, the omnipresence of the term “intellectual” during the period covered confirms its role as a weapon in the battles of culture and war. A weapon which, like all rhetorical devices, has a double edge; thus, Unamuno himself, who was acclaimed by the public attending his lecture at the Zarzuela theatre against the “Law of Jurisdictions” (*ley de jurisdicciones*) in Catalonia, shouted “Long live the intellectuals!” (*¡Vivan los intelectuales!*) but was attacked at the end of his life by an audience of legionnaires in the University of Salamanca, shouting “Death to intellectuals!” (*¡Mueran los intelectuales!*).³ That double-edged concept was shared by some advocates who liked

1 François Dosse, *La marche des idées. Histoire intellectuelle et histoire des intellectuels* (Paris, 2003); Wolf Lepenies, *¿Qué es un intelectual europeo? Los intelectuales y la política del espíritu en la historia europea* (Madrid, 2008).

2 Javier Varela, *La novela de España: los intelectuales y el problema español* (Madrid, 1999).

3 The 1906 “law of jurisdictions” gave military courts the power to prosecute any civilian spokesman or publication judged to have insulted the military. This law caused the grouping of most of the Catalan parties around the *Solidaritat Catalana* coalition. Miguel de Unamuno gave a lecture against the law at the Teatro de la Zarzuela. The President of the Second Republic, Manuel Azaña, abolished this law in 1931. During the Spanish civil war, Unamuno, who had supported at

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to oscillate between political disinvolvement and political intervention, sometimes as dramatically as Ramiro de Maeztu did. Ramiro was a particular Hispanic embodiment of a *bendiano* cleric (after Julien Benda), who dreamed of making journalists “a religious order” (*una orden religiosa*) that was closed to those who “distort the truth or judgment to serve a cause” (*falseen la verdad o el juicio por servir a una causa*) but who, at the same time, considered the term “intellectual” “repulsive” (*repulsiva*), if only because he thought the Russians had coined it.⁴ Moreover, the discursive heterogeneity of the Hispanic version of the modern *clerc* has its stylistic boundaries in the shared preference for writing essays in articles and books, newspaper articles and scholarly texts, and critical and historiographical writings. Suitable for literary self-presentation of elites who are eager for popularity but fearful of the masses, this hegemony—also double-edged—of the essay, or the mere attempt at writing an essay, reached the boastful dispersion of Unamuno or the agonizing collapse of the desire of being systematic in the work of Ortega, who in a letter of 1925, confessed to Ernst Robert Curtius that “this double-edged paradox, according to which, the fact that the little that is done in philosophy in Spain takes the guise of popular newspaper articles, is one of the most curious and interesting points of the spiritual structure of Spain.”⁵ What we want to emphasize here is the fact that this frenzy for essay-writing has determined for decades the forms of writing and thinking about the Middle Ages much more than typical historiography, not only among intellectuals in the broad sense, but also among medievalists in the narrow one.

Much has been written on the national uniqueness of some “ways to dream of the Middle Ages,” in the late Umberto Eco’s words. This exceptionalism cannot be separated from the question of Spain, be it considered a novel, a moral problem, or even a real philosophical problem. Nevertheless, my intention here is to qualify this singularity (given as incontrovertible proof of the theorem of Spain against Europe) and instead emphasize the international character, or more precisely, the European connections of the medieval argument among Hispanic intellectuals. In my view, those connections are inseparable from modern thinking on “the crisis”: a mindset that, despite its heteroge-

first the reasons for the military uprising against the Republic, started a nasty incident with the fascist general Millán-Astray at the University of Salamanca. The professor firmly told the fascists: “You will win, but you will not convince!” (*vencereis, pero no convencereis*). The soldiers of Millán-Astray shouted: “Death to intellectuals!” (*¡Mueran los intelectuales!*). The incident ended with the writer’s removal as rector of the University of Salamanca. He spent his final months, from October to December 1936, under house arrest.

4 Ramiro de Maeztu, *España y Europa* (Madrid, 1959), 62–64. Maeztu (1875–1936) wrote several important works about Spain and Europe. He wrote a book that was published in English under the title *Authority, Liberty, and Function in Light of the War* (in Spanish *La crisis del humanismo*), in which he called for a reliance on authority, tradition, and the institutions of the Roman Catholic Church. Vehement opponent of the Spanish Republic—he wrote in 1934 a strongly conservative book *En defensa de la Hispanidad*—, he was shouted down by Republicans from the first days of the Civil War.

5 *Esta paradoja—de doble filo—en virtud de la cual lo poco que se haga de filosofía en España tome el disfraz de artículo para diario popular, es uno de los puntos más curiosos e interesantes de la estructura espiritual de España.* Cited from José Ortega y Gasset, Ernest Robert Curtius, “Epistolario entre Ortega y Curtius,” *Revista de Occidente* 6 (1963): 332.

neity, either in its neo-humanist or anti-humanist formulations, attributed the reasons for the physical self-destruction of the West to forgetting its genuine cultural tradition. Both diagnoses, self-destruction and oblivion, were associated with the gloomy expectations of a future that seemed to go beyond all the historic ups and downs suffered by the European experience in history since the beginning of modernity. For the intellectuals who upheld those diagnoses and forecasts, the Middle Ages offered exciting arguments for building a trans-historical morphology and a rhetorical space from which the most fearsome effects of the dominant celebration of that movement as an aesthetic and political imperative should be offset or redirected. However, an important part of the “elites” finally succumbed to this approach. In this context, the image of the Middle Ages ranged from a persuasive, but peripheral, function to a central and substantive presence that was, in any case, an essential structure for different discursive practices. It can probably be found in the work of Américo Castro, even more than in Menéndez Pidal and Sánchez-Albornoz, where the humanist link between political and cultural reflection and what we might call the “medieval argument” reached its high point.⁶ Apart from its various developments, this argument aspired to become a key for interpreting the historical uniqueness of Spain as a remedy for the bouts of national culture and politics. In this sense, notwithstanding its dialogue or confrontation with Europe, the special feature of the medieval presence in Spanish essays on the “problem of Spain” was determined by the prospects of civil war, even many years after the end of the armed conflict. From such perspectives, the medievalism of intellectuals such as Castro was a valuable and ductile scholarly instrument to explore the lines of convergence between the drama of his own self-awareness and the conscience of the nation.

The following pages are not a survey, more or less complete, of the uses of medievalism in promotional writings of Hispanic intellectuals and in historical-literary essay writing, although some reference to these is required. Its purpose is to test a conceptual approach to the medieval argument through three concepts that, although selective, are

6 Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz (1893–1984) was a crucial figure for the development of Spanish medieval historiography, and even more so for the Latin-American; see the excellent book: Ariel Guance, ed., *La influencia de la historiografía española en la producción americana* (Madrid, 2011). However, his great work of medieval essayism (Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, *España, un enigma histórico* (Buenos Aires, 1957)), cannot be considered—nor Américo Castro, *España en su historia* (Buenos Aires, 1948)—a culmination of the “medieval argument” among the intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century, as we consider it here. The interpretation of the Hispanic reality from the Middle Ages in Castro, as in Pidal, concerns the language and literature and anthropological, philosophical, and critical-literary concepts whose structure demanded essayistic forms, that the rigorous Pidal also cultivated, for example, to justify his essentialist theses on the Hispanic character or his evolutionary category of the “latent state.” The “Anti-Castro,” as Sánchez-Albornoz called him in his *opus magnum*, is not the result of thoughts obsessed with the perspectives of civil war like those of Castro or—very differently—Maeztu or Xirau, nor the result of literary humanism disposed to articulate heterogeneous categories for a totalizing interpretation of his subject. It is rather the work—undoubtedly also essayistic and ideological, reluctantly—of an academic determined to cancel any possibility of interpreting the history of Spain outside the historiographical channels he considered unquestioned and thus to determine the scientific orientation of academic medievalism in the Hispanic setting.

not arbitrary. First, the concept of Subject, particularly the Hispanic Subject, associated with, but not reducible to, the concept of national identity, whose invention or reconstruction was a central task in the diagnosis and therapy of the Spanish and European crisis. Secondly, the issue of Mediation, an old ideal for the critics, concerning the proper task of those who, from the authority of their erudition or position as privileged observers of reality, make attempts to rebuild the links between the individual and community, experience, and expectations, or tradition and the present. In this regard, we are interested in the intellectual who, whether a historian or not, resorts to the Middle Ages in their role of a “medium” in the struggle for memory. Thirdly, the concept of Memory which, turned into a regulative idea of historiography, looks at the Middle Ages to overcome the oversights of history, fuelling what we might call a medievalization of the historical world. But first, let me contextualize some aspects that favoured the multiplication of these more or less oblique presences from the Middle Ages.

Presences of the Middle Ages

Ortega’s damning statement in his *España invertebrada*, “The secret of the great Spanish problems lies in the Middle Ages”;⁷ synthesizes the persuasive power that the Spanish intelligentsia entrusted to the medieval argument: an argument, historical and ahistorical at the same time, that was established as key to a true reading of the present. We find examples of this rhetoric in the aforementioned book by Ortega as well as in his *La Rebelión de las masas*, with its penchant for Gothicism *a contrario sensu*, or in the defence by Maeztu, in his *Crisis del Humanismo*, of the Middle Ages as anti-Pelagian and anti-Averroist, whose theology in the thirteenth century would be the antidote to the ills of modernity. Or in describing the benefits of the Hispanic medieval crucible, creator of “habits of liberality and democracy” as Joaquim Xirau did in his monograph about Ramon Llull.⁸ Along with this presence, mainly rhetorical, the Middle Ages maintained a substantial presence in historical-philological essays that, via an interdisciplinary methodology, eventually turned it into an exemplary trans-historical constellation. This sort of “science of the Middle Ages,” close to the name Curtius⁹ gave to it, forms the core of

⁷ *El secreto de los grandes problemas españoles está en la Edad Media*. Cited from José Ortega y Gasset, *España invertebrada*, ed. Paulino Garagorri (Madrid, 1981), 105.

⁸ *Hábitos de liberalidad y democracia*. From Joaquim Xirau, *Obras completas II: Vida y obra de Ramón Llull* (Madrid, 1999), 215–349. Joaquim Xirau Palau (1895–1946) was a Spanish philosopher and teacher. Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Barcelona, he went into exile in Mexico after the Spanish civil war, where he taught at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. In Madrid he was a disciple of Ortega y Gasset, García Morente, and especially of Manuel Bartolomé Cossío, with whom he formed his philosophical-pedagogical vocation following the principles of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, founded by Francisco Giner de los Ríos.

⁹ For this Alsatian Romanist, it was, at root, a “regulative idea,” that had to orient the medieval interpretation of Europe, and one of whose parts would be “literary science.” Ernst Robert Curtius, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Romanischen Philologie* (Bern, 1960), 109; and Ernst Robert Curtius, *Literatura europea y Edad Media latina* (Ciudad de México, 1955), 747ff.

the works conceived in the *Centro de Estudios Históricos* created in 1910 by the *Junta para Ampliación de Estudios*.¹⁰ The fact that, notwithstanding their belief in positivism, most of the concepts and arguments of this erudite production were generated, and could only be generated, through the essay is due, on the one hand, to the disciplinary overflow of objectives and methods, and on the other, to constant discussion with intellectual positions which fall within a wider ideological debate. However, what essay-writing required in a more decisive way was a convincing identification between history and memory, for which the humanist-literary origin of its practitioners, trained in philology and literary criticism rather than in historiography, was crucial.

This literary memory culminated in the works of Menéndez Pidal and Américo Castro and is difficult to separate from the rhetorical-persuasive efforts to make the Middle Ages, sometimes rather opportunistically, into the founding moment of the modern crisis. Such efforts appear sporadically, but also paradigmatically, in Ortega, garnering the admiration of Castro and contempt by Pidal, although not as much as the contempt that the latter received from the philosopher.¹¹

In parallel with these national debates, some of the best European literary thought promoted significant interpretations of Spanish medieval studies and the “problem of Spain” at an international level. In 1931, in an impassioned speech in honour of the newly proclaimed Spanish Republic before the Society of Friends and Sponsors of the University of Bonn, Curtius, then better known for his critical and promotional writings than for his medieval research, reeled off the names of some of the greatest minds that constituted, in his words, “*la vida española del espíritu*”. Among them, besides his friend Ortega, he listed Unamuno, Ganivet, Marañón, Pérez de Ayala, and Américo Castro, then

10 *La Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas* (“Board for Further Studies and Scientific Research”) established in 1907 and presided over by the Nobel prize winner Ramón y Cajal, thought science an essential ingredient of knowledge, culture, and social progress. For its founders, like for those of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, education and science would play a central and ever-increasing role in the development and well-being of society.

11 Ortega’s sharp criticism of Pidal, so bleak for the latter, who understood them generally as the forays of a layman into his materials, not only concerned the determination of the philologist, Pidal, to trace Hispanic essence to the beginning of time, or his Castilianist interpretation of the country’s history (an interpretation, however, that Ortega also proclaimed in his own way, certainly with less constancy but sometimes more virulently), but rather for what the philosopher considered a sterile and irritating tendency of the scholar to entertain the north of the national-medieval issues in labyrinths of literary research. It was an old reproach. In one of the first and probably endless interventions by the author of *La España del Cid* in the Ateneo in Madrid, the bright and flowery pen of Navarro Ledesma commented that he was the “excellent lad whose only defect is his assiduity with which he dedicated himself to the chronicles of the Middle Ages, believing with the most utter simplicity, that this was also of use for something [...] A shame that the sharp and perspicacious intelligences like his are wasted on such mousy necessities, having as there is here such a necessity for a general *sursum corda* to move out of ordinariness and irritating morass that dominates everywhere nowadays.” See Joaquín Pérez Villanueva, *Ramón Menéndez Pidal: su vida y su tiempo* (Madrid, 1991), 112ff. A few decades later, Pidal himself, for example, in his lectures in Havana, zealously wanted to fulfil the functions of the *sursum corda*, adopting the *hybris* of *excitator hispaniae* that had earlier been cultivated by other representatives of the Spanish intelligentsia like Unamuno or Ortega himself.

ambassador to Berlin. In the year of the proclamation of the Republic, according to the Alsatian Romanist “that intelligence embodied the will for national renewal” (*esta inteligencia encarnaba la voluntad de una renovación nacional*). However, as he would state a year later at the Seminar of Pedagogy at the University of Barcelona, invited by Joaquim Xirau, Curtius did not view the Spanish intellectual republic through the lenses of the tradition of the *regenerationism* movement, but through the lens of a Weimar Republic on the verge of succumbing. Spain was thus an extraordinary laboratory to reformulate the great questions of interwar Europe, since its rise “is part of the great process of balance between cultures, which can provide a stable basis for spiritual renewal—at the same time Restoration and Renaissance—of Europe.”¹² Once expurgated the anti-European excesses of Ganivet and the later Unamuno, what the Romanist called “national questions of life” (*nationalen Lebensfragen*), rather than vital questions about the nation, would become the only particular manifestation of the question about the survival of Europe. As in early Romanticism, in the interwar period, medieval Hispanic culture (which lasted until the Baroque of Calderón) was a recurring theme among those who, on the eve of European destruction, imagined Spain as a model for a special or alternative path, a *Sonderweg* that would allow Europe to leave its unending crises and to rewrite the guidelines for its modern tradition. This is undoubtedly a literary model, which subordinates political and social history to the history and critics of literature, and which found its most passionate formulation in a speech entitled “Literature as a spiritual space of the nation” (*La literatura como espacio espiritual de la nación*)¹³ that the Austrian poet Hofmannsthal read in 1927 at the University of Munich before his rector, the Hispanist Karl Vossler.

In Europe, and especially in Germany, a humanism existed that substituted the Greek mirror for the medieval one and which wanted to find in the Spanish national question the modern imprint of an essential European Latinity. As is well known, Curtius traced this Latinity to the poetry of Jorge Manrique, who he considered a champion of

12 *Es parte del gran proceso de equilibrio entre culturas, que puede facilitar bases estables para la renovación espiritual—a un tiempo restauración y renacimiento—de Europa.* Cited from Ernst Robert Curtius, “Problemas de la cultura española actual,” in *Escritos de humanismo e hispanismo*, ed. Antonio de Murcia Conesa (Madrid, 2011), 18.

13 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “Das Schriftum als geistiger Raum der Nation,” in *Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1999), 122. This Catholic view close to the “conservative revolution” struggled with people like Víctor Klemperer and Ludwig Pfland who considered that Spanish literature was condemned to isolation, or, with the very different fascist or philo-nazi interpretations of Spanish culture, saw in its exceptionalism the model for German exceptionalism. A paradigmatic and sinister example of the latter was the playwright Joseph Gregor who, in *El teatro español del mundo* of 1937 and especially in the epilogue from 1943, talked about the Spanish as the only culture that was aware of all the European contradictions, of the abyss between the north and the south, and of all the tensions in the world of thought. This life of contradictions, forged in the Middle Ages, would have led it to a suicidal and anti-modern struggle for the *idea*, culminated in a civil war that the author celebrated as an act of reaffirmation against the civilized Europe: a revenge for the destruction of its empire, that had prefigured the Hitlerian idea of Europe: “Spain experienced the tragedy of Europe before anyone and in a model way.” From Joseph Gregor, *Das spanische Welttheater* (München, 1943), 474ff.

the idea of empire. In 1948, the same year the Romanist published *Literatura europea y Edad Media latina*, Castro published in Mexico the first edition of *España en su historia*. In the same magazine where Curtius published the first research for his *opus magnum*, *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, Ramón Menéndez Pidal had vigorously defended an interpretation of the Hispanic epic and, in particular, the topics about el Cid, directly confronting the interpretation of the German Romanist, and, therefore, that of a European representation of the Hispanic spirit.¹⁴

Indeed, the Middle Ages had taken centre stage in the discourse of some intellectuals who had abandoned the contemporary debates to search for the real keys to the present in the cultural and literary traditions. What distinguishes the Spanish scholars and polygraphs, who also followed this old romantic detour through the Middle Ages, is the resolution with which they assumed its national specificity and their commitment to distance it from any cosmopolitan idea of history.

(Re)Constructing the Spanish Middle Ages as Subject

When Pidal wrote the preface to his *Historia de España* with the title of “Spaniards in history” (*Españoles en la historia*), or the essay on “Spaniards in literature” (*Españoles en la literatura*), he was undoubtedly identifying a common subject for the phenomena that had occupied most of his already countless studies. We can say the same thing, perhaps even more explicitly, of Castro’s invocation, since the prologue of *España en su historia*, of the individual and social man, an emaciated subject who was the agent of the history-biography of Spain.

Nevertheless, it is not entirely accurate to consider that the aim of these studies by medievalists on the Hispanic reality was to prove the existence of a collective identity. This is so, at least, if, according to the authoritative definition by Jan Assmann, we understand “collective identity” as the “image that a group forms of itself and with which its members identify”; that is, if we understand that, far from existing by itself or by the projection of the internal needs of the researcher, “the collective identity is a matter of ‘identification’ by the individuals concerned” so that it only exists “to the extent that certain individuals profess it.”¹⁵ Despite the explicit commitment of Castro to identifying the subject who is the agent of the history of Spain, such a subject could hardly identify itself without the generous hermeneutics of the historian. Something similar can be said of the author of *La España del Cid*, for whom the historical subject is necessarily anonymous and, therefore, unable to express its own self-consciousness, something

14 Ramón Menéndez Pidal, “La épica española y la ‘Literaturästhetik des Mittelalters’ de E. R. Curtius,” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 69 (1939): 1–9; Spanish edition in: Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *Castilla. La tradición, el idioma* (Madrid, 1955), 75–93.

15 *La imagen que un grupo se forma de sí mismo y con la que se identifican sus integrantes; la identidad colectiva es una cuestión de “identificación” por parte de los individuos afectados; en la medida en que la profesan determinados individuos.* Cited from Jan Assmann, *Historia y mito en el mundo antiguo. Los orígenes de la cultura en Egipto, Israel y Grecia* (Madrid, 2011), 121ff. The title of the Spanish edition is surprising, when that of the original work was *Das kulturelle Gedächtniss. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 1999).

only noticeable to those who know how to pursue its deployment in the high-level structures that surround it.

Contrary to what is often claimed, these hermeneutical syntheses on the Hispanic Medieval Ages did not have as their sole objective the foundation of a centralist nation-state. Admittedly, the reference to Spain is unequivocal. References to the word “nation” are, however, fewer than we might think. In a recent essay on the ideological backgrounds of Hispanism, Joan Ramon Resina noted a fundamental epistemological and ideological split between the medievalism of Menéndez Pelayo and Milà i Fontanals, and that of the subsequent generation of Pidal.¹⁶ The former would be primarily guided by aesthetic ideals, while the obsession of Pidal for Castilianism would be guided by a political principle, which is confirmed by his fight against Basque and Catalan nationalisms during the Republic. That would explain the lack of interest of the Cantabrian scholar in medieval culture. In fact, despite his appreciative reception of the first great work of Pidal on the princes of Lara, Menéndez Pelayo¹⁷ could state with contempt, “Let others extol the Middle Ages!” (*¡Que ensalcen otros la Edad Media!*), and devote his “Toast of the Retiro” (*Brindis del Retiro*) speech to the Spain of Calderón; in so doing, he was honouring the catholicity of the Empire and the Church rather than a national community.¹⁸ Perhaps this interest was behind the close relationship between Menéndez Pelayo and Catalan intellectuals, encouraged by their common traditionalist view of European modernity. Disdainful of the liberal Gothicism of the *doceañistas* (politically moderate supporters of the Spanish Constitution of 1812), this neo-Catholic traditionalism was not so obsessed with the national question as the liberal scholars of the *Centro de Estudios Históricos*. Pidal belongs to the class of intellectuals convinced of what his most enthusiastic biographer, the scholar Pérez Villanueva, summarized: “Spain must go back

16 Joan Ramon Resina, *Del hispanismo a los estudios ibéricos. Una propuesta federativa para el ámbito cultural* (Madrid, 2009), especially the chapter: “¿Qué hispanismo? Trauma cultural, memoria disciplinada e imaginación simbólica,” 101–26.

17 The scholar, historian, and literary critic Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo (1856–1912) is indispensable for understanding the contradictions of Spanish conservative thinking. On the one hand, his work provided intellectual and historical arguments for Spanish (and Catalan) Catholic traditionalism; on the other, it preserved and transmitted the knowledge of marginal but fundamental figures of Spanish thought despised if not persecuted by the official Spanish culture. It is important to read his important *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (1880–1882).

18 At least since the period of the Restoration and in parallel to the writing of national histories of Spain and its literature, the essayism of a constellation of polygraphs (teachers, lawyers, politicians, journalists, literary critics), either in the service of traditionalism, progressivism and, above all, moderantism, had contributed to symbolizing the articulation between the political idea of nation and the interests of an increasingly hegemonic bourgeoisie, through a terminology of undoubted aesthetic power. We must not forget that these terms translated some of those that had already been brandished by those who (like the neo-Catholics, including those from the Catalan intelligentsia) had identified Spain with the most universal structures of the Empire or the Church. Retranslated to the conceptual construction of a national structure, such concepts are in the orbit of what we would nowadays call collective identity. Together with the cited works by Javier Varela and Joan Ramon Resina, valuable information about the concepts of nation and memory can be found in: Ricardo García Cárcel, *La herencia del pasado. Las memorias históricas de España* (Barcelona, 2011).

to itself. Because of this, they all share a Medievalism, where they seek the roots.¹⁹ That conviction, rather than being linked to nineteenth-century national-liberal projects was a product of the great fractures that the twentieth century brought. These required not only an account of institutional unity, but also one of cultural unity.

That may be why Menéndez Pidal much more frequently used the term “Spanish people” (*pueblo español*)—rather than “Spanish nation” (*nación española*)—since the former was an obvious legacy of the old romantic *Volk* which, more sensitive to the latent traits of culture, allowed the artificial political dimension of the national structure to be replaced with the natural purity of its popular form. From Pidal’s logic, the oral character of medieval culture was the most direct way to reach the ethno-forming elements of the community.

Beyond the expression *nación española* and along with the term *pueblo español*, the substantial medievalism of our essay-writers also used, with particular emphasis, the concept of *civilización española*. It is no coincidence that in his first lecture at Princeton University, entitled “The Meaning of Spanish Civilization” (*El significado de la civilización española*), Castro significantly did not use the term “culture.” We will soon return to this important text. Prior to that, it is worth recalling that in the previous decade, Ortega had condemned *culturalism*, the ideology of the culture, and its “false immanence” (*falsa immanencia*), thus taking a stand in the European dispute between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* that runs through the intellectual debate in the interwar period. In this debate, the use of the term “civilization” was an unequivocal sign of an allergy to nationalisms.²⁰ Therefore, it is striking that Castro uses it in a text that ends by looking at the medieval sources for Spanish national uniqueness. Spengler, with whom Castro had an acknowledged debt, was, of course, a precursor. However, it seems fair to look first for a precursor in the Spanish context, namely the figure of Rafael Altamira.²¹

Indeed, this scholar and politician from Alicante understood perfectly (in a very different way from Spengler) that the idea of civilization was inseparable from cosmopolitanism and, therefore, that the question of Spain was also a European issue. For Altamira, the nation was a variation on the common construction of a civilization or, in his words, “the global division of labour for civilization” (*la división del trabajo mundial por la civilización*). Such a position is thus at the antipodes of the nationalist discourse of Fichte, whose works Altamira himself translated. That is why he called his general history of Spain, published in 1945, *Historia de la Civilización española*, but which he had sketched out many years earlier: “for me, to say civilization is the same as saying

¹⁹ *España debe volver a sí misma. Por ello, todos comparten un medievalismo, donde buscan las raíces.* Pérez Villanueva, Ramón Menéndez Pidal, 157.

²⁰ José Ortega y Gasset, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, ed. Paulino Garagorri (Madrid, 1981), 98–105.

²¹ Rafael Altamira (1866–1951), is one of the most significant Spanish historians of the twentieth century. Professor at the University of Oviedo he gave courses and conferences in many universities both in Spain and abroad. He was also a judge at The International Court of Justice, at The Hague in the Netherlands, where he concentrated his efforts on working for peace and international dialogue. For his work and career he was nominated as candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1933. The same year, he was elected a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

history”, he says in his preface.²² The term “civilization” contained for him, as it did for Castro, that particular integrating force which was basically intended to put an end to the hegemony of political and chronological history. Altamira also explored the medieval Hispanic sources of that civilization, but not its uniqueness, as Castro or Pidal, and, in his own way, Ortega did too. That is why he wanted to emphasize that all the Hispanic epic literature was a product of Latin literature, and that Italianism and Classicism, rather than Muslim influence, determined Hispanic literary writing. When Castro presented the medieval sources of the problem of Spain to his American listeners, now translated into the catastrophe of civil war, he also insisted on the idea of a particular Spanish civilization, saying “civilization” was for him the same as saying “subject” and, with this in mind, it was also the same as saying “history.” Its intended compensatory effect was specifically medieval in this idea of civilization. Indeed, the need to know and understand the Hispanic subject was a central strategy for understanding how, in the mid-twentieth century, the certainties of a medieval subject could compensate for the depths of the modern subject. This idea was defended before an audience composed, among others, of US military personnel who wanted to study before a possible invasion of Spain.

The “Ticklish” Medieval Subject

A few years ago, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, with no connection to Hispanic studies nor medievalism, began one of his most lucid books saying: “A spectre is haunting western academia: the Cartesian subject.”²³ After this parody of the famous Marxist saying, he recited the list of contemporary enemies of that spectre, from deconstructionism to post-Marxist critics and feminism. Aptly, he traced the history of that exorcism to Heidegger, who, from his chair in Freiburg, not only held forth against the Cartesian subject but, in general, against all European intellectuals, whose impenitent humanism would have helped to conceal the true presence of being. For certain, if Žižek had known the lecture that Américo Castro gave at Princeton²⁴ soon after occupying the chair of Spanish Literature, and in which he presented his idea on the history of Spain, he could have included that lecture in the anti-Cartesian list. With the significant title of *The Meaning of Spanish Civilization*, this text, which we have already referred to, is a model for understanding the scope of the medieval argument in Spanish thought and rewriting the history of European anti-Cartesianism, and anti-modernism. Indeed, in it, the philologist exclaimed: “The Spanish self is not the *cogito ergo sum* [...] The Spanish self is *La vida es sueño* of Calderón, the self of Segismundo.” The author continued:

22 Para mí decir “civilización” es lo mismo que decir “historia.” From Rafael Altamira, *Historia de la civilización española* (Barcelona, 2008), 8.

23 *Un espectro ronda la academia occidental: el sujeto cartesiano*. Cited from Slavov Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* (London, 1999).

24 Américo Castro (1885–1972) became ambassador to Germany during the Spanish Republic. When the Spanish civil war broke out in 1936 he moved to the United States, teaching literature at the University of Wisconsin–Madison from 1937 to 1939, at the University of Texas from 1939 to 1940, and at Princeton University from 1940 to 1953. There, Castro continued and developed his transformative and suggestive theses on the Jewish and Islamic identity of Spanish culture. His influence on American Hispanism was and remains remarkable.

The Spanish self is that of Cervantes: an ego that prolongs the will of existence in the most opposite directions, because it thinks that the exclusionary or partial attitudes will lead it to endless mazes. It is the self of Francisco Giner, who wanted Spain's present time to consist in its traditional past and its bright future, at the same time. Or that of Goya, wherein beauty and horror, hell and paradise coexist [...] And that of Lope, with his love and duty [...] The list [he concludes] could be extended from the Middle Ages to the present.²⁵

In his lecture, Castro reiterates the crucial distance between the Spanish subject, a polymorphic one, coined in the Middle Ages, which is the agent of its own historical reality, and the modern European subject, which he considers, in a compact form, a rational subject, overwhelmed by science and technology that it has itself generated, and in doing so, triggered the great crisis of modernity. The terms in which he outlines that crisis are not very different from those used by philosophers and humanists from Central Europe shortly before World War II, such as Husserl, Huizinga, or the aforementioned Curtius:

Today, Western civilization is going through a crisis from which we do not know how we will survive. The illusory faith in reason has collapsed. Its place has been replaced by the brutal action which, via dark forms of collective will, disintegrates and annihilates the individual.²⁶

On top of all modern dangers, against which the subject which is the agent of Spanish history would be an alternative, Castro points to an idea of science, identified with technology, as primarily responsible for western violence and war: "From the spontaneity of natural man to dehumanized technology, through the 'humanized technology': a world that dominates us, a force that can influence our actions and destinations. Paradoxically, this leads to a new primitivism."²⁷ The naive faith in technology and science was thus, for the philologist, cause and effect of an enlightened faith in progress from which the war had brutally healed us:

Modern man has been living in an order that makes him similar to perfection, towards the utopia of 'infinite progress' [...] Over the past three centuries, Europe has lived thinking

25 *El yo español no es el del cogito ergo sum [...]. el yo español es el de "La vida es sueño" de Calderón, el yo de Segismundo; El yo español es el de Cervantes: un ego que prolonga la voluntad de la existencia en las direcciones más opuestas, pues piensa que las actitudes exclusivistas o parciales le llevarán a laberintos inacabables. Es el yo de Francisco Giner, que quería para España un presente que fuese al mismo tiempo su pasado tradicional y su espléndido futuro. O el de Goya, en el que convivían belleza y horror, infierno y paraíso... Y el de Lope, con su amor y su deber [...]. La lista [concluye] podría alargarse hasta el presente desde la Edad Media.* Cited from Américo Castro, "The Meaning of the Spanish Civilization," in *Américo Castro and the Meaning of Spanish Civilization*, ed. José Rubia Barcia (Berkeley, 1976), 30. In another work, he explicitly denies any possible Cartesian interpretation of Cervantes: Américo Castro, *El pensamiento de Cervantes* (Barcelona, 1972), 90.

26 *Hoy la civilización occidental atraviesa una crisis a la que no sabemos cómo vamos a sobrevivir. La fe ilusoria en la razón se ha colapsado. Su lugar se ha sustituido por la acción brutal, mediante oscuras formas de voluntad colectiva que desintegran y aniquilan al individuo.* From Castro, "The Meaning," 28.

27 *De la espontaneidad del hombre natural a la técnica deshumanizada, pasando por la "técnica humanizada": un mundo que nos domina, una fuerza que puede condicionar nuestros actos y destinos. Paradójicamente esto nos lleva a un nuevo primitivismo.* Cited from Castro, "The Meaning," 27.

that what escaped reason did not exist or was not worth being known. Today, however, we cannot help but smile at the attempt of the nineteenth century to make science into a religion, and believe that progress, the result of a social mechanism, was unstoppable.²⁸

Such arguments converge with much of European neo-humanism of their time, but they are inseparable from a debate that is specifically Spanish. Indeed, from Menéndez Pelayo to Unamuno, the controversy over science in Spain had fluctuated between two central arguments: the special feature of Spanish science, consisting of theology, poetic and mystic, against the monotonous Cartesian definition of modern science; or the absence of Spanish science, understood mostly as techno-science, under the singularity of the Hispanic *ethos*. On several occasions, Castro chided those who claimed a science that was characteristic of Spain, reminding them of the titanic task the *Centro de Estudios Históricos* had assumed in the development of a historiography and a philology comparable to those cultivated in Europe. In fact, the arguments in this debate, isolated outbreaks of which can still be found in Spain's national intelligentsia, were dependent on opposition to what or whom they were put forward. For Castro, it was above all about claiming a special form of knowledge, a *Sonderweg* of Spanish science suitable to justify his particular historiographic hermeneutics, i.e., the idea of a history of the Hispanic subject by a Hispanic subject:

In this atmosphere of applied science, technology, and welfare, Spanish values suffered a huge depreciation. The main Spanish issue has always been the man as an absolute and naked reality, and the products with which he tries to mark the consciousness of his existence are secondary. For a Spaniard, human beings are more important for what they are than for their social function and their production. If a Spaniard does not find a vital connection between what a person does and what he is, that person will not interest him in the least.²⁹

The key to the "substantive" medievalization of the Hispanic subject is to be found in this anthropological framework, a moral and anthropological medievalization, very different from the rhetorical and theological one that Ramiro de Maeztu emphasized from his *Crisis del humanismo* to his posthumous *Defensa del espíritu*.³⁰ Associated with his defence of Hispanity, Maeztu's theological medievalization should be understood as the confrontation not only with the modern Cartesian subject, but also, and espe-

28 *El hombre moderno ha estado viviendo en un orden que lo hace semejante a la perfección, hacia la utopía del "progreso infinito" [...] Durante los tres últimos siglos Europa ha vivido pensando que lo que escapaba a la razón no existía o no era digno de conocer. Hoy, sin embargo, no podemos sino sonreír ante el intento del siglo XIX por hacer de la ciencia una religión y al creer que el progreso, resultado de un mecanismo social, era imparable.* Cited from Castro, "The Meaning," 27.

29 *En esa atmósfera de ciencia aplicada, tecnología y bienestar, los valores españoles sufrieron una gran depreciación. El principal tema español ha sido siempre el hombre como realidad absoluta y desnuda, y sólo secundariamente, los productos con los que intenta situar la conciencia de su existencia. Para un español, los seres humanos son más importantes por lo que son que por su función social y su producción. Si un español no encuentra una relación vital entre lo que una persona hace y lo que es, esa persona no le interesará lo más mínimo.* Cited from Castro, "The Meaning," 27.

30 Ramiro de Maeztu, *La crisis del humanismo* (Barcelona, 1919); Ramiro de Maeztu, *Defensa del espíritu* (Madrid, 1958).

cially, with the Lutheran subject. In this field, Maeztu insists on a transfer of contents from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries, allowing him to imagine the naive updating in the modernity of the anti-Pelagian and anti-Averroist Middle Ages, an antidote against Renaissance humanism, Protestant voluntarism and, finally, the individualistic narcissism of the masses. Not in vain, Maeztu was a regular reader of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, but, above all, he was an attentive reader of Kant. So attentive that he could not help but fear the subjective foundation of law. “The German liberals (“like the Spanish liberals,” we might add) forgot that there is no other means to realize the law in this world than maintaining it by means of arms.” Otherwise, and that is what he really feared, scattered individuals would seek its foundation in an all-encompassing and divine subjectivity, identified with the Hegelian State and embodied in the Bolshevik State.³¹ The medievalism of the thirteenth century claimed by Maeztu, foreshadowing post-Tridentine Catholicism, was, in short, a salutary lesson against individualistic narcissism, a transcript of Ortega’s Revolt of the Masses. And it is also so against the parliamentary democracy of the “argumentative class.” It is no accident that Maeztu read Donoso Cortés in depth, mainly through Carl Schmitt. Actually, the Middle Ages of Maeztu were a trans-historical incarnation of the Catholic form as a legal form, something Schmitt admired. But their natural place was the modern empire or what Schmitt himself considered the Hispanic *nomos* of the earth.

Nevertheless, the medievalist essayism of philologists was not looking for patterns of theological orthodoxy in the medieval mirror of the Hispanic subject. In this respect, the teachings of Menéndez Pelayo, who, as a good humanist, was involved in violent debates with representatives of the Spanish Scholastics (unbearable for him and unrelated to his ideal of aesthetic and literary tradition), are always present. Their primary goal was to find symbolic vestiges of a permanent *ethos*. Pidal, rather a late advocate of imperial Spain, provides an interesting example of his medieval concept of the Hispanic subject in an early and comprehensive comparative work on the origins of *El condenado por desconfiado*.³²

In this paper, Pidal, like the Spanish theologians, rejected the repugnance of some European critics towards the fanatic triumph of faith in personal salvation above one’s

31 *Los liberales alemanes [habría que añadir: “como los liberales españoles”] se olvidaron de que no hay otro medio para realizar el derecho en este mundo que mantenerlo con las armas.* From De Maeztu, *Defensa del espíritu*, chap. 6. The immediate connection between Kant and the totalitarian state is a habitual exercise even nowadays among defenders of the Spanish philosophical exceptionalism. It was easy to do it then, especially because the Krausist mysticism soon took charge of erasing the imprint of the nineteenth-century Spanish neo-Kantians, like del Perojo. For the history of Spanish Kantism it is essential to see the study by José Luis Villacañas “Historia de una historia olvidada,” in *Kant en España. El neokantismo en el siglo XIX*, ed. José Luis Villacañas (Madrid, 2006), 13–139. It is not by chance that in the same lecture at Princeton, on praising Ortega—presented as a Hispanic Kantian without precursors, as he never or almost never quoted José del Perojo or Manuel de la Revilla—Castro celebrates his distance from neo-Kantism which he argued had so often and so erroneously been following in Spain through positivism, on which, by the way, Castro only omits the most mystical Comte.

32 Ramón Menéndez Pidal, “El condenado por desconfiado,” in *Estudios literarios* (Madrid, 1973), 9–46.

works. However, he also questions the theological reading of the Romantic scholar Agustín Durán, who, in the drama of Tirso, appreciated a reaction “against the fatal and heart-breaking rigidity of Protestantism.”³³ Pidal does appreciate a distinctly theological issue: reformulating Molina’s theme of sufficient grace and effective grace, but always through an original assimilation of the old legend on the comparison of merits, of Oriental origin, to which Tirso added modifications. The philologist gives us valuable information about the different variants of the issue. Above the theological and poetic synthesis, for Pidal “it is necessary to draw attention to the traditional facet” (*es preciso llamar la atención sobre el aspecto tradicional*), which “constitutes the storyline of the work” (*dio trama entera en la obra*). That’s where the *ethos* of the drama lies, its moral value over its theological value. In contrast with Molina, the orthodox Catholic scholar, Pidal the philologist considered it an error that this theological work was “impossible to taste in the modern age, characterized by scepticism” (*imposible de saborear en una época de escepticismo como la moderna*) in an age “seething with ideas of humanity and altruism” (*bullen ideas de humanidad y altruismo*). The figure of Paul, anxious about predestination, was for Pidal:

A real, living figure in all ages, not invented by a single abstraction, but the slow result of the contact with races and civilizations, of migration, of the struggle for life; in short, the figure of Paul is the child of a secular legendary generation whose antiquity is ennobling.³⁴

The important thing is that the legendary theme of comparing merits can serve different religions, the Christian as well as the Muslim and the Hebrew, as it already did with the Brahmin. “That hermit devoured by anxieties of the soul, searcher of the divine secrets, who interrogates a mute and impenetrable sky [...] will forever retain his grandeur and interest, even after the death of our religious theatre.”³⁵

What is important here, in order to understand the scope of Pidal’s “medieval argument,” is that he places *El condenado* by Tirso much closer to a medieval subject, to a conciliatory *ethos* of permanent human characters, than to a Tridentine Catholic subject which, according to Pidal, and contrasting with Ramiro de Maeztu and even Menéndez Pelayo, was something that was historically unrecoverable, or, in other words, belonging to history, but not to memory. The Spanish-ness of Paul / Tirso de Molina lies precisely in the human, anthropological level, which drives his desperate actions.

Over time, Pidal refined the uniquely Hispanic features of these human characters, reducing the Catholic structure of the empire of Charles V to these. In turn, Castro would do the same thing with the subject of Spanish civilization, that anti-Cartesian self, which

33 *Contra la fatal y desconsoladora rigidez del protestantismo*. From Menéndez Pidal, “El condenado por desconfiado,” 42.

34 *Una figura real y viviente en todas las edades, no inventada por una abstracción individual, sino producto lento del contacto con razas y civilizaciones, de la emigración, de la lucha por la vida; hija, en fin, de una secular generación legendaria con cuya antigüedad se ennoblece*. Cited from Menéndez Pidal, “El condenado por desconfiado,” 9–46.

35 *Ese ermitaño devorado por ansiedades del alma, escudriñador de los secretos divinos, que interroga a un cielo mudo e impenetrable [...] conservará eternamente su grandeza e interés, aun después de muerto nuestro teatro religioso*. Cited from Menéndez Pidal, “El condenado por desconfiado,” 44.

is that of Calderón, but only to the extent that Calderón did not represent the divine creature of Tridentine orthodoxy, but the “essential man” who “has been and is the main subject of Spanish civilization.”³⁶

That whole man, *con su seguridad y oscilaciones*, an alternative model to the man of the crisis, is not eternal for Castro, as he seems to be for Pidal, since he cannot ignore the vital basis on which he is founded: his entirety is prefigured in the Hispano-Arabs who created, in southern Spain, a culture superior to that of the lands from which they came and determined a marked Spanish interest in all questions of existence, even before the essence. That is why this subject is so paradigmatic, as proclaimed in the conference on *meaning*, on the epic of the Cid, which puts the depiction of everyday life ahead of the mythic tale.

Mediation

In his *Ensayo sobre historiología*,³⁷ written shortly after *España en su historia*, following the methodological discussions on this work, Castro compared the role of the historian, and therefore himself, with a *medium*. The term is not accidental. The task of the mediator was indeed what many European intellectuals, particularly the so-called “humanists,” had entrusted themselves with in response to the “crisis of mediation,” which can be defined as the dissolution of shared forms (legal-political, religious, aesthetic) from which relations between subjects themselves, and between them and their objects of knowledge, could be organized. Against the excessively political reaction of dictatorship, the humanist intellectual elites trusted in literary knowledge (criticism, philology, hermeneutics, but also journalism) for the continuing generation of meaning. As Castro repeated in his lecture at Princeton, this generation of meaning should also be the true mission of science, as opposed to the technique, and, therefore, the goal of historical knowledge against the sociological and political.

Spanish philosophers cited by Castro, thinkers about the “polymorphism” of life, represented the Spanish response to the crisis of mediation: an unrepentant and sometimes agonizing effort, from Unamuno to Ortega, to integrate the individual and the collective, science and life, culture and civilization. Castro relayed it to the Americans as “an ego that prolongs the will of existence in the most opposite directions, because it thinks that the exclusionary or partial attitudes will lead to endless labyrinths.” It is, in short, the subject of a story of mediation summarized in the desire of Francisco Giner, “who wanted for Spain a present time consisting in its traditional past and its bright future, both at the same time.”³⁸ The Spanish way, the special path that the history of Spain had

36 *Hombre esencial; ha sido y es el asunto principal de la civilización española*. Cited from Castro, *España en su historia*.

37 Américo Castro, *Ensayo sobre historiología. Analogías y diferencias entre hispanos y musulmanes* (New York, 1950).

38 *Un ego que prolonga la voluntad de la existencia en las direcciones más opuestas, pues piensa que las actitudes exclusivistas o parciales le llevarán a laberintos inacabables; que quería para España un presente que fuese al mismo tiempo su pasado tradicional y su espléndido futuro*.

undertaken since the Middle Ages was not only an exception but, as some German intellectuals had perceived, a guide to avoiding the dissolution Spanish philosophers talked about. Therefore, he concluded his lecture on Spanish civilization advising the American public to get in contact with it, for “contact with Spanish civilization will pave the way for a fruitful new humanism.”³⁹

The purpose of this humanism and its historical interpretation of the culture and life of nations was certainly a compensatory response to disenchantment in the world, due to the separation of disciplines and values, in which Max Weber saw the essence of modernity. Castro had read Max Scheler admiringly, a declared enemy of Weber’s diagnosis, from whom he took his theory of values to merge it with what he had learned from his reading of Dilthey. The result was a double epistemological operation: raising the concept of “convivial value” to a central category of literary hermeneutics and converting it into its main historiographical technique. Although the coexistence of the value is not natural in itself, but depends on certain historical conditions, it is always mediated, it always needs a “medium,” a mediator. To tell the story of Spain is to explain the origins of its mediations, but also to contribute to its survival, in short, to contribute to the medievalization of its entire history, its present and its future; in other words, to the restitution of a historical time opposed to the modern acceleration of time. And this can only be done by turning historiography into a sort of autobiographical projection, which means transforming history into memory.

The Memory or Memories of the Middle Ages

In 1942, Joaquín Xirau published an article in Mexico entitled *Humanismo español (Ensayo de interpretación histórica)*, which categorically stated: “Spain is a nation without history.”⁴⁰ He blamed this lack of history on the serious spiritual problems of the Hispanic world which he described in similar terms, except those derived from the fervent Christianity of the Catalan philosopher, to those expressed by Castro, two years earlier, in his conference at Princeton. What did Xirau mean with that “lack of history” (*falta de historia*) with such pathetic consequences? He meant: “the absence of clear ideas about our past and our future,” in other words, the lack of “continuity of a serene and

Castro’s reference to Giner when showing the Americans the origin of his thought is essential, as his conception of the historical reality is inseparable from the organic thesis of the founder of the Institución Libre for whom “in the intellectual order, begets the common historical sense, by the irreflexive interpenetration of all the social activities that, crossing in multiple directions according to laws unknown or forgotten by the collaborators in the same general culture form the plot of this,” and was extremely concerned by the fact that “the spirit of the peoples” took “ever more eccentric directions” until it dissolved “in a wild atomism, that does away with any common action, with all social links and still with all objective elements.” From Francisco Giner de los Ríos, “La política antigua y la política nueva,” in *Obras selectas*, ed. Isabel Pérez Villanueva (Madrid, 2004), 118–27.

39 *El contacto con la civilización española allanará el camino para un nuevo y fructífero humanism.* Cited from Giner de los Ríos, “La política antigua,” 127.

40 *España es un pueblo sin historia.* From Joaquim Xirau, “Humanismo español (ensayo de interpretación),” in *Obras completas*, ed. Ramón Xirau, 4 vols. (Madrid, 1999), 2:534–51.

critical judgment on the meaning contained in its presence and temporal development in the Western world.” Not that the Christian thinker denied the absence of historiographies, but that he denied them the minimum historical value, because they held onto the “blind amorphous erudition,” “the simple handling of big issues” and “the patient stacking of facts.”⁴¹ However, the proposed remedy against this scholarship was not a new methodology, more subtle and attentive to the complexity of the historiographical narrative, but rather the understanding of the “spirit” that “creates the Hispanic world” (*informa el mundo hispánico*) acting on its agents without them knowing. Just accepting that *a priori*, we will be in a position to understand, for example, that the Bolívar’s revolution was caused by the same “liberal spirit” “we already find in the political and social institutions of all nations of medieval Spain [...]”⁴² The methodological question is how and where to find this shaping spirit, how to give scientific substance to that *a priori*. All responses ultimately converge in memory.

Indeed, the belief that memory must be the ultimate goal of history underlies the diagnosis of the absence of history. This was a conviction shared by almost all intellectuals who passed through the Middle Ages in search of their Hispanic subject, including philosophers like Xirau and Ortega, and which represent, in a paradigmatic way, the works of historiographical synthesis undertaken by the philologists. The historical memory developed by these men of letters is, as we have said, a literary memory.

Its root, proto-Romantic, goes back to a discovery of modern literary criticism and history which consists of matching the words to the land or, more specifically, to the

41 *La ausencia de ideas claras sobre nuestro pasado y sobre nuestro futuro [...]; la continuidad de un juicio sereno y crítico sobre el sentido que encierra su presencia y su desarrollo temporal en el mundo de Occidente [...]; ciega erudición amorfa; el fácil manejo de grandes tópicos; el paciente amontonamiento de hechos.* Cited from Joaquim Xirau, “Humanismo español (ensayo de interpretación)” in *Obras completas*, ed. Ramón Xirau, 4 vols. (Madrid, 1999), 2:534–51. In a very similar way to the cited speech by Castro, Xirau here defines “Spanish humanism” as the “heroic attempt to save, in spirit and in action, the ecumenical unity of a world that is splitting apart.”

42 *Encontramos ya en las instituciones políticas y sociales de todos los pueblos de la España medieval [...].* From Xirau, *Obras completas*, 2:551. Thus, in his opinion, Bolívar denied that what was behind his war against a supposed Hispanity were not enlightened French ideals, but rather those that Hispanity itself had generated; the same that moved his enemy Riego: Xirau’s perception is bedecked with Christianity that seeks lines of mediation, of unification of the critical subject born from Humanism. However, in any case, what this is about is to “seek in the deepest depths of history the integrating breath capable of incorporating into the organism of a tradition, progressive and creative, the innovations brusquely introduced” (*buscar en lo más profundo de la historia el aliento integrador capaz de incorporar al organismo de una tradición, progresiva y creadora, las innovaciones bruscamente introducidas*). Another sentence by Xirau is extremely significant for the question of the subject and its relation with the medieval argument: “Hispanic humanism is not a resonance of foreignizing voices as perhaps spirits exempt from profundity believe. We have fathers, we have old and illustrious fathers, and we have to honour them. Only in this way will we fulfil our destiny and contribute to the salvation of the world. And we can say in truth: ‘I know who I am’” (*El humanismo hispánico no es una resonancia de voces extranjerizantes como lo creen acaso espíritus exentos de profundidad. Tenemos padres, tenemos viejos e ilustres padres y es preciso que les hagamos honor. Sólo así cumpliremos nuestro destino y coadyuvaremos a la salvación del mundo. Y podremos decir con verdad: “Yo sé quién soy”*). Cited from Xirau, *Obras completas*, 2:551.

stones. The key is to look for the eloquence of the written words, like that of the stones which make up a Church, not so much in what they say and do not say, but in what they retain in their own mute shape as a testimony, or, rather, a metonymic expression of an attitude, of a subject or of a bygone world, always available and ever present. To ensure this presence, the philologist “medium” highlights the direct link between the uniqueness of the work and the community that the work represents. Moreover, he turns the formula “a people creates a poem, a poem creates a people”⁴³ into an infinitely reversible one. Be it called “spirit,” “character,” “nation,” “people,” or “civilization,” the subject of this literary memory merely names the interchangeable roles of the power of expression that is evident in the text and the collective power that the text expresses. Herder vindicated this formula to set the basis for a national literature, not in the name of particularism, but rather the liberalization of universalism, one that ceased to be the monopoly of cultural empires (especially the French). Therefore, the formation of the concept of universal literature (*Weltliteratur*) is parallel to that of national literatures. Both required a rewriting of tradition, new mirrors or mirages of history, which placed the ideal setting to reinvent the relationship with classicism and the dispute between the ancients and moderns in the Middle Ages, or, more precisely, between the recent moderns, who sought their sources in classicism, and ancient moderns who, rebelling against the present, looked for theirs in the Middle Ages.⁴⁴

For a while, at least in France, the construction of an idea of civilization from a literary memory was a liberal endeavour, a third way which, affirming the analogy between mind, language, and community, mediated between the social, moral, and cultural organicism of the counter-revolutionaries and the anti-traditionalism and faith in progress of the revolutionaries. Later, it was the preferred route of supporters of an idea for civilization that linked the European nations around the *uchronia* of an evergreen “Romania.”

In Spanish literary thought, the Middle Ages paradoxically became the place where the keys to all the oversights of history stood, but also the keys to all recovery of memory. In the appendix to his controversial text *Los españoles en la historia*, significantly entitled “duties of history” (*Los deberes de la historia*),⁴⁵ Pidal lamented the injustice of what he called “enhancement of memories” (*realce de memorias*) at the expense of forgetting other memories. An injustice perpetrated by historians, from the same Middle

43 *Un pueblo crea un poema, un poema crea un pueblo*. We find this expression in Jacques Rancière, *La palabra muda* (Buenos Aires, 2009), 71.

44 In his *Fragmentos*, Friedrich Schlegel distinguishes between the oldest moderns and the recent moderns; in other words, between those who, from their particular chemistry, long for the oriental organic model and those who pursue the abstract Greek model. The interest of Romanticism in the Germanic Middle Ages—an interest that can only be deployed from the chemistry and the irony of the criticism—appears not only as a rejection of classicism, but also, at the same time, as a return to the orient, both worlds linked by the religious. From this perspective, there is no incoherence in the Catholic drift of a modern consciousness sustained by aesthetic and literary criticism. Peter Szondi, *Poética y filosofía de la historia*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1992), 1:71ff.; and Hans-Robert Jauss, “La réplica de la ‘querelle des anciennes et des modernes’ in Schlegel y Schiller,” in *La historia de la literatura como provocación* (Barcelona, 2000), 75ff.

45 Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *Los españoles en la historia* (Madrid, 1947), 255–58.

Ages which, with their institutional disintegration, would have prevented the Spaniards from remembering the history of their unitary “ethos.” The medieval chronicles from the Alfonso Castilian king chronicles would have suffered the consequences of ignoring earlier historians. And, as Pidal argues, the writing of history is always partial, selective, and more so if it is guided by political interests.⁴⁶ Hence the “oversight of archiving memories” (*descuido en archivar memorias*) more prevalent in the Crown of Castile than in Aragon and Navarre, and the inveterate tendency of writers to forgetfulness, beyond the selection of information required by the historical account.

Notwithstanding his essential contributions to the history of language and philological criticism, Pidal’s hermeneutics of medieval history stands on three epistemological and ideological assumptions: first, memories experienced are more numerous, more diverse, and more real than memories recounted. In other words, what is forgotten always exceeds what is remembered in the same way as what is latent is always greater than the conscious; second, historical truth is always on the side of what is forgotten or latent; and, third, these heterogeneous memories that underlie history hold an “indissoluble unity,” which is the ultimate measure of historical knowledge. Finally, truth lies in this unity, understood as a kind of *complexio oppositorum* of the different memories of each period, forgotten or enhanced “according to the pressure of circumstances” (*según el apremio de las circunstancias ambientales*). Such unity within the heterogeneity is analogous to the unity of the subject of history. It is also analogous to a concept of the Middle Ages understood as the authentic *complexio oppositorum* of the most heterogeneous interests of history. Only that conception of medieval memory can be erected as an unquestionable truth; for example,

The provincial Hispanic feeling, facing the [cosmopolitan] city, arises within the Roman Empire, representing the beginning of a national consciousness; or the institution of the Hispanic-Leonese Empire, which had been ignored since the late Middle Ages; or the grouping of the five kingdoms conceived under their dynastic unity.⁴⁷

That desire to rebuild *the* historical memory of *a* Hispanic subject in the Middle Ages also underlies the project of Américo Castro, and the assumptions of those beyond philology and historiography, such as Ortega, Xirau, and before them, Giner or Fernando de los Ríos, who interpreted the history of Spain as the history of an all-encompassing unity.

Faced with the problem of how to make the genealogy of a memory that goes beyond any of its writings into a science, the solution is to decouple history from historiography or, rather, to subordinate the interpretation of the historiographical text to the context

46 “All historiographic works imply a necessary enhancement of some bygone memories, and necessary silence regarding others [...] What then was highlighted is transmitted unchanged to the following centuries, and with this, some are determined to forget what was then discarded” (*Toda obra historiográfica implica necesario realce de algunas memorias pretéritas, y necesario silencio respecto de otras [...] Lo que entonces fue destacado se transmite inalterable a los siglos siguientes, y con esto, se determinan cierto olvido para lo que entonces fue desechado*).

47 *El sentimiento provincial hispánico que, frente a la urbe, surge en el seno del Imperio romano, representando el comienzo de una conciencia nacional; o la institución del Imperio hispano-leonés, ignorada ya desde la Baja Edad Media; o la agrupación de los cinco reinos concebidos bajo su unidad dinástica.* Cited from Menéndez Pidal, *Los españoles*, 257.

of its literary production, placing it within the limits of an original and pervasive oral expression. This is the basic assumption of philological traditionalism: the unity of a historical memory based on a poetic oral use, which is not based on the biological or racial essentialism of the subject, but rather on the morphology, equally biological, of its language. However, according to Pidal's terminology, that emphasis on a *specific* historical memory as a lived memory which has been experienced involves a "partial selection" (*escogimiento parcial*) of memories: a calculated enhancement of those which allows the fusion of the communicative, psychological memory typical of the brief history, and the founding cultural memory typical of long history.⁴⁸ Reduced to poetry, this historical memory unifies the various memories, psychological, profane, religious, moral or legal, ignoring the different modes in which they are written and transmitted, as well as their internal tensions.

A paradigm of this strategy of "Memory" against "Memories" is found in the interpretation of medieval historiography and, particularly, in the Alfonsine chronicles. If, as Pidal says in his studies on the *Romancero*, "literature is born and grows ignoring itself",⁴⁹ the same is true of memory, which is never born as a historiographical enterprise but as poetry: a vulgar historiography, I must say, spontaneous, such as that of "journalist" minstrels. The reading that Pidal, and to an extent, Castro, make of the *Primera Crónica General* or *Estoria de España* weighs the historiographical value of the text for its ability to express the collective memory. Thus what is most relevant, even more than the contents of the texts, is its expressive value, the form of its writing, its "texture" in the words of Castro, which becomes a metonymy of the collective "ethos" that unconsciously encouraged its development. In contrast to earlier chronicles like the *De rebus Hispaniae* by Jiménez de Rada or the *Chronicon mundi* by Lucas de Tuy, the chronicle of Alfonso was written in the vernacular language, and a great part of it by various authors, especially the part written under the reign of Sancho IV, where the influence of the epic is much greater. Castro perceived a "varied and sylvan frond" (*fronda varia y selvática*) in the *Primera Crónica general* or *Estoria de España*, the same that Pidal perceived as a "confusing jungle of tangled fronds" (*selva confusa de enmarañada fronda*) full of arguments for that "vital overflow"⁵⁰ of what is Spanish regarding the linguistic, legal, and spiritual tradition that constituted the framework of Christian-Roman Europe. We cannot go deeper to show the methodological weakness of these interpretations; we refer to an earlier work in which we accept the observations of Georges Martin and Isabel Fernández Ordóñez on the relationships between the historian and the king, and between them and the kingdom ("the historiographical power") to focus attention on the pedagogical and political functions of the chronicles serving a crown keen to reconcile the supremacy of the royal order with the legitimacy of the judges representative of the Castilian nobility against the tyranny of Leon.⁵¹

48 Asmann, *Historia y mito*; and García Cárcel, *La herencia del pasado*.

49 *La literatura nace y crece ignorándose a sí misma*. From Menéndez Pidal, *Los españoles*, 255.

50 *Desborde vital*. From Menéndez Pidal, *Los españoles*, 255–58.

51 Antonio de Murcia, "Memoria histórica de la Edad Media e idea de tradición en Menéndez Pidal y Américo Castro," *Res publica* 17 (2007): 309–28.

Together with Francisco Rico, José Luis Villacañas has emphasized the nature of the *Estoria de España* as “family history” (*historia de familia*), which allows the expression of the transmission of power, and has insisted on its imperial nature which, as Fernández Ordóñez argues, determines that the protagonist is not the people, but the lords who exercised the empire; hence the pedagogical sense. However, Villacañas underscores an essential aspect, which Pidal and Castro had significantly overlooked: the constitution of the *Estoria* as a book, in imitation of the Bible, the ultimate cornerstone of the continuity, stability, transcendence, and therefore, the vicariousness of kings in relation to God.⁵² But all these issues require a critical eye and enter directly into political issues, which, for these philologists, are incompatible with memory, as they require stepping away from the past to analyse it rather than to keep it in mind. And, of course, they are not compatible with what Castro called the “apolitical vitality of the Spaniards.”⁵³

From the perspective of a genuine conceptual history, the main problem with that memory is that of its hermeneutical limits. In other words, how can a historian establish himself as guardian and interpreter of a memory regardless of the awareness that the agents themselves have of it? How can we continually refer to an agent subject of history, as Castro does, ignoring the fragmentary subjects of “the histories”? The solution is simply to roll back memory to its pre-literary time, either to its dormant state or its existential foundation. Pidal rendered great importance to the biological metaphor of latency, which is brilliant and operational even today when it comes to describing the communication processes between oral use and literacy.⁵⁴ What is problematic is not to turn the latent memory into a regulative principle of the production processes and poetic transmission in oral cultures; the problem is to make it into a real principle for the historical continuity and ethno-formation of a subject of history that is anything more than a rhetorical subject.

52 José Luis Villacañas Berlanga, “Apéndice VI: Legitimidad, poder y religión en el Islam. Debate con Américo Castro,” in *La formación de los reinos hispánicos* (Madrid, 2006), 85–123.

53 *Vitalidad apolítica de los españoles*. From Castro, *España en su historia*.

54 Thus, Paul Zumthor has adopted this concept of the latent state as that of a “deep oral use” (*oralidad profunda*), which he defines as “a complex set of common conducts and discursive modalities, that determine a system of depictions and a faculty of all the members of the social body to produce certain signs, to identify and interpret them in the same way” (*un conjunto complejo de conductas y modalidades discursivas comunes, que determinan un sistema de representaciones y una facultad de todos los miembros del cuerpo social de producir ciertos signos, de identificar y de interpretarlos de la misma manera*), thus an oral use that “refers to the first source of the authority that governs the practice (in the absence of ideology) of a society” (*hace referencia a la fuente primera de la autoridad que rige la práctica (a falta de ideología) de una sociedad*). For Zumthor, this is a question of perceiving the cultural productions in a space-time framework that includes them in a perpetual movement made up of collisions, interferences, exchanges, and ruptures in which history is not perceived, in which it remains unaware, as “in the word heard nothing separates what is conditioned by time and what depends on the place” (*nada separa todavía en la palabra oída lo que el tiempo condiciona y lo que depende del lugar*). From Paul Zumthor, *La letra y la voz. De la literatura medieval* (Madrid, 1989), 167–91.

This problem brings us back to the endless dialectic between forgetfulness and memory. If, as Pidal maintains, also in his studies on the *Romancero*, “what is lost is more than what can be found,” and if historical knowledge is based on the excess of what is forgotten, then, rather than a custodian of memory, the medievalist becomes a manager of oversights. Similarly, the philologist officiates as an oracle of what is latent, that which does not have “tangible” truth, like Vulgar Latin, “it has [thanks to hermeneutic mediation] a logical reality as ‘tangible’ as if it were before the eyes.”⁵⁵ Thus, the true subject of history is, paradoxically, that which has been forgotten by it. The latency of what is Hispanic among the Goths does not admit as a rejoinder the fragility and instability, the inability of a patrimonial system in the Visigothic kingdom of Hispania, nor the subsequent documented processes of ethno-formation closer to the constitution of a State. Similarly, the unquestionable existence of a vanished folk poetry on which the *Poema del Cid* is built is precisely because of its disappearance, much more accessible to the memory than the tangible, historical existence of the *Historia Roderici* or the *Carmen Campidoctoris*.

In his methodological justification, Pidal denounced the recalcitrant individualism of those who deny the powers of latency, rescuing the aforementioned reversible formula of the poem that makes the people, and the people that make the poem from proto-Romanticism. However, curiously, this operation has a limit, just where collective authorship is attributed to the written tradition, that is, to an institutionalized conception of literature, such as that applied by Curtius to the reading of the Spanish epic, which closely links its genesis not to a process of national ethno-formation but to an international tradition mediated by the *translatio* of Latin culture. Curiously, that is where Pidal and most Spanish critics, from Lida de Malkiel to Dámaso Alonso, rediscovered the concept of individual creativity, of poetic originality, not in the name of individualism, but of the ethnographic and poetic analogy between subject, language, and culture, a counterpoint to the homology between *imperium*, *ecclesia*, and *studium*. In this controversy, Pidal suddenly becomes an avowed anti-traditionalist.⁵⁶ Thus, he shows that not only are historical memories selective, but also their supposed collective subjects. Given a choice, Pidal here sides with life even if he has to give up tradition; or rather, he redefines the true tradition, one that is not written and, therefore, absent from histories, just as in life, against whose truth any other argument pales.

55 *Lo perdido es más de lo que se puede encontrar; posee [gracias a la mediación hermenéutica] una realidad lógica tan “tangible” como si lo tuviera delante de los ojos.* Cited from Menéndez Pidal, *Los españoles*, 255–58.

56 For the controversy between Curtius and Pidal, see: Antonio de Murcia Conesa, “Estudio preliminar,” in *Escritos de humanismo e hispanismo*, ed. Antonio de Murcia Conesa (Madrid, 2011), 13–74. Also the work of: Ernst Robert Curtius “*El Carmen Campidoctoris (Cid-Rhythmus)*,” in *Escritos de humanismo e hispanismo*, ed. Antonio de Murcia Conesa (Madrid, 2011), 143–55. The controversy is very instructive for evaluating the concepts of memory and tradition applied to history from philology.

Medievalization of Time: Experience and Expectation of the Civil War

In a virulent essay of 1932, *Años decisivos* (translated into Spanish during the civil war, of course, in the fascist-controlled area), Oswald Spengler held that the modern historian

Confuses his mother tongue with the written language of the great cities in which everyone learns to read and write, that is, with the language of newspapers and magazines, which indoctrinate citizens about the "law" of the nation,⁵⁷

while the oral language, that of the common people, expresses the "inner form of an important life which, unconsciously and inadvertently, is performed in each deed and every word."⁵⁸ Contempt for this orality would be the result of modern liberalism and individualism, which replace individuals with the masses. This reference seems significant because it comes from someone who has been widely read in Spain and who inspired several of the categories in Américo Castro, and by linking the essential word, the one reflecting collective oral memory rather than the written one, with villages rather than with the city. This conception of memory is undoubtedly decidedly anti-urban. None of the defenders of that memory, which rests on oral use and the literature generated by it, could recognise that, in fact, apart from the remembrance of the dead (present in the "memorials" of the churches, in which the living and dead appear almost equally by virtue of their importance or contributions to the church community, and in the remembrance of the souls in purgatory through an organized system of prayers and alms), the first obvious manifestation of a will to build a community memory was the "urban memory," contemporary with the development of the cities. Here, one could talk about the need to preserve an identity against other forms of domination not through immediate oral communication, but by the written mediation of municipal archives.

Since his lecture at Princeton, Castro stated on numerous occasions that the Spanish soul always has something of primary humanity in its struggle with the basic problems of human geology. That soul was clearly hardly urban and ill-fits a type of modernity in which "every gesture of true manhood, of free life, is something outrageous, ridiculous, and reprehensible" (*todo gesto de auténtica virilidad, de vida libre, es algo extravagante, ridículo y rechazable*). For Castro, the gesture of life is also the subject of a history of Spain, which manifests itself in the "heart of the language" (*meollo de la lengua*). Against Pidal, the author of *España en su historia* emphasized the existential and experiential nature of historical memory. That was the reason why the subject should not be sought in pre-medieval figurations. But it was also the reason why it endured forever prefigured in the Middle Ages. History has an obligation not only to know the past but to bear in mind that the Middle Ages are not only an imprecise historical epoch but, above all, the point of intersection between the vertical and horizontal planes of history, that is, between the planes of succession and continuity. The collective subject is formed pre-

57 *Confunde su lengua madre con el lenguaje escrito de las grandes ciudades en el que cada uno aprende a leer y escribir, esto es, con el lenguaje de los periódicos y revistas, que iluminan al ciudadano sobre el "derecho" de la nación.* Cited from Oswald Spengler, *Años decisivos* (Granada, 1938), 42–43.

58 *Forma interior de una vida importante que, inconsciente e inadvertidamente se realiza en cada hecho y cada palabra.* From Spengler, *Años decisivos*, 43.

cisely where succession crosses continuity, which has its individual reflection in the intersection, or rather the merging of interiority and externality:

The functional structure of Hispania, its reality, is given in the expression "I woke up feeling sick" and in a thousand other manifestations, which those who had dealings with Spaniards of the eleventh century in the sanctuary of Compostela or of the twentieth century in the Puerta del Sol of Madrid, can see.⁵⁹

In this horizontal plane "past moments experienced by those who were and continue to be numerators of the broad common denominator of their own history survive and take on their own existence."⁶⁰ The horizontality between author and reader is presented as proof not only of the possibility of receiving the texts, but also of the common vital abode between past and future and, therefore, of the futility of a history whose purpose is not to reveal our entanglement in the "palimpsest of past life" (*palimpsesto de la vida pasada*). The common abode is associated with the structure of personal existence, which, for example, with Muslims, is what allowed them to adopt the ancient technologies and sciences, but not the revival of Homer or Sophocles. Only literature can testify to this structure, in the literary use of language, which, not because it is literary (*littera*), but by being interwoven into life, style, and consciousness, becomes a privileged reflection of expressions of life's experience in the common abode. To that end, once again, Pidal's disciple must remind us of the cultural, collective origin of national literature. An origin in which legal custom and poetic oral life are mixed up, as in Pidal, although with many nuances, as Eduardo de Hinojosa has taught in his work on law in the *Poema del Cid*.

Castro, like Pidal, and in general all those who questioned the Middle Ages (and also ultimately Ortega himself), solely from a consideration of historical memory as a "living arrangement," tended towards a geographical rather than a chronological conception of history. According to this conception, the philologist could move between different moments in history. Therefore, in his response to Leo Spitzer's objections to the poor attention to the genesis of the concepts used in *España en su historia*, Castro said, "The question of how it was possible for a structure to be set up over the centuries is independent, secondary, to the reality of the structure itself once set up."⁶¹ That is why he did not take into account, for example, the historical times involved in the wars of medieval Spain, nor that Christian warfare, the inheritance of Constantine, was declared before the *jihad*, even before the early Christians could understand the Muslim world. Therefore, he insisted on attributing to the cult of Santiago a crucial role as a generator of

59 *La funcional estructura de Hispania—su realidad—se da en "amanecí enfermo," y en mil otras manifestaciones que puede observar quien trate a hispanos del siglo XI en el santuario de Compostela, o a los del siglo XX en la Puerta del Sol de Madrid.* Cited from Américo Castro, "Respuesta a Leo Spitzer," *Nueva revista de filología hispánica*, 3 (1949): 152.

60 *Sobreviven como propios los momentos del pasado vividos por quienes fueron y continúan siendo numeradores del amplio común denominador de su historia propia.* From Américo Castro, *Sobre el nombre y el quién de los españoles* (Madrid, 1965), 81.

61 *La cuestión de cómo haya sido posible que una estructura se constituya a lo largo de los siglos es independiente, secundaria, respecto de la realidad de la estructura misma una vez fijada.* From Américo Castro, *De la España que aún no conocía*, 3 vols. (Ciudad de México, 1972), 2:249–66.

military endeavours, symmetrical to the Muslim *jihad*, and of an idea of empire whose European source he disregarded. Thus, he paid scant attention to the way the idea of apocalypse determined the historical times of the Christian kingdoms.

This geographical conception of historical times tried to bridge the gap between historical experience and the horizon of expectations, typical of modernity. Hispanic uniqueness consisted of demonstrating that the terrible and modern experience of the civil war was fully integrated into a historical experience, whose terrible expectations could only be neutralized by a knowledge of the Middle Ages, whose permanent memory becomes the key to overcoming it.

As Castro told his audience in Princeton, only a cataclysm, with the intervention of another superior historical agent, can modify the common abode and reconstitute it in another form. However, he told his audience little or nothing about the conditions and material consequences (technical, political, economic, or social) of this “cataclysm.” How is the abode maintained after the expulsion of the Jews and the Moriscos? How can we keep it, especially after the civil war? Castro’s response, in line with other intellectuals of his time, stands on the finding that the Hispanic subject had survived, even after the war, oblivious to the acceleration of time that was threatening to destroy civilization. And precisely by also being oblivious to the crisis of modern Europe and its rationalist science, that subject would have to continue contributing to that civilization something that neither German culture with its *Wissenschaft*, nor the French one with its *clarité*, could provide: its tenacious approach to life as a problem and its even more tenacious willingness to face death.

The itineraries of Hispanic thought in the twentieth century are inseparable from this phenomenon, perhaps specific to Spain, but always measured against or confronted with a European idea of modernity. It was against this idea that, for much of the century, before and after the civil war, an essential part of the Spanish intelligentsia strove to understand the Hispanic “historical being” as a singular essence for death, whose trans-historical permanence was revealed in a constant disposition for civil war. The fact that the dramatic self-consciousness of this destiny was inseparable from what we have called the “medieval argument” indicates the important role played by historical memory in the work of some “elites” who placed their own survival and that of their nation in it.