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### ROYALIST MEDIEVALISMS IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTION: From Robert de Lézardière to Chateaubriand, 1792-1831

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RELIEF 8 (1), 2014 – ISSN: 1873-5045. P 20-47

<http://www.revue-relief.org>

URN:NBN:NL:UI:10-1-116438

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This essay examines the histories of the French monarchy composed by French royalists of the period 1787-1831 with a threefold aim: to develop a model of how French royalist medievalisms evolved from Revolution to Restoration; to investigate whether the French Revolution altered perceptions of the Middle Ages; and to elaborate a theory of the relationship between medievalism and politics. The exercise is especially revelatory when studying periods of severe press censorship like the one that occupies us, and political groups inimical – like our monarchists – to the theoretical expression of political ideals.

From the outbreak of the French Revolution to the end of the French Restoration – the regime that saw the Bourbons return to the French throne (1814-1830) – few could have been more eager to revisit the Middle Ages than the French defenders of monarchy. Especially for the legitimists – the supporters of Louis XVIII (1755-1824) and Charles X (1757-1836), brothers and successors of Louis XVI (1754-93) – 1789 had created a break with the past that it was urgent to repair. One ready means of doing so was to restore the material remains of the medieval that legitimated the aristocracy as a class. Thus emigrated French nobles became editors of ‘original’ medieval documents, specialists of things Gothic and zealous contributors to rendering medieval studies into a serious scholarly occupation (Kendrick, 97). Among their erudite activities was that of turning medievalism itself into a subtle conduit of political thought. Convinced that political philosophy was an agent and symptom of modernity’s *malaise* – of the abstraction, discursiveness and

systematics encouraged by the Enlightenment – aristocratic royalists scoured the past for indirect means of expressing their political beliefs. The medieval period suited their purposes ideally, since the monarchy they supported was a medieval invention, and its present calamities had been partly prepared by the aspersions that the eighteenth century had cast on the Middle Ages. Vindicating the medieval was hence a means of upholding the monarchical<sup>1</sup> – a means whose roundaboutness was particularly welcome at a time of severe press censorship.

If studying the Middle Ages could become a means of articulating politics, the obverse was true as well: politics could become a lens for looking out on the Middle Ages (Bloch and Nichols, 4). The revolutionary age in Europe<sup>2</sup> was the heyday of the ‘liberal Middle Ages’,<sup>3</sup> of those mythically ferocious times when freedom-loving barbarians burst out of German forests to spread an ethic of equality and generosity through war, and to craft a primitive democracy led by kings and founded on inclusive assemblies. It was an eighteenth-century aristocratic tale most famously told by Montesquieu, who extolled the early Middle Ages as the unspoiled crucible of the liberal values of the present. Bourgeois narrators, of course, were less enthusiastic: to them the Middle Ages seemed less harmonious and Promethean, more violent and superstitious. The abbé Dubos, Montesquieu’s adversary and the conjurer of a Roman rather than a barbarian medieval world, was the most learned and prolific expounder of their case.<sup>4</sup>

The crumbling of the old world changed the fortunes of aristocratic and bourgeois medievalisms. The builders of the new order sought to mask the traumatic break between old and new, and re-establish a continuity between past and present. Silence – denying the recent, violent past – was the most simple way to achieve this, and indeed Restoration France entered into a pact of forgetting (Lok). Yet oblivion could not suffice, and royalists found a companion strategy for it in the art of recombining aristocratic and bourgeois medievalisms. Their goal was to retrieve from the more remote past the facets of it that most resembled the present, to find both agreeable continuities – like common ideals of liberty – and more disturbing ones – like the conflicts that evoked revolutionary terror. The past emerged from this exercise with altered features. It now seemed both more familiar and more alien: more familiar, in that it had borne catastrophes similar to those of the present generation, and that whatever was left of it now seemed inexpressibly precious; more alien, in that the parts of it that were lost seemed all the more painfully distant to those desirous of retrieving them. Gone were the early modern days when medievalists emphasized the seamless continuity between the medieval and

the modern:<sup>5</sup> the Revolution had precipitated the differentiation of the past that had been advancing for centuries – and that is the natural consequence of scholarly advance – until the medieval became truly ‘other’.

The Revolution also bolstered the fortunes of varieties of medievalism so far unexamined by scholars.<sup>6</sup> Foremost among them were the Germanic Middle Ages which Montesquieu had exalted in his mission to defend the nobility. This type of medievalism fired aristocratic imaginations on both sides of the revolutionary divide. In the early nineteenth century, however, it began to co-exist with other, more bourgeois accounts of the Middle Ages. Drawing on the histories of the previous century, these types of medievalism wished to de-barbarize obscure ages. They focused on non-Frankish cultures – Gallic, Roman, and Christian, among others<sup>7</sup> – and rendered the medieval more antique or more modern in order to articulate various class, constitutional, and religious interests, and to uphold different ideals of liberty. This last point is particularly worth emphasizing. For far from opposing freedom, as is commonly supposed, royalists of the revolutionary age argued that the Revolution had stolen liberty from monarchy; that it had used it to disguise a variety of despotism without precedent; and that monarchy was worth preserving because it was, among forms of government, liberty’s best friend.

If a sympathy for liberty united our authors, they were defined as a group by the belief that Providence guides history. Some readers may find such beliefs disturbing, and even question the value of studying works that contain them. I would like to emphasize here that – despite the fact that they have been written out of the canon in the process of constructing our present cultural and political identities – the royalists considered here were representative, *precisely because of their providentialist sensibilities*, of the majority opinion of both nineteenth-century elites and nineteenth-century common people. Remembering this fact is crucial for drawing a picture of nineteenth-century historiography and political thinking *als sie eigentlich gewesen sind* – rather than the one we would prefer to have been. Moreover, historical providentialism should shock us less if we consider that it prefigured antithetical modes of historiography that remain familiar to us: whether it was deterministic historical writing – notably Marxist historical materialism, whose denunciation of religion is but a thin veil for the debt it owed to providential thinking – or the myriad historiographies that emphasize historical contingency and the influence of factors beyond human control. This is without considering that historical providentialism is compatible with the production of compelling historical insights – as the reader may judge from

the material presented in this paper – and that magical paradigms and symbolism continue to pervade our culture and condition our thinking.<sup>8</sup>

This essay examines the histories of the French monarchy composed by French royalists of the period 1787-1831 with a threefold aim: to develop a model of how French royalist medievalisms evolved from Revolution to Restoration; to investigate whether the French Revolution altered perceptions of the Middle Ages; and to elaborate a theory of the relationship between medievalism and politics. In this latter connection I am particularly interested in inquiring how particular political medievalisms might correspond to specific political orientations. The exercise is especially revelatory when studying periods of severe press censorship like the one that occupies us, and political groups inimical – like our monarchists – to the theoretical expression of political ideals.

#### **Four royalists**

From the eve of the French Revolution to the close of the Restoration (1787-1831), four royalists composed histories of the French monarchy dwelling extensively on the medieval period: Marie-Charlotte-Pauline Robert de Lézardière (1754-1835), Jacques-Maximilien Benjamin Bins de Saint-Victor (1772-1858), François-Dominique de Reynaud, comte de Montlosier (1755-1838), and François-René, vicomte de Chateaubriand (1768-1848). All four were *émigrés*, legitimists, and medievalists. With the exception of the *enchanteur*,<sup>9</sup> they are exceedingly ill-known: Montlosier has only one, eighty-year-old, mostly psychological study devoted to him (Brugerette) and an article on his ideas of war and conflict (Piguet); Lézardière one section of a book on the descent of Montesquieu (Carcassonne, 478-518), two nineteenth-century pieces (Merland and Sourdeval) a thesis (Signoret-Serrano), and a rather brief recent article (Carmaux); and Saint-Victor, to my knowledge, though exceedingly erudite and an excellent writer, has never before been the subject of scholarly attention.

Of the four, Robert de Lézardière is the only woman, as well as the only one who wrote before the Revolution. A liberal enthusiast of Montesquieu, she represents royalism before the Revolution – and we shall see that her history of France's medieval monarchy contrasts notably with those that her fellow monarchists wrote in the nineteenth century. A patriotic legalist, her writer's vocation began at the age of seventeen in response to the Maupeou coup – the political maneuver of 1771 whereby France's Chancellor broke the *parlements*, imprisoning and exiling their members, eliminating their posts, and dividing their functions. The writings and notes that Lézardière patiently compiled for

years in the seclusion of her father's château in the Vendée culminated in her *magnum opus*, the *Théorie des lois politiques de la monarchie française*, a monumentally erudite – if never finished – history of French political law from late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages. Its goal was to teach French people the historic rights and liberties that the *parlements* defended, and that lay embedded within the French constitution: for it was only ignorance, Lézardière believed, that caused the French to submit to tyranny, and that prevented the monarchy from becoming the full haven of liberty that its barbarian creators had once intended it to become. That opinion was of course widespread among Enlightened *littérateurs*.

Lézardière's family sent the *Théorie* to Louis XVI along with her other legal compositions,<sup>10</sup> but the text did not appear in print before 1791. In that year, the king ordered the first volumes published under the supervision of his loyal minister Chrétien de Malesherbes (1721-94) in a last-ditch attempt to justify the monarchy. But revolutionary violence impeded the distribution of the work (Carcassonne, 480). The text's completion was also thwarted when Lézardière and her family emigrated during the Terror, leaving her notes and documents to be dispersed. Throughout her life, though, Lézardière remained loyal to the Bourbons. When the Restoration arrived, she welcomed it, hoping that the Charte – the royal constitution that Louis XVIII proclaimed in 1814 – would ensure 'the two objects of her cult, monarchy and liberty'.<sup>11</sup> She would not live to see her work published: the *Théorie* was only printed posthumously in 1844, thanks once more to the care of her family, as well as to public funds allocated for the purpose by François Guizot (1787-1874), then the government's shadow head, and Abel-François Villemain (1790-1870), the Vice-President of the Conseil royal de l'Instruction publique.

The liberal rationalism that emanates from Lézardière's prose contrasts notably with the conservative Catholicism of the *Tableau historique et pittoresque de Paris, depuis les gaulois jusqu'à nos jours* of Jacques Bins de Saint-Victor, which was initially published in 1807 and saw a second edition in 1822. As impressively erudite as Lézardière's *Théorie*, the *Tableau* could not differ from it more in nearly every other respect. For if the *Théorie* is a liberal tribute to Montesquieu, Saint-Victor's description of Paris is the worthy work of a man reputed to be one of the most gifted journalists of the *ultras* – those legitimists famed for being more royalist than the king. Saint-Victor was not only very conservative, but became more so overtime: by his own account, the *Tableau's* second edition is more hostile than the first to the *parlements* and the University, those age-old adversaries of the kings of France, and more ardent

in its defense of the Jesuits, those soldiers of Christ renowned for their support of authorities spiritual and temporal.

Although royalist medievalism and the *tableau* of a city may at first seem to be only uncertainly related, for Saint-Victor the history of Paris and that of the French monarchy were so intimately bound up with each other that the one could not be told without the other. This was a provocative opinion to voice in the midst of the Restoration. Chateaubriand, who had collaborated with Saint-Victor on the journal *Le conservateur* (1818-22), objected to it loudly. 'If one wants to know our ancient fatherland', he wrote indignantly, invoking the language of *tableaux* that Saint-Victor had used for his title, 'it is necessary to recompose the general picture [*tableau*] with the particular pictures [*tableaux*] of the provinces: the sole means of re-establishing the aristocratic character that our history must have, instead of the monarchical character that it has been lyingly given'.<sup>12</sup> A project like Saint-Victor's was objectionable to most royalists because it suggested that French royal power had been strongly centralised, which was simply untrue, since (Chateaubriand implied) it was not the monarchy, but the Revolution which had rendered government despotic by ruling entirely from Paris, and ignoring the needs and sensibilities of the provinces. The opinion, of course, required forgetting the ways in which France's absolutist kings, and notably Louis XIV, had prepared revolutionary centralization.

Psychologically, writing the history of the French capital building by building, street by street and neighbourhood by neighbourhood was an attempt to regain control of the city and restore a sense of familiarity after the experience of upheaval. In this respect, Saint-Victor prefigured later nineteenth-century associations of anti-revolutionary surveillance with a light-flooded urban space (Prendergast, 32), responding to the French Revolution much as Baudelaire's *Le spleen de Paris* (1869) would do to Haussmann's transformation of the French capital (Terdiman, 304-5). At heart, both texts were conservative manifestos, rejections of abstraction that reflected on the built environment to make political thought spring from an awareness of the bodily and the material. Saint-Victor and Chateaubriand were at one on this point. To write the political history of France, the vicomte averred,

It is not enough to search for facts in comfortable editions, it is necessary to see with one's own eyes what one can name the physiognomy of times, the certificates that the hand of Charlemagne and that of Saint Louis touched, the exterior form of charters, the papyrus, the parchment, the ink, the writing, the seals, the thumbnails; it is necessary [...] to handle the centuries and breathe their dust.<sup>13</sup>

If the further observation that Chateaubriand made regarding *De la monarchie française* (1814) is any indication, his friend Montlosier attended flawlessly to the imperative of being molded by one's materials:

The work of M. de Montlosier on feudalism is filled with new ideas, expressed with an independent style, which feels like the Middle Ages. If the old lords of the keeps had known how to make anything other than a cross with a pen, they would have written like this, but they would not have seen so far.<sup>14</sup>

A leader of the party of the *monarchiens* during the French Revolution<sup>15</sup> and a friend of Chateaubriand's, Montlosier was perhaps the most conscious of our four royalists of the need to delve into history in order to do politics. *De la monarchie* itself was written for a political occasion: Napoleon commissioned it to celebrate his 'various restorations' of France's liberties.<sup>16</sup> But the medieval past was not solely an instrument of political expression for Montlosier: it was also a nostalgic ideal, a time of virtue and pure emotion to which it was impossible to return. The sadness that tinged this knowledge perhaps made of the comte the most reactionary of the monarchists here considered, as well as the one with the keenest sense of his own intellectual and political marginality (Montlosier, I vi).

In medieval matters, however, the odd man out was really Chateaubriand. An admirer of antiquity and the Renaissance, he had an outlook on the Middle Ages that was at once melancholy (Milner, 13) and ambiguous. When the century began, he pioneered the rehabilitation of the medieval – most famously with his *Génie du christianisme* (1801) – but by the 1820s, he had distanced himself from the very fashion he had launched (Berchet, 177-193), at once deploring the medieval for its brutality and praising it for the courage with which it had borne future ages in its womb (Chateaubriand, 151). His political medievalism reflects this last, more hesitant attitude. It is contained mostly in the fragments of the *Histoire de France* that he started in 1812 but never completed,<sup>17</sup> in the massive *Études historiques* (1831) that he intended to serve as a preface to the *Histoire*, and in some passages of the *Réflexions politiques* (1814).

In all, though dispersed in widely varied texts, and written from very diverse perspectives, the reflections of our authors on France's medieval monarchy focus on two main themes: the vicissitudes of political violence, and the constitutional contributions of different cultural groups.<sup>18</sup> I explore these themes in what follows. The mostly ill-known nature of my materials has persuaded me to organise my discussion by author, with the aim of

developing my subject while providing the first introduction in English to nineteenth-century royalist medievalisms.

### **Harmony unmoved by time: Lézardière**

A description of the development of French constitutional law from late antique to late medieval times, Lézardière's *Théorie* takes to heart Montesquieu's recommendation that the juristic documents of the nation's past, though 'cold, dry, insipid, and hard' be 'devoured, as the fable says that Saturn devoured stones'.<sup>19</sup> The young woman's *opus* is a monument to erudition. Yet the myriad facts it contains are all marshalled to support a single idea: that France's harmonious institutions deployed themselves logically and harmoniously across time to realize faithfully the principles of political organisation they contained (Carcassonne, 484-5). At certain times, of course, violence prevented harmony from reigning. Private wars and trials by faith rendered the medieval juridical system unjust (Lézardière, III, 79) as the abusive feudal order became a millennium-long betrayal of France's original constitution. Yet even these many centuries of disorder were but a 'momentary accident which, born of the forced dissolution of the primitive order, tend[ed] only to re-establish it' (IV, 141). In fact the primitive order not only survived a thousand years of feudalism through sheer inexorable consonance, but also managed to consummate itself in modern royal absolutism.

Had he read the *Théorie*, Chateaubriand would probably have pleaded with his contemporaries not to judge it too severely. 'We had in our heads', he writes of his Old Regime precursors, 'the type of a grave monarchy, always the same, walking squarely with three orders and a *parlement* in long robes; hence that monotony of accounts, that uniformity of manners that renders the reading of our general history insipid. Historians were then reading room men, who had never managed affairs'. The observation applies readily to the timid Vendean who penned her *Théorie* through years of studious retreat in her family's ancestral château. '[I]f we perceive facts under a new light', Chateaubriand went on, 'let us not imagine that this is due to the sole force of our intelligence. We come after the fallen monarchy; we measure on the ground the broken colossus, we find that it has different proportions than the ones that it seemed to have when it was upright'.<sup>20</sup>

Uprightness had bred faith in monarchy, especially among providentialists like Lézardière, who saw whatever lasted through time bearing God's stamp of approval. In the case of the French monarchy, the divinity manifested itself by perpetuating political freedom. The general



assemblies of Germanic tribes which met every month at the time of the new or full moon, and which were composed of all men who were free and hence obliged to carry weapons, were liberty's original cradles. Crucially, these deliberative bodies were not monarchical institutions, because initially, the Franks were republicans with no king. It was only after the fifth century that they began to elect magistrates and name princes. It then took even longer for elective monarchy to become hereditary. Yet even when the latter arrived, it could not alter the barbarians' 'essentially democratic' government, since the plenitude of political power remained vested in the general assembly of the people (Lézardière, I, 61) – a historical priority that for Lézardière denotes political superiority.

A narrative like this suggests republican sympathies that become even more evident when Lézardière portrays the nobility and clergy as secondary orders that developed late, serving only to preserve popular freedom and guarantee civic virtue. The clergy, in particular, promoted feelings of loyalty among the people, and of protection among the royalty and the aristocracy, but it did nothing in this ambit that the magistracy had not achieved. In fact the clergy did not help political virtue to form (IV, 142), and it was even to blame during the Merovingian dynasty when its properties were usurped (II, 60). As for the pope, he began to influence the nomination of bishops rather late, in the ninth century (II, 32), thus signaling his irrelevance to the French constitution.

The origins of French political culture, therefore, lie among the Franks rather than in Christianity. The 'Germanic genius', writes Lézardière, 'despised civil advantages, to occupy itself only with political interests'.<sup>21</sup> The notion of political interest was primal for her: where her successors would borrow from the Romantics to emphasize Germanic passion and sentiment, she remained an eighteenth-century rationalist. In fact her politics seems to have left no room for sentiment, preferring to concentrate on economic relations. Thus she explains that honour first referred to the possession of landed property and to the taxes pertaining to it (I, 69), while liberty was a type of political relation between state and people, in particular one grounded in a healthy system of public finance quite unlike that of ancient Rome (I, 32). Lézardière here follows Montesquieu, whose property-based account of monarchy included a discussion of relationships of credit.<sup>22</sup> And she imitates the Bordeaux president in dismissing the idea that the Gauls and Romans could have contributed to France's primitive order: too debased by servitude, and thus too foreign to the creativity that can only be born of freedom, these peoples were condemned from the start to political sterility (I, 55). In the

making of France, the Franks alone counted. It was they, and they alone, who had created the polity where equality was an 'amiable exchange of services and aid' between the classes, and the society where 'continual relations of protection and services [...] retraced in a thousand ways the touching images of a paternal service'.<sup>23</sup> It was they too who had begotten the kings of France, uniquely republican monarchs who renounced despotism's splendor to incarnate the adage: 'Be among them as one of them' (IV, 141).

Ever burning equality's flame, then, the Old Regime colossus had remained motionless through the centuries, a democracy disguised as a monarchy that breathed only liberty, and did so with regular impassivity.

### **Saint-Victor, the anti-Lézardière**

From his portrayal of the French monarchy to his narrative of constitutional development, Saint-Victor was the precise contrary of Lézardière. The Revolution had convinced this aggrieved Catholic of the alterity of the past. Thus where she emphasised the continuity between the medieval and the modern like an early modern medievalist, he insisted on the rupture between past and present, complaining that

[n]othing can be clearly explained in the history of the first centuries of our monarchy, when one writes with the prejudices, the traditions and the customs of the monarchy as Henri IV, Richelieu and Louis XIV had made it. Yet this history has not been otherwise written; and it is not easy to destroy the errors that even the most serious historians have spread on so serious a subject.<sup>24</sup>

Saint-Victor's past was also more doomed and more violent than Lézardière's. Where she saw a primevally wise constitution developing gradually, logically, harmoniously, and inevitably in accordance with liberty, he portrayed 'an ensemble so badly constituted' (II, 2) that it 'had within itself, like everything that is purely human, its principle of destruction',<sup>25</sup> and whose very 'existence' was a 'miracle' ('le miracle de son existence', II,2). The Franks were no geniuses for him, and feudalism was a time of persecution. Fiefs arose from 'the continual movement of barbarians' and from the 'ceaselessly reborn calamity of invasions' that destroyed the Roman Empire.<sup>26</sup> Disaster was unending throughout the feudal centuries. '[C]alamities [...] exhausted' France, and 'the most revolting use of force' ensured 'the oppression of the weak and poor'.<sup>27</sup> Royal authority was threatened until feudalism itself was destroyed, and 'a general system of independence' was established 'which resembled disorder and anarchy'.<sup>28</sup> France, in short, would have been stillborn if the 'spiritual power [had not] become preponderant within the State'<sup>29</sup> – the

obverse of Lézardière's claim that the Church was a mere and ultimately unnecessary auxiliary to liberty.

Unenamoured of the barbarian Middle Ages that kept Lézardière in awe, Saint-Victor refused to see the Germanic assemblies that proclaimed popular liberty at the heart of the French constitution. For him, monarchy developed out of itself, not out of democracy, and it fought ceaselessly for dear life. Growing messily and miraculously, it was sustained in its struggle only by the Church, which instead of being a late and clumsy arrival, as in Lézardière's *Théorie*, enjoyed a 'gradual increase of its influence' that testified to the 'legitimacy of [its] power, its force and its duration'. The Church established a spiritual empire over the Franks, whom Saint-Victor portrays – again in contrast to Lézardière, and more in harmony with the Romantics – not as rational politicians, but as a fundamentally passionate people. Inveterate breeders of violence until the true religion enlightened them (I, 737), the forests' fierce children attained glory only when the Church directed them. The Crusades, not democracy, fulfilled them:

It was above all when the Church, letting out a cry of distress that resounded in the whole of Europe, called all its children to the defence of the holy lands profaned by the infidels, that it was possible to recognise all that there was of FAITH and religious enthusiasm in those warring races, and what it was possible to expect from those new and ardent souls, as soon as one could direct their courage and their activity toward a noble and useful goal.<sup>30</sup>

Religion, in fact, was not only a civil servant as it was for Lézardière, but the creator of political equality and the defender of the oppressed. 'It spoke, it threatened', writes Saint-Victor of the clergy,

its words brought disquiet to guilty consciences, reassured the weak [...] temples became asylums always open to the oppressed [...] from [ecclesiastical] tribunals went off, against those that [ecclesiastical] exhortations had not recalled, judgments that no guilty man, however powerful, could avoid, because the whole of society was in charge of executing them.<sup>31</sup>

Predictably, Saint-Victor and Lézardière extolled different medieval periods. They both agreed that feudalism was violent, but where Lézardière championed the early Middle Ages as a golden age of republican freedom and dismissed feudalism as the chance happening that betrayed it, Saint-Victor looked upon the later Middle Ages – especially the last years of the reign of Charles V (1338-80) – as the golden age of the blossoming of France's 'true monarchy', an affective order that was 'a living image of the family'.<sup>32</sup> Under

'true monarchy' royal authority was secure enough to restrain violence and excess; yet power was decentralized – as it had been under feudalism – so that liberty was preserved. For despite what one might suppose, Saint-Victor resembled his fellow legitimists in being no absolutist: for all his support of kings, his ideal government was incompatible with their unchallenged power. With the possible exception of Bonald, who remained quiet on this point (Klinck, 192), this opinion was universal among monarchists of the post-revolutionary period.

Due to the Capetians' follies, Saint-Victor goes on, 'true monarchy' was approximated but not consummated in France. Saint Louis' descendants weakened the Church instead of seeking refuge in it (II, 425-6) – thus combating the 'salutary influence of the spiritual power'<sup>33</sup>– and they allied themselves with the Third Estate – thereby creating a 'blind and impetuous force'.<sup>34</sup> It was this circumstance that prepared the unhappy years of Charles V's early reign, marked by the revolts of the Paris bourgeoisie under the leadership of Étienne Marcel (1302[?]-58), whose plots to arouse Parisian street passions prefigured the popular terrors of the 1790s. Yet if violence kept punctuating time, it introduced only one rift in political history: the bourgeois revolution that almost gave birth to 'true monarchy'. Saint-Victor's narrative is otherwise continuous, a fact probably encouraged by the urban description to which he binds his narrative: for Paris may have been consumed by periodic fires, but it grew steadily with the centuries.

As for the aristocracy, Saint-Victor did not think highly of it: he blamed it for conducting private wars, for abusing 'the weak and the poor', and for rendering the monarchy incapable of maintaining order (I, 75, 684). He reflected these views when recounting the contributions that various peoples had made to France's constitution. Contesting Montesquieu's thesis of Frankish dominance, he thought much more highly than Lézardière of the Gauls – whose founding of Paris and struggle against the Romans he describes with sympathetic detail – and of the Romans – whose legacy he appreciates, not least for helping to form the Church. Thus where Lézardière contended that Roman laws and customs were too slavish to be politically productive, Saint-Victor wrote that 'Roman law was conserved by the Frankish kings wherever it was established before the conquest, and that the clergy did not cease for a single instant to be under the protection of the Roman law which was its national law'.<sup>35</sup> France's political order therefore arose from the mix of three different cultures: the Roman, the Gallic and the Frankish. An empire of free warriors like the one described by Lézardière could never have produced a free polity as she claimed. On the contrary, it would have been despotic. 'It is

a radical vice attached to all conquest', wrote Saint-Victor, 'when the winner [...] brings to the midst of the conquered nation his national spirit and his foreign customs, when, from the beginning of his domination differences humiliating for [his new subjects] are established, exciting in them keen resentments'.<sup>36</sup> By contrast, truly successful political orders, like the one that established itself in the late Middle Ages, avoid empire and mix cultures as well as classes. The opinion may look astonishing under a pen so conservative, but only if it is taken out of context: Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), that supposed paragon of Reaction<sup>37</sup> and contemporary of Saint-Victor – for whose *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* (1821) Saint-Victor wrote the preface – was also an enemy of empire (Maistre, XIV, 257). In the eyes of disciples of Augustine like these two, there was no justice, virtue or honour in cultural domination, or in imperial expansion and military aggression. Their hatred of Bonaparte, in short, was not capricious, even if the keyword in their world was "authority".

No account of France's medieval past could have served more ably the ultramontanist ultraroyalism that Saint-Victor represented than the centralist and ecclesiastically minded anti-imperialism of the *Tableau*.

### **Montlosier, the nostalgic aristocrat**

Although he, too, invoked Providence, Montlosier envisioned the past as hopelessly remote and history as a continuum of violence. On these points, he was just like Saint-Victor, and he resembled many other survivors of the Revolution. But the comte was unique in believing that the Middle Ages – indeed world history – was split into two main periods characterised by different types of violence. The first was that of the 'Frank[ish] wars [*guerres franques*]'<sup>38</sup> practiced by the Franks. These private conflicts, which Lézardière and Saint-Victor lamented, Montlosier vindicated as constitutive of the ancient regime of the Gauls. The Franks had not invented them: they had been a part of the world's administration since the beginning of time. As for these barbarians themselves, Montlosier discerned their essential character neither in passion nor in relational reason, but in the transparency that enables virtue. A defender of the aristocracy, he found the Germanic Middle Ages inspiring: he portrayed medieval barbarians neither as republicans nor as conquerors, but as Romantic avatars of the liberated and generous beings of Montesquieuian lore, sincere warriors who 'cultivated only courage, honor, devotion, and all the virtues of the heart'.<sup>39</sup> A historical chasm marked the end of their ascendancy.

Indeed for Montlosier the true break between past and present did not come at the dawn of the medieval, but with the high point of the Gothic.

Before then, France was governed by institutions of the highest antiquity whose origins modern writers (composers of a 'heap of dreams, futilities and falsehoods'<sup>40</sup>) wrongly assigned to later times. It was here that Montlosier made his most innovative contribution – the very one that he believed 'condemned' his thought 'to forgetfulness and obscurity'.<sup>41</sup> He proposed that the 'bourgeois revolution' that interrupted the Gothic had to be regarded 'as the greatest event that has been known among peoples since the origin of the world'<sup>42</sup> – a cataclysm even greater than the French Revolution it prepared. Led by the emergent Third Estate, which was educated at the newly founded University and allied itself with the king, this revolution was an insurrection of the 'faculties of the mind'<sup>43</sup> against Frankish virtue. It put an end to the 'Frank wars' – an unfortunate development in the opinion of Montlosier, who went so far as to regret the Peace of God for forbidding them (I, 189). And it disguised its tyranny by blaming the nobility (I, 182) – another harbinger of 1789 – and multiplying acts of ennoblement (I, 262). The result was 'a pretty good anarchy',<sup>44</sup> the quiet and insidious destruction of not only barbarian culture, but more momentously of the human social order as it had until then been known.

This shockingly pessimistic portrait highlights the violence that Montlosier discerns pervading the human experience, a perception of disorder that had not only revolutionary but also more personal roots. Following a spiritual crisis in his youth, Montlosier did not rescind Catholicism or belief in Providence, but he does seem to have lost faith in the Church as an instrument of social cohesion – an opinion that set him apart from his fellow royalists. *De la monarchie française* credits the Church with no special powers of social or political organisation (*Ibid*, I, 68, 141-142, 317) and appeals less to Providence and reason than it does to accident and force. Thus the latter half of the Middle Ages witnessed

[a]n ensemble of old institutions half-effaced and of new institutions, without a relationship to the old institutions: all this coming closer together, stirring itself blindly, colliding, attacking, and reduced, to coordinate itself, to the sole principle of a blind force of necessity: such is the state of France during all the time that writers have celebrated as the time of the *great police*.<sup>45</sup>

Paradoxically, the rediscovery of Roman law made this disorder possible. Like Lézardière, Montlosier admires the Franks and believes the Romans to be debased. Unlike her, however, he sees Roman law as very productive, in fact excessively so, since it became a pillar of the 'bourgeois revolution'. The Roman legal principle *quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem*<sup>46</sup> founded the

Roman monarchy, the despotic regime that the Third Estate instituted to succeed the feudal monarchy. But the Roman monarchy did not thrive alone. It coexisted with the Hebrew monarchy that the clergy invented, a regime that drew on the Bible to ascribe to French kings the same rights and titles once belonging to the ancient Jewish ones. Montlosier disapproved of it. The kings of Israel, he pointed out, had lacked the aristocratic institutions that ensured French liberty – they had had no *parlements* of barons, or Estates General, or assemblies of the *champ de mai* (I, 311). Hence, Montlosier implied, neither the Third Estate, which invented the Roman monarchy, nor the clergy, which devised the Hebrew one, were trustworthy constitutional agents. Worse, they were betrayers and destroyers of the Frankish aristocracy, that perpetuator of the world's primitive order that had once formed France's real, free, and now lost political essence.

Like the Revolution of 1789, Montlosier's high medieval upheaval broke up time and divided sovereigns from their subjects. By the end of the Middle Ages, 'the king invoked preferably the principles of Jewish monarchy strengthened by those of Roman monarchy, while peoples recalled the principles of Frankish monarchy' – the primeval regime where king and nobles ruled together and social order was maximised – 'fortified by those of feudal monarchy'<sup>47</sup> – a more hierarchical and regionally grounded order which Montlosier also approves. Contrary, then, to what his defence of the aristocracy and dislike of the Third Estate might suggest, Montlosier believed that the loyal keepers of France's primitive constitution were not the rulers, but the ruled. It was the ordinary people of the countryside and provinces – distinct from the rebellious urban intelligentsia – who were the true depositories of the nation's ancient political wisdom and virtue.

Unlike Saint-Victor, moreover, and like his friend Chateaubriand, Montlosier rejected the idea that the monarchy had been strongly centralised and located its true history in the provinces. His narrative harmonised well with the politics of decentralisation popular among royalists, and with the aristocratic liberalism that flourished during the Restoration.<sup>48</sup> It suggests that he should not, perhaps, have felt so marginal after all.

### **Aristotelian conciliation: Chateaubriand**

In fact if there really was a stranger among our royalists, it was Chateaubriand. This claim may seem initially surprising, given that he was the foremost literary representative of monarchism during the Restoration. Yet in his political medievalism he developed a highly idiosyncratic point of view whose most notable feature was a critique of Montesquieu – that usual hero of

aristocratic monarchists. Perplexingly, the enchanter disliked the Bordeaux president's thesis that French political culture had an exclusively foreign and barbarian origin. He denounced the 'pompous praise' that *De l'esprit des lois* had bestowed on the English government, as well as its 'pretence' that it had been found in the forests. Far from being exceptional, the French variety of governance had grown up throughout Europe:

In the Middle Ages, all of Europe, except maybe Italy and a part of Germany, had more or less the same constitution: the Cortes in Spain, the Estates General in France, the Parliaments in England, were founded on the representative system. Europe, walking with an equal step toward civilisation, would have arrived through all the nations to a similar result, if local causes and particular events had not upset the uniformity of the movement.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, Chateaubriand maintained perturbingly, even the Franks were not the 'pure' people celebrated by Montesquieu, who 'in any case [had] known few things about the Franks'.<sup>50</sup> Moderating the horrified descriptions that Sidonius gave of the barbarian races he encountered (their drunken singing, their 'hair greased with acid butter', their smell of onion and garlic), the vicomte emphasised that, 'mixed for a long time with the Romans', the Franks were not as 'brutal' as their Germanic brethren, and that they had 'adopted something of [the Romans'] cleanliness and of their elegance'. The Franks' appearance foretold the freedom and brilliance of their descendants: their 'young chief walked on foot among his own; his clothing of scarlet and of white silk was enriched with gold; his hair and his skin had the brilliance of his vestments'. His companions too were richly dressed, 'and their weapons served them as much as ornament as for defence'. In all, they borrowed so much from surrounding cultures that they finally settled on French soil, which they would not have done by their own nature.<sup>51</sup>

Not content to give France a mixed cultural origin within the Gauls, Chateaubriand seeks French beginnings in the whole of Europe and the Mediterranean. This explains the otherwise bizarre fact that the massive *Études historiques*, a history of pagans, Christians, and barbarians throughout Europe and the Mediterranean from the time of Christ to the end of the Roman Empire, should serve as the preface to the *Histoire de France*. Akin to Saint-Victor, who emphasises Rome's political contributions in order to celebrate the *ecclesia*, Chateaubriand dwells on cultural mixing and diversity by way of narrating Christianity's liberation of the world. He insists that the religion of Jesus everywhere brought the abolition of slavery and the equalisation of gender relations (2002, 42); and that modernity began 'at the foot of the



Cross',<sup>52</sup> spreading through Rome's dominions and ending antiquity by finishing slavery. Monasticism helped as well to perpetuate freedom: 'Political truth, or liberty, found an interpreter and an accomplice in the independence of the monk who researched everything, said everything and feared nothing'.<sup>53</sup> Not that Christianity did it all: ever the syncretist, Chateaubriand also accords the Franks their legendary creativity in matters of emancipation: 'The individual liberty of the Frank', he writes, 'changed little by little into political liberty, of that representative kind unknown by the ancients',<sup>54</sup> and which gave rise to the famous assemblies, where the nobility 'showed itself very independent in its opinions'.<sup>55</sup> The difference with Lézardière is that the Franks were not by character a politically minded people – they needed time to develop political habits – and that the aristocracy to which she accords a secondary role is a protagonist of the history of liberty that is central to Chateaubriand's medievalism.

With time, Christian, Frankish, and aristocratic freedoms combined to generate the libertarian chaos of the Middle Ages, when

[a]ll the forms of liberty and servitude met each other: the monarchical liberty of the king, the aristocratic liberty of the noble, the individual liberty of the priest, the collective liberty of the communes; the privileged liberty of the cities, of the magistracy, of the guilds of crafts and merchants; the representative liberty of the nation; Roman slavery, barbarian servitude, the servitude of the disadvantaged [*l'aubain*]. Hence those incoherent spectacles, those customs that seem to contradict each other, that are bound to each other only by the bond of religion.<sup>56</sup>

Arising from the unfused 'debris of a thousand other societies', medieval society was the antithesis of the homogeneous nations of antiquity, and '[t]he individual never lived so intensely' as in its bosom.<sup>57</sup> Pregnant with future freedoms, it prepared the political liberty promised by the Restoration, when each individual would be free to think for himself – instead of submitting to the despotic technocracy of Bonaparte, who had substituted statistics and 'systems' of pre-fabricated ideas for personal initiative and creativity.<sup>58</sup>

More than a conglomerate of customs, though, medieval liberty had a history, and this history began with democracy. Like Lézardière, Chateaubriand believed that France under the Merovingians and first Carolingians was not a monarchy – in fact the principle of royal heredity was established only under Hugues Capet (939?-96).<sup>59</sup> Rather, the French government of the early Middle Ages was a 'true democracy', or more accurately an 'aristocracy without a people',<sup>60</sup> all of whose members 'were equal, or thought they were'.<sup>61</sup> Paradoxically, the democratic age ended with the 'social revolution' that Chateaubriand saw convulsing the High Middle

Ages and demolishing slavery: 'Under the successors of Charlemagne is declared the great social revolution that changed the ancient world into the feudal world: the second step of the general liberty of men [the first having been the advent of Christianity], or the passage from *slavery to serfdom*'.<sup>62</sup>

Eclectic liberty continued to characterise the feudal centuries, which, Chateaubriand argues astoundingly, put in place the mixed variety of government that Aristotle recommended. Indeed the Athenian holds the key to the vicomte's puzzling rejection of Montesquieu and his curious coldness toward the Germanic Middle Ages. For Chateaubriand always preferred – ever since the *Essai sur les révolutions* (1797) – the Aristotelian categories of government – democracies, aristocracies and monarchies – to Montesquieu's division of governments into monarchies, republics and despotic regimes. The preference may in turn be explained by the fact that the *Essai* is a deeply Rousseauian text, and that Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762) adheres to the Aristotelian rather than the Montesquieuan categorisation of government. Whatever the reason – whether it was his well-known classical aesthetics or a preference for Rousseau – Chateaubriand remembers the Bordeaux president only in the *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811), where he uses the idea of despotic government, and in the *Réflexions politiques*, which mentions briefly the governmental categories of *De l'esprit des lois*, but only to return quickly to the Aristotelian division of government (2002, 165).

Chateaubriand extends this eccentricity to the point of choosing Aristotle, rather than Montesquieu, to serve the cause of the aristocracy. Like most royalists of the time (and unlike Saint-Victor), the vicomte believes that the nobility is crucial to good government. Unusually, however, his reason is that aristocratic groups can generate simultaneously Aristotle's three types of regime: 'When [the nobility] acts as a body and in relationship to the monarchy in general, it is led by honour, it is monarchical: when it acts for itself and after the nature of its own constitution, it is moved by liberty: it is republican, aristocratic'.<sup>63</sup> This Aristotelian ideal of mixed government – which Chateaubriand defends also in the *Réflexions politiques*, citing not only Aristotle, but also Cicero, Polybius, Pythagoras, Plato, and Lycurgus (1987, 171) – is the unexpected hallmark of an inclusive and liberal medievalism attentive to the plight of the oppressed across the centuries. It is a medievalism maintaining that liberty was most complete, and the *peuple* best defended, when monarchy was finally stabilised under the Capetians. It was then that the Church became the 'sole representative' of an 'oppressed political truth' – as it had been for Saint-Victor – and the judge and deposer of kings. The *ecclesia* was not just popular in character, it *was* in fact the people, since the

people became priests and 'conserved under this disguise the use and sovereignty of their rights'.<sup>64</sup> Again, though, the Church was not alone: it was aided in its task by the *parlements*, which acquired 'merited consideration' thanks to their integrity and enlightenment, and which became the people's defender against the Crown,<sup>65</sup> 'enlightening [France] in the time of darkness, [and] defending [it] against feudal barbarism'.<sup>66</sup> This praise of both Church and *parlement*, and this gesture to tie them both to the people, is yet another example of the will to conciliation that renders the vicomte idiosyncratic. For many if not most royalists of his time would have argued for the liberating powers of *either* the Church *or* the *parlements* – with the conservative Catholics (like Saint-Victor) preferring the Church, and the liberals (like Lézardière) the *parlements*.

On the subject of constitutional development, however, Chateaubriand took sides and drew close to his friend Montlosier, emphasising both violence and four monarchies. 'Counting from Hugues Capet to Louis XVI', he writes, four types of government succeeded each other: 'the purely feudal monarchy of the great peerage, the monarchy of the Estates (later called Estates General), the parliamentary monarchy during the intermission of the Estates, the absolute monarchy that loses itself in constitutional monarchy'. It was a history riven by cruelty: 'Nothing is more contrary to truth' than to believe, as many do, that 'if the Middle Ages were barbarian, at least morality and religion counterbalanced their barbarity'. The medieval order was established on a 'Roman society depraved by luxury, degraded by slavery, perverted by idolatry',<sup>67</sup> and Chateaubriand does not shrink from enumerating its crimes. His concern with violence certifies him, like his peers, as a survivor of Revolution. Yet his story, unlike Montlosier's, is one of increasing harmony rather than violent decline, because it is a story propounding that liberty is the Holy Grail of the providential order of monarchical succession:

After the confusion of civil and foreign wars, after the disorders of feudalism the penchant of things was toward the unity of the governmental principle. The ascending monarchy had to attain the highest point of its power; it was necessary that in crushing the tyranny of the aristocracy it begin to show its own before liberty could reign in its turn. In this way aristocracy, monarchy and republic succeeded each other in France in a regular order: the nobility, the royalty and the people, having abused their power, finally consented to live in peace under a government composed of their three elements.<sup>68</sup>

The mixed government of the present promises the end of political strife. The enchanter is a political optimist: for him, the Restoration has at last realised the representative principles at the core of the French monarchy. 'What only

happened in intervals under the old monarchy', he writes blissfully, 'has become permanent in the new one'. Not only has a moderate equilibrium been at last achieved, but it has been so *forever*: 'The nobility, represented *forever*<sup>69</sup> in the Chamber of Peers, has transmitted *forever*<sup>70</sup> to that Chamber its principle of liberty, its republican and aristocratic rights, while it remains outwardly conservative of the principle of honor, the real foundation of the monarchy'.<sup>71</sup> Political happiness in such abundance seems impossible to surpass, yet the good fortune is not only France's: Chateaubriand sees the whole of Europe tending toward moderate monarchy.

The vicomte's extraordinary optimism about the political present contrasts notably with the melancholy that otherwise traverses his approach to the medieval, and that pervades the whole of his *oeuvre*. What a blow, then – and what a reason for Romantic melancholy – must have been for him the end of the Restoration.

### **Conclusion: The French Revolution and political medievalism**

1789 profoundly changed ideas of the political medieval. In contrast to their eighteenth-century precursors, French royalists looked on medieval monarchy as a regime at once alien and unstable. Saint-Victor, Montlosier and Chateaubriand no longer described the government of their nation sprouting spontaneously from primitive forest gatherings as Lézardière had done. History now proceeded too uncertainly, unforeseeably, and violently for that. Under the Old Regime, the giant of government had grown monolithically, but after the Revolution, monarchy the fallen colossus, broken and close enough for inspection, seemed both more fragile and more fragmented. Indeed it now looked plural where it had once been singular, and it seemed to have changed form with time. The past now looked profoundly different, much more different than it had ever done on the eve of the Revolution.

The Restoration sought to conjure continuity, yet history now looked full of breaks. Our royalists projected onto the Middle Ages the sense of violation and rupture that they inherited from the Revolution. Horrified by violence – a fact worth highlighting, given the family relationship commonly assumed between nineteenth-century monarchism and early forms of fascism – they wrote at length and disapprovingly of the conflicts, betrayals, crimes, and acts of destruction that had introduced divisions into medieval time. They also agreed that the High Middle Ages had witnessed a political revolution. Montlosier despaired of this event as a destructive preparation of 1789, and Saint-Victor and Chateaubriand agreed with him. But Providence was productive, and it broke up time to make new and purer beginnings. For

Chateaubriand, each break in time was politically meaningful: Christianity had inaugurated the end of slavery; the high medieval revolution that of serfdom; and representative monarchy had brought civil and political liberty to equilibrated perfection. His royalist colleagues joined him in rendering their historical breaks political: a Catholic and *ultra* affair, Saint-Victor's high medieval revolution was the painful prelude to a nearly achieved 'true monarchy' and to the betrayal of the Church by kings; while Montlosier's aristocratic version of the same event was not only a woeful ode to a crushed nobility, but also, and more originally, a lamentation of the destruction of the world's primitive order.

The French Revolution altered views of medieval cultures and peoples, a transformation laden as well with political implications. The exclusive political creativity that the Franks exercised through the centuries in Lézardière's Middle Ages was a foil for royal absolutism, since it was symbolically appropriate that a political world governed by one will should have a single and rational cultural origin. But the Revolution, that wrathful child of the Sun King's follies, turned royalists into anti-absolutists, and taught them to populate their political worlds with more wills after the manner of bourgeois medievalists.

As for belief in Providence — in the play of a myriad of social and political factors beyond human attainment — it is probably one reason why the narratives that royalists composed of the French past diverged so greatly and were so independently minded — since once one begins looking for grace, one finds it in every detail. Thus Saint-Victor avoided Lézardière's sole focus on the Franks and wrote also about the Romans and the Gauls, lauding the Romans to defend the Church and refusing to praise the Franks because of the millenarian threats that the nobility had posed to royal power. Indeed a lack of enthusiasm for his own class was probably the only attitude that Saint-Victor shared with his intellectual contrary Lézardière. Montlosier too included Romans and Gauls in his narrative; but he insisted like Lézardière on the primacy of the Franks. In this sense he was the most loyal of our royalists to Montesquieu, whose Germanic Middle Ages were fashioned to defend the nobility against the bourgeoisie. His friend Chateaubriand differed from him in this sentiment to the point of outlandishness: preferring Aristotle to Montesquieu, the vicomte invoked a bewildering variety of peoples when recounting French history. His inclusiveness allowed him to conjure medieval society as composed of the shards of a thousand civilizations, to portray them clashing without ever melding, and performing the aristocratic ideal of

independence that he hoped the moderate monarchy of his time would finally embody.

Anti-absolutism had one final medieval measure: the praise of feudalism. Perhaps predictably, given her belief that absolutism was the crown on Frankish government, Lézardière had dismissed the feudal regime as a thousand years of betrayal of France's primitive state. With equal foreseeability, her post-revolutionary successors expressed more balanced views. Mourning feudalism for its violence, they still exalted it as a time when 'true monarchy' was in embryo (Saint-Victor), when the aristocracy flourished freely before its fall (Montlosier), and when the future was prepared: for Chateaubriand, the medieval was the generous order that left its 'rich heritage to the civilized ages [it] bore in its fecund womb'.<sup>72</sup> Feudalism, in short, was the imperfect ancestor of present polities. Retrieving its virtues required some allegiance to Montesquieu, whose glorious feudal centuries were a discreet bane on absolutism. But it also demanded setting the Germanic Middle Ages side by side with other, more ancient or more modern ones less prone to violence and servitude. Chateaubriand went furthest down this path, using the Athenian to modernise the medieval. In doing so, he devised a political thought that was syncretic, eclectic, all-embracing, and that is perhaps best characterized as a consummate example of what Pierre Pellegrin has called moriology (Pellegrin, in Aristotle, 74n [69]) or the Aristotelian 'science of parts'. Modelling polities as composed of separate elements, this science posited that the legislator could recombine these elements *a priori* for the purposes of fashioning new political forms. Moriology also had the advantage of being readily capable of accounting for non-existing forms of government – like the ones envisioned during the Restoration's representative experiment – and of thus being wonderfully free of the empiricism imposed by Enlightenment epistemology (49-50).

In all, nineteenth-century French royalists communicated their politics, and especially their class politics, through a code they embedded in their medievalisms. Cracking this code yields new perspectives on post-revolutionary France, from changes in attitudes to the Middle Ages to the varied royalisms that emerged during the Restoration. We learn not only that monarchists during those years denounced absolutism unlike their Old Regime forebears, but also that they were divided on the question of the aristocracy's political importance, with writers like Montlosier and Chateaubriand supporting it as a guarantor of freedom, and Saint-Victor denouncing it as an agent of social violence and political fragmentation. Indeed royalist medievalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

centuries is remarkable for the diversity of political views it harboured. This is probably one reason for its eventual demise: in valuing independence of mind as much as Chateaubriand did, and in refusing to develop a political theory and hence a common political vocabulary, nineteenth-century monarchism failed to forge the ideological unity that is fundamental to political survival. In this respect, the heirs of Revolution – and especially the republicans – always had a great advantage over it.

Yet the political medievalisms of nineteenth-century monarchists still have lessons for our own time. In their rendering of liberty, especially, they remind us that freedom is not solely to be conceived as a function of the relationship between individuals and the state, but also in terms of the role that interacting cultural and religious groups play in the formation of political practices and identities. The reminder is particularly apt for an age when religions and democratic states are confronting each other throughout the North Atlantic world, when transnational and supranational identities are on the rise, and when the European community that Chateaubriand and his fellow monarchists dreamt of<sup>73</sup> – and whose political creativity he praised – is attempting to fashion a common political life.

## Notes

1. On historical writing as a camouflaged means of political debate during the Bourbon Restoration, see Mellon.
2. I refer here to the period ca. 1789-1848.
3. The phrase is Peter Raedt's.
4. On bourgeois and aristocratic medievalisms in the eighteenth century, see Montoya.
5. Indeed early modern medievalisms emphasised this continuity to the point that they have only recently been discovered by scholars. See Montoya, Romburgh and Anrooij.
6. Until now the preferred focus has been on the reception of the high medieval period of courtly love and culture. See Jacoubet and Edelman.
7. Nicolet studies how the representation of the Franks, Romans and Gauls has contributed over the last five centuries to the construction of French national consciousness.
8. For a recent and enthralling case study of this last phenomenon, see Warner.
9. The nickname given to Chateaubriand by his sister Lucile.
10. These were the *Tableau des droits respectifs du monarque et des sujets* (1774) and the *Essay sur le rétablissement possible de quelques points de la Constitution* (1778).
11. 'les deux objets de son culte, la monarchie et la liberté'. Preface by the vicomte Charles de Lézardière to the *Théorie des lois politiques de la monarchie française*, I, viii-ix.
12. 'Si l'on veut connaître enfin notre ancienne patrie, il en faut recomposer le tableau général avec les tableaux particuliers des provinces: seul moyen de rétablir le caractère aristocratique que notre histoire doit avoir, au lieu du caractère monarchique qu'on lui a mensongèrement donné' (Chateaubriand 1987, 67).

13. 'Ce n'est pas tout que de chercher les faits dans des éditions commodes, il faut voir de ses propres yeux ce qu'on peut nommer la physionomie des temps, les diplômes que la main de Charlemagne et celle de saint Louis ont touchés, la forme extérieure des chartes, le papyrus, le parchemin, l'encre, l'écriture, les sceaux, les vignettes; il faut [...] manier les siècles et respirer leur poussière'. Chateaubriand, 1997, 6 (pagination based on 217-page Word document with Arial 7.5 font).
14. 'Le travail de M. de Montlosier sur la féodalité est rempli d'idées neuves, exprimées dans un style indépendant, qui sent son moyen âge. Si les anciens seigneurs des donjons avaient su faire avec une plume autre chose qu'une croix, ils auraient écrit comme cela, mais ils n'auraient pas vu si loin' (1997, 17).
15. On Montlosier's political activities during the Revolution, see Saint-Victor 2010.
16. 'ses diverses restaurations' (Montlosier, I, v).
17. These fragments were published with the *Études historiques* in 1831.
18. The cultural groups include the Romans, the Gauls, the Franks, the non-Frankish barbarians, the Christians and various Mediterranean peoples. In keeping with an eighteenth-century historiographical commonplace, our royalist authors considered the first three of these groups to be the ancestors of the French constitution's traditional orders: the Third Estate, the nobility, the clergy, and the king himself.
19. 'Tous ces écrits froids, secs, insipides et durs, il faut les lire, il faut les dévorer, comme la fable dit que Saturne dévorait les pierres' (Montesquieu, II, 1056).
20. 'On avait dans la tête le type d'une grave monarchie, toujours la même, marchant carrément avec trois ordres et un parlement en robe longue; de là cette monotonie de récits, cette uniformité de mœurs qui rend la lecture de notre histoire générale insipide. Les historiens étaient alors des hommes de cabinet, qui n'avaient jamais vu et manié les affaires. Mais si nous apercevons les faits sous un autre jour, ne nous figurons pas que cela tienne à la seule force de notre intelligence. Nous venons après la monarchie tombée; nous toisons à terre le colosse brisé, nous lui trouvons des proportions différentes de celles qu'il paraissait avoir lorsqu'il était debout' (Chateaubriand 1997, 10).
21. 'génie germanique qui dédaignait les avantages civils, pour ne s'occuper que des intérêts politiques' (Lézardière, III, 2).
22. See Chapter 2 of Sonenscher, especially 170-1.
23. 'ces rapports continuels de protection et de services, ont retracé en mille manières les images touchantes d'un service paternel' (Lézardière, IV, 144).
24. 'Rien ne peut être clairement expliqué dans l'histoire des premiers siècles de notre monarchie, lorsqu'on l'écrit avec les préjugés, les traditions et les habitudes de la monarchie, telle que Henri IV, Richelieu et Louis XIV l'avoient faite. Cependant cette histoire n'a point été encore autrement décrite; et il n'est pas facile de détruire les erreurs que les historiens même les plus graves ont répandues sur un aussi grave sujet' (Saint-Victor, I, 471).
25. 'Ce régime avoit en lui-même, comme tout ce qui est purement humain, son principe de destruction' (I, 76-77).
26. 'ce mouvement continu des barbares et [...] cette calamité sans cesse renaissante des invasions' (I, 54).
27. 'calamités', 'accablé', 'l'abus le plus révoltant de la force', 'l'oppression du foible et du pauvre' (I, 684).
28. 'un système général d'indépendance [...] qui ressembloit au désordre et à l'anarchie' (I, 74).



29. 'la puissance spirituelle devint prépondérante dans l'État' (II, 4).
30. 'ce fut surtout lorsque l'Église, poussant un cri de détresse qui retentit dans l'Europe entière, appela tous ses enfants à la défense des lieux saints profanés par les infidèles, qu'on put reconnoître tout ce qu'il y avoit de FOI et d'enthousiasme religieux dans ces races guerrières, et ce qu'il étoit possible d'attendre de ces âmes neuves et ardentes, dès qu'on sauroit diriger vers un but noble et utile leur courage et leur activité' (I, 688).
31. 'Elle parla, elle menaça: ses paroles portèrent le trouble dans les consciences coupables, rassurèrent les foibles, les rallièrent et leur prêtèrent ainsi une force qu'ils n'eussent jamais trouvée, s'ils fussent restés abandonnés à eux-mêmes' (I, 687).
32. 'une vivante image de la famille' (I, 72).
33. 'l'influence [...] salutaire de la puissance spirituelle' (II, 10).
34. 'une force aveugle et impétueuse' (II, 597).
35. 'le droit romain fut conservé par les rois francs partout où il étoit établi avant la conquête, et que le clergé ne cessa pas de vivre un seul instant sous la protection de la loi romaine qui étoit sa loi nationale' (I, 58-9).
36. 'c'est un vice radical attaché à toute conquête où le vainqueur [...] apporte au milieu de la nation conquise son esprit national et ses habitudes étrangères, que, dès le commencement de sa domination, il s'établit nécessairement entre ses anciens et ses nouveaux sujets des différences humiliantes pour ces derniers, et qui excitent en eux de vifs ressentiments' (II, 371).
37. The reactionary persona that Maistre has been lent across the centuries is largely a caricature all too easily sketched by highlighting the provocations that he loved to scatter through his writings. See the Introduction to my *French Idea of History*.
38. Montlosier plays here on the dual meaning of 'Frankish' on the one hand, and 'frank' or 'honest' on the other, borne by the word 'franques'.
39. 'Les Francs ne cultivaient guère que le courage, l'honneur, le dévouement, et toutes les vertus du cœur' (I, 180).
40. 'un amas de rêves, de futilités et de faussetés' (I, 3).
41. 'condamné à l'oubli et à l'obscurité' (I, vi).
42. 'le plus grand événement qui soit connu parmi les peuples depuis l'origine du monde' (I, 114).
43. 'les facultés de l'esprit' (I, 180).
44. 'une assez belle anarchie' (I, 235).
45. 'Un ensemble d'institutions anciennes à demi-effacées et d'institutions nouvelles, sans rapport avec les institutions anciennes: tout cela se rapprochant ensuite, se remuant à l'aveugle, se heurtant, s'attaquant, et réduit, pour se coordonner, au seul principe d'une force aveugle et de la nécessité: tel est l'état de la France pendant tout le temps que les écrivains ont célébré comme le temps des *grandes polices*' (I, 209).
46. 'Whatever pleases the prince takes on the force of law' (I, 310).
47. 'le roi invoquait de préférence les principes de la monarchie juive fortifiés de ceux de la monarchie romaine, les peuples invoquaient souvent les principes de la monarchie franque fortifiés de ceux de la monarchie féodale' (I, 312-13).
48. On aristocratic royalism during the Restoration, see Chapter 2 of DeDijn.
49. 'éloge pompeux'. 'prétend'. 'Dans le Moyen Âge, toute l'Europe, excepté peut-être l'Italie et une partie de l'Allemagne, eut à peu près la même constitution: les Cortès en Espagne, les États-Généraux en France, les Parlemens en Angleterre, étoient fondés sur le système

représentatif. L'Europe, marchant d'un pas égal vers la civilisation, seroit arrivée pour tous les peuples à un résultat semblable, si des causes locales, et des événements particuliers n'avoient dérangé l'uniformité du mouvement' (Chateaubriand, 2002, 172).

50. 'qui d'ailleurs a su peu de choses sur les Francs' (Chateaubriand, 2002, 11).

51. 'les cheveux graissés avec du beurre acide'. 'Tous les barbares n'étaient pas aussi brutaux. Les Franks, mêlés depuis longtemps aux Romains, avaient pris quelque chose de leur propreté et de leur élégance. Le jeune chef marchait à pied au milieu des siens; son vêtement d'écarlate et de soie blanche était enrichi d'or; sa chevelure et son teint avaient l'éclat de sa parure'. 'leurs armes leur servaient autant d'ornement que de défense' (183).

52. 'au pied de la croix' (28).

53. 'La vérité politique, ou la liberté, trouva un interprète dans l'indépendance du moine qui recherchait tout, disait tout et ne craignait rien'. Chateaubriand 1987, 50.

54. 'La liberté individuelle du Frank se changeait peu à peu en liberté politique, de ce genre représentatif inconnu des anciens' (41).

55. 'elle s'y montra très indépendante quant aux opinions' (77).

56. 'Toutes les formes de liberté et de servitude se rencontraient: la liberté monarchique du roi, la liberté aristocratique du noble, la liberté individuelle du prêtre, la liberté collective des communes; la liberté privilégiée des villes, de la magistrature, des corps de métiers et de marchands; la liberté représentative de la nation; l'esclavage romain, le servage barbare, la servitude de l'aubain. De là ces spectacles incohérents, ces usages qui se paraissent contredire, qui ne se tiennent que par le lien de la religion' (133).

57. 'débris de mille autres sociétés' (132).

58. Chateaubriand 1816, 83 and 84.

59. Chateaubriand 1987, 59.

60. 'une véritable démocratie', 'une aristocratie sans peuple' (1987, 61).

61. 'tous les membres de cette société étaient égaux, ou le croyaient être' (*Ibid.*, 60).

62. 'Sous les successeurs de Charlemagne se déclare la grande révolution sociale qui changea le monde antique dans le monde féodal: second pas de la liberté générale des hommes, ou passage de *l'esclavage au servage*' (42).

63. 'Quand elle agit en corps et par rapport à la monarchie en général, elle est conduite par l'honneur, elle est monarchique: quand elle agit pour elle-même et d'après la nature de sa propre constitution, elle est mue par la liberté; elle est républicaine, aristocratique' (*Ibid.*, 165-6).

64. 'unique représentant [...] d'une vérité politique opprimée'. 'conserva sous ce déguisement l'usage et la souveraineté de ses droits'. Chateaubriand 1997, 29.

65. 'considération méritée'. Chateaubriand 2002, 173.

66. 'ils l'ont éclairée dans les temps de ténèbres, défendue contre la barbarie féodale'. Chateaubriand 2002, 174.

67. 'la société romaine dépravée par le luxe, dégradée par l'esclavage, pervertie par l'idolâtrie'. Chateaubriand 1987, 127.

68. 'après la confusion des guerres civiles et étrangères [...] après les désordres de la féodalité le penchant des choses était vers l'unité du principe gouvernemental. La monarchie en ascension devait monter au plus haut point de sa puissance; il fallait qu'en écrasant la tyrannie de l'aristocratie elle eût commencé à faire sortir la sienne avant que la liberté pût régner à son tour. Ainsi se sont succédé en France, dans un ordre régulier, l'aristocratie, la monarchie et la république: la noblesse, la royauté et le peuple, ayant abusé de la puissance,

ont enfin consenti à vivre en paix dans un gouvernement composé de leurs trois éléments'. Chateaubriand 1997, 32.

69. My emphasis.

70. My emphasis.

71. 'La noblesse, représentée *pour toujours* dans la Chambre des Pairs, a transmis *pour toujours* à cette Chambre son principe de liberté, ses droits républicains et aristocratiques, tandis qu'elle reste au-dehors conservatrice du principe d'honneur, fondement réel de la monarchie'. Chateaubriand 2002, 167.

72. 'lissé leur riche héritage aux âges civilisés qu'[elles] portèrent dans leur sein fécond'. Chateaubriand 1987, 151.

73. I am thinking here of the heyday of Europeanist royalism during the Concert of Europe, a subject of which nearly nothing is known, and more particularly of two royalists not discussed in this essay, Friedrich von Gentz (1764-1832) and Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), both great enthusiasts of European political unity.

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