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# The Limits of 'Spanishness' in Nineteenth-century Spanish Literary History\*

SANTIAGO PÉREZ ISASI

*Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa*



## **Abstract**

This article analyses some of the most representative histories of Spanish literature written during the nineteenth century (both in and outside Spain), to show the different definitions they offer of the limits of Spain and Spanishness: the chronological, linguistic and geographical limits set to the Spanish nation and literature, but also the inner limits of Spanishness; the conceptual, aesthetical or ideological limits that divide Spanish literature from not-so-Spanish literature, even within the external limits previously defined. I will also study, however briefly, how these configurations of the limits of Spanishness affect the selection and assessment of literary works.

## **Resumen**

El presente artículo analiza algunos de las producciones más representativas de la historiografía literaria española del siglo XIX, producida tanto en España como en el extranjero, para mostrar la definición de lo español que subyace en ellas, en especial en relación con los límites atribuidos a la nación y a la literatura española: no solo los límites externos, cronológicos, geográficos o lingüísticos, sino también los límites internos: la conceptualización estética o ideológica de lo español mediante la cual es posible distinguir la literatura nacional de la no nacional. También se estudiará, si bien de manera sucinta, el modo en que estas definiciones de los límites de lo español afectan a la selección y configuración del canon literario.

Historiography, in its modern, narrative form derived from its nineteenth-century tradition, is still subject to extensive and sometimes harsh debates about

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its validity as a scientific tool or as a cultural or ideological artifact;<sup>1</sup> literary historiography, sometimes considered merely as a branch of the former (or of ‘cultural history’, be it what it may), and at other times as a whole new epistemological field, is not less complicated in its epistemological, theoretical and even practical foundations.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it could be argued that apart from sharing the common questions and instabilities of any narrative history, literary history must face specific problems that haunt it to these days – but these, paradoxically enough, have not stopped it from developing for over two centuries with a great deal of editorial and scholarly success.<sup>3</sup> Its teleological narrative form, its ability to grasp its object, which at the same time evades temporality and resists chronology; its ideological and nationalistic debts, and its guilty relations with power, nation, institution and canon, all of which have been questioned in the last century, have rendered its status questionable at best; indefensible at worst. In the much quoted words of Lawrence Lipking, ‘literary history used to be impossible to write; lately it has become much harder’ (1995: 1).

All these theoretical and historiographic debates have had their counterparts in Spain, a country in which literary history has played a central role in the national educational system since its development by the middle of the nineteenth century (see Carolyn Boyd 2000; Pérez Isasi 2010). As early as 1978, in his article ‘Sobre el objeto del cambio literario’, Claudio Guillén asked for a detailed study of the process of canon creation in Spain; his request was partially answered by the works of José Carlos Mainer (2000, 2003, among others), a pioneer of historiographic studies in Spain, with a focus on the social and ideological aspects of the process. Since then, the corpus of works which deal with literary historiography in its general, theoretical implications or in its actual textual configuration regarding particular authors or texts, has increased exponentially.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 Among the most significant reflections on (narrative) historiography and its scientific validity, let us mention those by Hayden White (1973; 1987) and Paul Ricoeur (1983–1985); as all narratives, especially those which contribute to create a collective (mainly national) identity, history has also been objected to from the point of view of post-colonialism by authors such as Homi Bhabha (1990; 1991).
- 2 The critical and theoretical approaches to literary history have been in continuous growth since the middle of the twentieth century; a complete bibliography on the subject would greatly exceed the limits of this article; let us mention, then, the classic works by René Wellek (1983) and David Perkins (1991; 1993), as well as other more recent ones by Hutcheon and Valdés (2002), Groth and Sheehan (2010) and London (2010).
- 3 Examples of this success, in the field of Spanish historiography only, are the publication of *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* edited by David T. Gies (2005); the continuity of the ambitious *Historia crítica de la literatura hispánica*, coordinated by Francisco Rico (1979), or the recent creation of a new and extensive historiographical work, the *Historia de la literatura española*, published by Editorial Crítica and coordinated by J. C. Mainer (the first volume to be published (in 2010) is chronologically the sixth one, dealing with early twentieth-century Spanish literature and literary criticism). As Epps and Cifuentes put it, ‘the concept of literary history is as troubled as that of the nation-state. And yet, as should by now be more than evident, like nation-state, literary history persists, indeed insists’ (2005: 13).
- 4 A few of the most salient of these works should be mentioned as immediate antecedents for this article: for instance, the works by the research group of the Universidad de Zaragoza (Romero Tobar 1997, 2006; Martín Ezpeleta 2008) or, from a more comparative

This is, precisely, the critical and theoretical background in which this article should be considered. My aim is to analyse Spanish nineteenth-century literary historiography (a wide corpus that includes histories of Spanish literature written in Spain and abroad; histories of Spanish literature per se and their pedagogical equivalents: textbooks of Spanish literary history directly published to be used in the classroom<sup>5</sup>), not only to demonstrate its close relationship with the process of the creation of a nation state, which is already quite solidly established,<sup>6</sup> but more precisely to make explicit the specific (and often implicit) limits of the national literature such works describe: the external, chronological, geographical, linguistic or cultural frontiers of historiography, as well as its internal, conceptual, ideological or identitarian ones.

As is stated above, this study will focus on nineteenth-century histories of Spanish literature; there is, of course, a previous tradition of literary history dating from the eighteenth century and earlier, but it is during the nineteenth century that the relationship between literary historiography and national identity was firmly and permanently crafted: it was at the inception of Romanticism, especially in its German crystallization, that both history and literature became a national affair.<sup>7</sup> The development and expansion of the concept of *Volksgeist* (national character or 'people's spirit') by Johann Gottfried von Herder,<sup>8</sup> and its transformation into nationalist principles and ideas, radically modified the practice of historiography and gave it a new objective: to trace and reconstruct – the two are obviously not synonyms – that 'national spirit' in the past deeds and the literary works of the nation. August Wilhelm Schlegel, in *Über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur* (1809–1811), and his brother, Friedrich Schlegel, in *Geschichte der alten und neueren Literatur* (1815), as well as Madame de Staël, in her influential *De l'Allemagne* (1810), applied this concept of 'national spirit' to the study and historicization of literature,<sup>9</sup> which then expanded, more or less rapidly, to the other European countries.

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point of view, in the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (Cabo Aseguinolaza 2001; Domínguez 2006; Abuín and Tarrío Varela 2004). José María Pozuelo Yvancos (2000; 2002; 2006) also offered a theoretical and historiographical approach to the question of literary canon, an approach that was also followed by Pérez Isasi (2006, pending publication).

- 5 The distinction is in some cases not an easy one to make: most of the works of both genres often include explicit and direct mentions of their importance as pedagogical tools, and claim to be filling a gap by offering for the first time useful material for teachers and students.
- 6 For instance, in the works of Leonardo Romero Tobar and his research group, such as *Literatura y nación* (2008). As Wadda C. Ríos-Font states: 'From their earliest instances, literary activities and literary canons have been linked to the concept of nation and to nation-building practices' (Epps and Cifuentes 2005: 127).
- 7 For a general review of Romantic literary theory, in Spain and, more widely, in Europe, see Ernst Behler 1993 and Derek Flitter 1992 and 2006. On eighteenth-century Spanish literary history, see Cebrián 1996.
- 8 See Berlin 1976 for an analysis of Herder's ideas and their influence in later European thinking.
- 9 In the words of Brad Epps and Luis Fernández Cifuentes: 'From its inception in such influential works as Schlegel's *Geschichte der alten neuen Literatur* ... literary history has tended to partake of a Romantic conception of nationality in which land, spirit and people are tightly tied to artistic and linguistic production' (2005: 11).

This European context must undoubtedly be considered when analysing the origins of modern Spanish literary historiography: firstly because Spain was, in the understanding of the German critics, unquestionably one of the ‘Romantic nations’<sup>10</sup> (alongside others such as England and Germany) as opposed to ‘Classical’ ones, such as Greece or France. While the second group of literatures was – and should be – governed by the rules of Poetics and Rhetoric, the nations of the first group had only the obligation to follow their own nature; in other words, to be loyal to their *Volkgeist*.<sup>11</sup> In fact, it could be argued that because of this ‘Romantic’ consideration and its somewhat superficial ‘exoticism’, Spain was elevated to a place of privilege among European nations by Romantic critics, who glorified its medieval ‘romances’, its national theatre – especially Calderón, who was considered the prototype of the Christian playwright and ‘a poet if ever any man deserved that name’, in the words of A. W. Schlegel (1815; see Schlegel 2006: 349) – and its main national novelist, Miguel de Cervantes, whose *Don Quixote* was about to be looked at under a new light by the Romantics.<sup>12</sup>

- 10 Although the term ‘Romantic’ had some previous occurrences, its modern literary meaning derives mainly from the works of the Schlegel brothers. Cf. W. Schlegel: ‘the word is derived from the romance – the name originally given to the languages which were formed from the mixture of the Latin and the old Teutonic dialects, in the same manner as modern civilization is the fruit of the heterogeneous union of the peculiarities of the northern nations and the fragments of antiquity; whereas the civilization of the ancients was much more of a piece’ (2006 [1815]: 20).
- 11 This idea appears in many of the histories of Spanish literature of the time; for instance, in Simonde de Sismondi’s: ‘Los italianos y los franceses han llamado *clásicos* a los autores antiguos, cuya autoridad invocan; *clásicos* a los escritores propios, cuando les ha parecido que estaban conformes con estos modelos, y *clásico* al gusto, que tenían por más puro y elegante; los alemanes, los ingleses y los españoles no han disputado esta denominación, dejando el nombre de *clásica* a toda la literatura que sigue o pretende seguir la escuela de los griegos y romanos; pero adhiriéndose a los recuerdos de la edad media y creyendo encontrar más poesía en su propia antigüedad que la de unos pueblos extranjeros’ (Simonde de Sismondi 1841–1842: II, 8); or in Agustín Durán’s *Discurso*: ‘En estas razones se han fundado los alemanes para admitir dos géneros distintos de literatura, llamando Clásico al que procede de las existencias políticas y religiosas de los pueblos antiguos, y Romántico al que eleva sus creaciones en el nuevo modo de existir, emanado de la espiritualidad del cristianismo, de las costumbres heroicas de los siglos medios, y del modo diverso que tiene de considerar al hombre’ (1828: 59–60). Another very significant and influential classification of European countries and literatures, also rooted in Schlegel’s works, stresses the north/south, Protestant/Catholic or Germanic/Romance discontinuities: ‘La poesía de los países católicos’, says Friedrich Schlegel, ‘la española, la italiana y la portuguesa, forman en [la Edad Media] un conjunto íntimamente unido’ (1843, II: 85). In the words of Mme. de Staël: ‘On peut rapporter l’origine des principales nations de l’Europe à trois grandes races différentes: la race latine, la race germanique et la race esclavonne. Les Italiens, les Français, les Espagnols, ont reçu des Romains leur civilisation et leur langage; les Allemands, les Suisses, les Anglais, les Suédois, les Danois et les Hollandais sont des peuples teutoniques; enfin, parmi les Esclavons, les Polonais et les Russes occupent le premier rang. Les nations dont la culture intellectuelle est d’origine latine sont plus anciennement civilisées que les autres’ (Staël 1968, I: 45). Simonde de Sismondi’s text, entitled *De la Littérature du Midi de l’Europe* is also rooted in this horizontal division of European nations and languages.
- 12 We will go back to these historiographical and canonical topoi later in this article, when discussing the internal limits of the Spanish nation and literature.

It is obvious, then, that at least some of the first and most influential modern ideas and works on Spain, its (literary) history and its 'national character', were, as J. M. Pozuelo has pertinently pointed out (2006), at first developed not by Spaniards but by foreigners and later, quite quickly in fact, by the Spaniards themselves. Nicolás Böhl de Faber, for instance, translated and adapted some of Schlegel's ideas in his famous controversy with José Joaquín de Mora, known as the 'Polémica Calderoniana', which started, quite significantly, with the publication of an article entitled 'Reflexiones de Schlegel sobre el teatro traducidas del alemán' in the *Mercurio Gaditano* in 1814;<sup>13</sup> Agustín Durán, too, took the new Romantic critical paradigm as a starting point for his *Discurso sobre el influjo que ha tenido la crítica moderna en la decadencia del teatro antiguo español*.<sup>14</sup> Literary history, first outside Spain and later in Spain itself, was soon to follow, adopting the idea of 'national literature' and *Volkgeist*, and applying it to the study of Spanish literature.

But in order for this to take place, it was necessary first to define and clarify what 'Spain' meant, what 'Spanishness' was. In the following pages, I will try to show the different answers given to these questions by Romantic literary historians through the nineteenth century,<sup>15</sup> their contradictions and tensions when defining the chronological, linguistic and geographical limits of the Spanish nation and literature, but also the inner limits of Spanishness, the conceptual, aesthetical or ideological limits that divide Spanish from not-so-Spanish literature, even within the external limits previously defined.<sup>16</sup> After such an inquiry,

- 13 The most complete work on Böhl de Faber and his role as the introducer of Romantic ideas in Spain is still the bio-bibliography written by Carnero (1978). See also Pérez Isasi 2006 for a historiographical contextualization of this controversy.
- 14 Agustín Durán has not received the critical attention he probably deserves as a pioneer of the Romantic literary ideas in Spain; we should mention, however, the bio-bibliography by David T. Gies (1975), which should be complemented by other, more specific studies on his position in the literary system of his time, the evolution of his ideas and works and his relevance as a scholar and as an editor.
- 15 The complete list of works can be consulted in the final bibliography, under 'Primary sources'. In the case of foreign histories translated into Spanish, they are identified by the dates of their translation, and by their first edition, in the case of Spanish authors: Bouterwek 1829 (see also Bouterwek 2002 [1829]), Simonde de Sismondi 1841–1842, Ticknor 1851–1856, Gil de Zárate 1844, Amador de los Ríos 1861–1865, Schack 1885–1888, and Fitzmaurice-Kelly 1901 (see also Fitzmaurice Kelly 1914 [1901] and Ángel Salcedo Ruiz (1910)). This is, obviously, just a representative selection of the histories or textbooks of Spanish literature published during the nineteenth century. A tentative chronology of Spanish literary historiography may be found in López 1996 and Romero Tobar 1997.
- 16 Although basic in the configuration of contemporary literary history, in these pages I will not deal with another obvious but implicit assumption made by all historians: the existence of different, easily identifiable nations and literatures in Europe, most regularly associated with national languages. Even if the first two histories analysed (Bouterwek's and Sismondi's) were part of a bigger, more comprehensive programme (in the first case, a history of European literature; in the second, a history of the literatures of southern Europe), the same national divisions applied, so it could be considered more as a juxtaposition of different national histories than as a real attempt towards a European literary history.

it will be clear how the development of a new concept of nationality was central to the configuration of (Spanish) modern literary history.

### Chronological Limits of the Spanish Nation/Literature

All historians of (Spanish) literature need to ask themselves the question of the external, chronological limits of their work (even if this question is not explicitly posed and answered), if not for theoretical or epistemological reasons, for practical ones: to know at what point to start the 'story' of national literary history<sup>17</sup>. In the context of nineteenth-century literary histories, the answer to this question will depend greatly (although not only) on the answer to another, closely related one: when was the (Spanish) nation born?<sup>18</sup> As we will demonstrate, there is a tension, in the corpus of historians, between a wider, more comprehensive definition of Spain, which would connect it mainly with its territory and include, then, all its inhabitants throughout history (from primitive peoples to current days, encompassing Hispano-Roman and Hispano-Arab authors, etc.); and a narrower one, which basically identifies national literature with the language in which it is expressed, and therefore does not include any author or text before the constitution of the Spanish language as an independent entity in the Middle Ages.<sup>19</sup>

As we will show in the following pages, the second of the two tendencies is by far the most abundant in early nineteenth-century Spanish literary history, thus privileging the view of language rather than territory as the core of the national literature. Language, nation and national character are said to have been born simultaneously, during the tempestuous times of the so-called 'Reconquista':

Aunque el verdadero origen de la poesía castellana se pierde en las tinieblas de la Edad Media, no puede dudarse que los primeros acentos poéticos que resonaron en

- 17 They should also, obviously, decide where to end it, but in most cases this end would coincide with some degree of precision, with the present time: Bouterwek's history comprehends up to the second half of the eighteenth century (although the Spanish translation abruptly ends in the Middle Ages); Sismondi's also includes a brief analysis of neoclassical authors whose works were fairly recent when the original text was written; Amador's *Historia* is obviously an exceptional case, since it was never concluded and only got to the sixteenth century; Ticknor's work was the first one to include a (brief) chapter devoted to the beginning of the nineteenth century, which in turn is absent from Gil de Zárate's textbook. From then on, the extension of the period considered kept expanding towards the present, and so Fitzmaurice-Kelly's history includes references to authors of the second half of the nineteenth century.
- 18 Of course, this question is a riddle with no solution or, paraphrasing Cernuda's words, 'una pregunta cuya respuesta no existe', since nations are not objective, externally measurable or scientific entities, but subjective, sociopolitical or historical ones, as defined in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983).
- 19 The distinction between 'narrow' and 'wide' historiographical trends or branches is intended to be exclusively descriptive, with no pejorative or derogative connotations attached to the term 'narrow'. Both options, of course, can be considered equally valid or invalid, equally arbitrary, since they both are based in the same tautological or circular definitions of nation and national literature.

el norte de la España fueron romances y canciones populares. (Bouterwek 1829; see Bouterwek 2002: 25)

La dignidad castellana que admiramos hasta en el mendigo, las consideraciones y respeto que se tributan en España a todo hombre, cualquiera que sea su fortuna, han nacido sin duda en las costumbres españolas en aquella época [la Edad Media]. (Simonde de Sismondi 1841–1842, I: 8)

However, some of the historians who adhere to this vision of Spanish literature, such as Friedrich von Schack, accept the existence of a certain, undefined type of continuity between the older tribes and peoples who inhabited the Iberian Peninsula and their modern heirs ('un pueblo indígena, que, a pesar de su mezcla con otras razas, aún no ha perdido los rasgos distintivos de su carácter, igual al descrito en las más antiguas historias' (Schack 1885–1888, I: 87)). Later, however, he specifies that the history of Spanish theatre, 'strictly speaking', starts only in the Middle Ages: 'La historia del teatro español, rigurosamente hablando, sólo comienza en la época en que la nación llamada España, surgió con su lenguaje especial de los restos de los diversos pueblos, que invadieron sucesivamente la Península pirenaica' (Schack 1885–1888, I: 165).

This way, even an author who apparently accepts that the Spanish nation can be traced back further than the Middle Ages, then reduces the scope of his own work to accommodate what we called the 'narrow view'. This is also the case when we examine the *Historia crítica de la literatura española* written by Amador de los Ríos, which can be considered the most significant example – if not the only one – of the actualization of a 'wider' chronology of Spanish literary historiography. In his *Historia crítica*, indeed, Amador de los Ríos brings the origins of Spanish literature back to the Roman period, to 'the era of the Caesars': 'He aquí, pues, lo que sucede con la literatura española: sus verdaderos orígenes arrancan de aquel grande acontecimiento, porque sólo bajo el manto de los Césares despiertan los ingenios españoles' (Amador de los Ríos 1861–1865, I: 29). His history, then, contains all the authors who wrote in the Spanish territory, from that point onwards: Hispano-Latin, Arab and Hebrew writers, as well as medieval authors in any language. This broad vision of Spanish history is not an innocent one by any means: one of Amador's most evident objectives when writing his work is to demonstrate that Spanish literature is not the result of foreign influences, but a native, original creation (a pure expansion of the *Volksgeist*, we could add), even if, paradoxically, it starts and deals extensively with authors who wrote in 'foreign' languages, such as Latin.<sup>20</sup>

However, even if all authors who wrote at any point in history in the Spanish territory are considered Spaniards by Amador, he later specifies, just like Schack did, that it was only during the Middle Ages (during the Reconquista, to be more

20 Amador de los Ríos does not go into much detail about this contradiction, since he seems to consider that Hispano-Latin authors are just as Spanish as any other writer born in the Spanish territory. The question of the foreign influences in Spanish literature, their importance and characteristics, would merit, of course, a much wider and detailed analysis, which we will note be able to address in this article.

precise) when the Spanish people ‘strictly speaking’ got its actual character and qualities: ‘Fórmase en esta lucha [la Reconquista] el pueblo español propiamente dicho ... ella es el campo siempre abierto, donde se fortalecen sus creencias, donde nace y florece su patriotismo, donde se crea, finalmente, su carácter’ (Amador de los Ríos 1861–1865, I: XCIX).

In the case of Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s *History of Spanish Literature*, the acceptance of the Spanishness of Roman (and even pre-Roman) inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula could be considered a mere rhetorical concession, given that it does not have any ulterior consequences. Indeed, in the first pages of his text, he states: ‘La tradición literaria española es enteramente latina. Vencidos por las legiones romanas, los españoles tomaron su revancha haciéndose maestros en el idioma e invadiendo la capital de sus vencedores’ (Fitzmaurice-Kelly 1901; see Fitzmaurice-Kelly 1914: 2); but then he deals with all authors prior to the Middle Ages in only three pages, and starts the next chapter with the first texts written in Romance languages (*El Auto de los Reyes Magos, Poema del Cid* ...).

There is, then, an obvious tension between both trends in the corpus analysed, but also an obvious and strong tendency towards the reduction of the object at hand, starting, as Menéndez Pelayo would put it, in *media res*,<sup>21</sup> with the creation of the language and the composition of the first literary works in Spanish. This tendency would become almost monopolistic towards the end of the century, at least partially, could be argued, due to the influence of Menéndez Pidal’s studies on Castilian language and literature.

### Linguistic, Geographical and Cultural Extension

As well as establishing the chronological limits of their object, in a similar way literary historians also have to establish its geographical, linguistic or cultural –external – frontiers: should they consider Spanish literature all literary works written in the Spanish territory, in any language; *or* the works written in Spanish in any part of the world; *or* just the authors who wrote in Spain *and* in Spanish? It is important to notice that, contrary to what the dominant historiographic tradition may have led us to believe, there is no obvious and permanent answer to this question. In fact, all the possibilities mentioned above were explored and put into (textual) practice at some point during the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, although the third option (Spanishness is equivalent to

21 ‘Bien sé que los principios son en todas las cosas áridos y enfadosos y que es mucho más cómodo y hasta artístico (si el arte de la historia fuera como el de un poema o una novela) comenzar a la manera de Ticknor (en otras cosas tan loable) con un capítulo en que se describiese el amanecer de la poesía castellana entre arremetidas y algaradas, entrando ipso facto y sin más explicación en el *Poema del Cid*. Pero si semejante traza y disposición puede satisfacer a una *young lady* britana que por recreación y deporte tomó en manos el libro de Ticknor, ha de causar forzosa extrañeza a quien busque la razón y fundamento de los hechos y se encuentre con disertaciones sobre un poema escrito en una lengua de cuyos orígenes no se ha hablado, en un ritmo que no se sabe de dónde viene y en alabanza de un héroe celebrado antes en cantos latinos y en libros históricos de que se le da ninguna o muy breve noticia’ (Menéndez y Pelayo 1878 (see Menéndez y Pelayo 1999: 11)).

being Spanish *and* writing in Spanish) will become prevalent with the passing of the decades.

As we have just seen, there is a very close relationship between the chronological and the linguistic definitions of the nation; however, it should be noted that this is not a direct or univocal relationship, but a complex and ramified one. The historians who opted for what we have called the 'narrow' chronological trend (which started the historical narrative in the Middle Ages) still had, indeed, a wide range of options and selections to make, by including or excluding writers in languages different from Spanish; however, they mainly tended towards an equally 'narrow' geographical and linguistic definition of Spanishness, identifying it with Castile, and its dialect – later, language – Castilian. In fact, the identification of Spanish and Castilian (in both the linguistic and the geopolitical sense) was almost complete by the end of the century, although it does appear quite consistently much earlier. For instance, George Ticknor's history makes this identification quite transparent: 'Muy difícil es, por no decir imposible, designar con precisión la época en que nació la poesía española, o hablando con más propiedad, castellana' (Ticknor 1851–1856, I: 15).<sup>22</sup> More strict promoters of this 'narrow' definition of Spanish literature, identified with Castile, are Sismondi and Schack, in whose histories there is little, if any, mention of writers in Catalan, Galician or, of course, the Basque language.<sup>23</sup>

There were different ways to justify this predilection towards works written in Spanish, although in most cases no need for justification was even felt: in some cases, the reason was purely linguistic, or literary; in others, there were geopolitical or ideological considerations involved. Bouterwek, who only mentions Catalan and Galician literatures in the introduction to his *Historia* (1829), exemplifies the first case: 'la grata lengua de los trovadores [catalán y valenciano] debió de carecer de perfección. De lo contrario, los poetas de Cataluña no se hubieran convertido tan rápidamente en prosélitos de la lengua castellana' (see Bouterwek 2002: 14, note 3).

The political or ideological justification of Castile and Castilian (a justification which can clearly be considered a precedent, however embryonic, of Menéndez Pidal's theories of Castilian supremacy in Spanish history) ignores this alleged linguistic supremacy, and focuses, on turn, in its political or national supremacy.

22 Cf. Friedrich Schlegel: 'La poesía que llamamos española, debiera en los tiempos más remotos ser llamada con más propiedad poesía castellana, pues en su origen solo pertenecía a esta provincia; y muchos otros países de la península ibérica tenían su poesía particular, enteramente distinta de la poesía castellana' (1843, II: 86).

23 It is almost impossible to find any reference to Basque literature (that is, literature in the Basque language) in the corpus. This can easily be explained by two reasons: firstly, because Basque literary tradition in written form is quite limited until its development in the nineteenth century; and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because the Basque language was most probably inaccessible to most foreign and Spanish literary critics and historians. In a separate research project, funded by Eusko Ikaskuntza – Sociedad de Estudios Vascos – and titled 'Presencias y ausencias de lo vasco en la historiografía literaria española (1800–1939)', I have identified several references to the Basque language in this corpus, but almost no mention, or very dismissive ones, to its literature.

As Simonde de Sismondi puts it: ‘la más poderosa de las monarquías españolas era la de Castilla, que ha recibido en herencia las conquistas, la grandeza y la gloria de los demás estados de la Península, y que por lo mismo merece más atención’ (Simonde de Sismondi 1841–1842, I: 83).

Amador de los Ríos’s *Historia crítica* also offers a geopolitical or ideological justification of the reduction of Spanish into Castilian, as paradoxical as this may seem. As we already know, Amador de los Ríos’s text is almost the only example of a wider chronological configuration for Spanish literary history, starting even before the Romanization of the Iberian Peninsula and connecting it with modern Spain; in consequence, his history included all authors who wrote in the geographical space of the Iberian Peninsula, regardless of the language they used, and regardless of their culture or religion. A wide chronological vision of Spanishness, then, implied a wide linguistic and cultural conception of Spanishness.<sup>24</sup> However, the tendency towards reduction was present in his text, and strongly so, also in the linguistic and cultural sense. Indeed, central Spain (i.e., Castile) is clearly privileged also in Amador’s history, even if western and eastern Spain (i.e. Galicia–Portugal and Catalonia) are included in it:

aunque semejante desarrollo, que hemos procurado caracterizar en todas sus relaciones, se ha operado principalmente en la España Central y teniendo por intérprete la lengua castellana hablada en tan diversas comarcas, no es lícito olvidar la correspondencia legítima que halla en las regiones de Oriente y Occidente, donde hemos visto formarse dos diferentes dialectos, aspirando al par a constituir dos distintas literaturas. (Amador de los Ríos 1861–1865, IV: 102)

And the reason for this superiority of ‘Central Spain’ is not merely linguistic (an alleged ‘superior perfection’ of Castilian language) as in Bouterwek’s work, but geopolitical or ideological: Castile was, according to Amador de los Ríos, more closely identified with the Spanish national character, with its *Volksggeist*, than any other region: ‘Cabe a la España Central, que había adoptado por término de expresión la lengua castellana, la gloria de reflejar más poderosamente y con un fin más general aquella múltiple cultura’ (1861–1865, IV: 151).

Of course, opting for this ‘narrow’ definition of Spanishness does not prevent contradictions or conflicts, and in fact it proved to be problematic in more than one aspect. For instance, a strict implementation of this trend would exclude works that are strongly and deeply rooted in the Spanish literary canon, such as the *cantigas* in the Galician/Portuguese language; and they are, in fact, absent from the texts of Bouterwek, Sismondi and Gil de Zárate; other historians, on the other hand, seem reluctant to obliterate them, although they are forced to admit that they do not belong to the core of their work. That is the case,

24 Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo would offer, some years later, a similarly ‘wide’ vision of the linguistic limits of Spanish literature: ‘Españoles fueron en la Edad Media los tres romances peninsulares: los tres recorrieron un ciclo literario completo, conservando unidad de espíritu y parentesco de formas en medio de las variedades locales’ (1878; see Menéndez y Pelayo 1999: 6). However, these ideas did not have a significant influence on the evolution of Spanish historiography, which continued to opt predominantly for the ‘narrow’ trend.

for instance, of Fitzmaurice-Kelly: 'Tales *Cantigas*, en número de cuatrocientas veinte, poco más o menos, no pertenecen a la literatura castellana, puesto que están escritas en gallego, lengua que han empleado bastantes autores castellanos; pero no podemos dejar enteramente a un lado un monumento de semejante importancia' (1901; see Fitzmaurice-Kelly 1914: 40).

Another contradiction emerges with this system when we consider the inclusion or exclusion of Latin American writers: although in most texts it is not clearly specified as a conscious decision or even as a methodological option, almost no author from the American continent is included in the canon of Spanish literature; the exceptions are few but significant: Sor Juana Inés, el Inca Garcilaso or, for more recent histories, Rubén Darío.<sup>25</sup> The inclusion of these authors, although almost irrelevant from a quantitative point of view, may represent a crack in the coherence of the reductive tendency. Once again, Fitzmaurice-Kelly is the only historian who explicitly acknowledges this problem, and feels obliged to give an explanation:

Hasta ahora, hemos omitido adrede a los autores modernos que, a pesar de escribir en castellano, no son de nacionalidad española por nacimiento o adopción [...]. Ha sido forzoso omitir varios nombres célebres [...]. Todos ellos pertenecen a la tradición literaria española, pero según parece, ninguno vio la Península [...]. Cualquiera que fuese su originalidad, no habrían podido ejercer influjo en la literatura española. Las condiciones de la vida moderna lo han trastornado todo. El día de hoy, en todos los pueblos, la literatura se asimila rápidamente elementos nuevos que proceden de fuera. Muchos autores americanos han pasado largos años en Madrid: un poeta de América central es el reconocido jefe de un nuevo movimiento poético que se dibuja desde hace algunos años. (1901; see Fitzmaurice-Kelly 1914: 453)

The question of the linguistic and geographical limits of the Spanish nation, then, is complex and full of contradictions: not only do we find the same duplicity of tendencies (which we have labelled 'wide' and 'narrow') as in the chronological aspect but, moreover, in most cases both tendencies are intertwined, creating intermediate and conflicting discourses. It is quite obvious, after this brief analysis, that the core of the Spanish literary canon is formed by the works written in Castilian and in Castile; and that there are, around this core, a series of materials and texts, from different linguistic and geographical origins, that may be included in the canon or not, depending on the decisions of each historian – decisions which, more often than not, must be deduced by the reader or critic, since they are almost never explicit or, even, conscious.

25 It could be argued, of course, that the American colonies were in fact Spanish, from a geopolitical point of view, between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries; however, this is not such an obvious or innocent statement as it could seem, especially considering that most of the Latin American territories had already become independent in the first half of the nineteenth century, and were, therefore, constructing their own national identities and traditions at the same time.

### The Inner Limits: Spanish Literature and National Character

This last idea – the centrality of the works written in Spanish in the Spanish literary canon – is also closely linked with the internal, ideological or identitarian definition of Spanishness in nineteenth-century literary histories. As we explained above, the Romantic theory of national literature and literary history, as developed by Schlegel and adopted by Böhl de Faber and Durán, among many others, stated that literature was the genuine expression of the character of a nation. This statement implied, quite obviously, that the *Volksgeist* preceded national literature, and that it was expressed by national (and not by all) literature and, therefore, it was the critics' duty to read literary history in a search for those moments, authors or works in which this union of national spirit and literature was most successful. This idea, which is implicit in most histories of Spanish literature, appears explicitly in some cases: 'Identificada [la poesía española] con el carácter y el sentimiento nacional, se halla en estrecha armonía con las costumbres, con las creencias, con las necesidades, con los triunfos del pueblo castellano' (Amador de los Ríos 1861–1865, I: XCVI); 'la poesía verdaderamente genial y original sólo da frutos sabrosos arraigándose en el suelo de la nacionalidad' (Schack 1885–1888, I: 43–44); 'En las épocas afortunadas, las naciones aplauden espontáneamente sólo lo bello, y las obras dramáticas, de acuerdo en todo con el espíritu del pueblo, crean sólo lo grande y lo verdadero' (I: 56). In fact, as we have seen, the identification with the national spirit is the key that guarantees inclusion in the literary canon: 'El arte del escritor consiste en producir obras que al mérito literario reúnan el indispensable espíritu de nacionalidad, y pecará siempre quien desatienda cualquiera de estas dos cualidades, porque entonces no podrá satisfacer a la vez al sabio concienzudo y al pueblo menos culto' (Gil de Zárate 1844, I: 10).<sup>26</sup>

It could be said that there is, at some point, a certain 'short circuit' of the logical reasoning behind this approach: since it is critics and historians who, a priori, define what they consider the fundamental characteristics of the national spirit, they will most probably choose those literary works which reflect these specific characteristics, and then, in turn, use those same literary works as foundations or proofs of the existence of that same national character.

It is crucial to remember that most of the Romantic views on Spain and its literature are not autochthonous but foreign, and so there needed to be a process by which the Spaniards adopted, adapted or rejected these foreign visions; this process was in fact quite quick, but not automatic. There are, in fact, three main

26 Gil de Zárate states in this quote what is probably one of the key crossroads in Romantic literary criticism and literary history: how to conciliate aesthetic merit and nationality or, better put, how to evaluate those literary works in which both do not coexist (i.e. 'heterodox' writers such as Juan de Mena, Garcilaso de la Vega or Luis de Góngora). The most common procedure when dealing with such authors, in the Romantic historiographical tradition, consists of accepting their inherent aesthetic value as writers; criticizing them for betraying their own nationality, and therefore diminishing them as literary models (see Pérez Isasi 2007). However, this is a key point that asks for a further and more detailed study.

characteristics of Spanishness which stand out in these first foreign attempts: a certain and undefined orientalism, resulting from a long contact with the Arab people; chivalry (connected with an exacerbated sense of honour and with a sense of gallantry) and piety or religiousness. The three of them appear already in the first German Romantic definitions of Spain,<sup>27</sup> generated or at least partially influenced by the accounts of biased foreign travellers who visited Spain during the nineteenth century;<sup>28</sup> and all of them also appear with surprising regularity in the histories of Spanish literature written in the first half of the nineteenth century, although the concept of 'oriental Spain' is much more relevant in the first half of the century (cf. Domínguez 2006). For Bouterwek, for example, Spanish national character was born precisely *due to* the contact with an oriental people:

Durante el medio milenio de lucha casi ininterrumpida entre los moros y los cristianos de antigua raigambre europea, ambas partes, aun sin querer, tuvieron que aproximarse en mentalidad y costumbres, pese a lo fanático de su odio recíproco .... Así surgió el espíritu caballeresco español, que representaba en el fondo el espíritu caballeresco general de la mayoría de los pueblos europeos de la época en una forma especial, porque en esa forma imprimió carácter oriental en el español. (1829; see Bouterwek 2002: 11)

This same idea may be found even more clearly in other foreign historians of Spanish literature, such as Sismondi or Schack: 'Este rasgo característico de su fisonomía, que proviene de la influencia de un pueblo no europeo, y es efecto de la unión de los dos elementos oriental y occidental, la distingue de manera singular' (Schack 1885–1888, I: 87); 'La literatura española difiere esencialmente de las demás de Europa: puede decirse que éstas son europeas, mientras que aquella es oriental' (Simonde de Sismondi 1841, I: 1–2). This second case is extremely interesting, however, because of its editorial accidents: it was translated into Spanish by two different persons (José Lorenzo Figueroa and Amador de los Ríos), but the translators did not merely translate the original work by Sismondi, they also adapted it and 'corrected' it, by adding entire chapters or 'lessons', or contradicting the opinions of the original author.<sup>29</sup> And one of the aspects in which the translator (in this case, José Lorenzo Figueroa) contradicts Sismondi is the 'orientalism' of the Spanish people and Spanish literature:

- 27 Cf. Friedrich Schlegel: 'El espíritu de la caballería [...] se conservó mucho más tiempo en ese país que en ningún otro' (1843, II: 85) and A. W. Schlegel (1815): 'If a feeling of religion, a loyal heroism, honour, and love, be the foundation of romantic poetry, it could not fail to attain its highest development in Spain, where its birth and growth were cherished by the most friendly auspices' (see Schlegel 2006: 353).
- 28 There is an extensive bibliography on Romantic travellers in Spain. See Rubio Jiménez 1994.
- 29 These extensive and deep modifications from original to translation may not be exclusive of Sismondi's history. However, since the presence of the translator's voice in the translated text is not as obvious in the histories of Ticknor, Bouterwek or Schack as it is in the case of Sismondi, a patient and meticulous process of *collatio* would be required, which would offer, I am sure, very meaningful results; unfortunately, such studies do not yet exist.

Tampoco es exacto lo que asienta el autor pocas líneas más arriba cuando dice que la literatura española difiere esencialmente de las demás de Europa, y que puede decirse que éstas son europeas mientras que aquella es oriental. Nuestra literatura ha tenido diversas épocas y no deben confundirse en un juicio común. (Simonde de Sismondi 1841, I: 29, note A)

Amador de los Ríos, in his *Historia crítica*, also comments on this alleged ‘orientalism’, regarding it as ‘erroneous’ and ‘pitiful’. In his case, however, this statement should be understood, as we said, in the context of the general objective of his work: to prove that Spanish literature was not born as a consequence of foreign influences, but as a genuinely spontaneous and native product:

Cuando [...] nos paramos a considerar el empeño con que la mayor parte de los críticos, así nacionales como extranjeros, procuran hacerla tributaria de otras literaturas, aun antes de tener vida, no sólo nos juzgamos obligados a rechazar tan erróneos asertos, sino que es para nosotros un misterio obcecación tan lastimosa (Amador de los Ríos 1861–1865, II: 288)

By the end of the century, then, Spanish historians had strongly reacted against the idea of the orientalism of Spanish literature, an idea that had, therefore, been abandoned as false. ‘No podría sostenerse’ – says Fitzmaurice-Kelly – (1901) ‘que los árabes hayan influido del mismo modo en la literatura castellana’ (see Fitzmaurice-Kelly 1914: 8).

The other two central elements of Spanish national character (chivalry and piety) were less controversial, probably because they fitted best with the Spaniards’ own image of themselves. *Caballería* adopted many forms: a high sense of honour, gallantry, patriotism, pride (and even arrogance) .... Piety, or a deep religious feeling, was in fact often conceived as an extension of this idea of chivalry. These two characteristics, separately or jointly, appear in most of the histories of Spanish literature, generally in the form of prologues, introductions, or in the general description of the Spanish nation that often opens such works:

La nación española otro tiempo tan valerosa, tan caballeresca, y cuyo orgullo y dignidad son proverbiales en Europa, se ha retratado al vivo en su literatura. (Simonde de Sismondi 1841, I: 2)

[H]ay en la literatura española dos signos tan peculiares y exclusivos de ella, que es forzoso fijarlos desde el principio como puntos de partida, a saber la fe religiosa y la lealtad caballeresca. (Ticknor 1851–1856, I: 109)

A semejante resultado contribuyeron los dos grandes factores de la civilización moderna, cuyas consecuencias han sido en todos uniformes, a saber: el espíritu caballeresco y la influencia del cristianismo. (Schack 1885–1888, I: 87)

Amador’s *Historia crítica* de la literatura española is, once again, especially explicit about this relationship between patriotism and religion:

Apoyándose en el gran principio religioso, alma de la sociedad cristiana, que alienta y vivifica el entusiasmo patriótico, se eleva sobre la esfera del mundo visible, reflejando la idea de lo absoluto y de lo infinito, y desdeñando la naturaleza exterior para inspirarse en las dos grandes fuentes que constituyen la creencia: *Dios* y la *patria*: he aquí el doble dogma del arte castellano. (Amador de los Ríos 1861–1865, III: 4)

And Gil de Zárate, too, explicitly defines Spanishness as 'religion, honour and gallantry' (which, as we have seen, was usually considered as part of the 'chivalric' quality of the Spanish character, and also one of the effects of its orientalism):

La religión, el honor y la galantería: estos son como hemos visto los tres ejes sobre los cuales ha girado la civilización de los tiempos medios, y las tres fuentes de todas las bellezas propias de su literatura. Estas tres causas han influido poderosamente en nuestra patria, y tal vez con más eficacia que en ninguna parte. (Gil de Zárate 1844, I: 11)

Of course, these inner limits of 'Spanishness' have, as we have pointed out, profound implications for the selection and disposition of the national canon. It would require a longer study to pursue these consequences in all their full extension; let us, however, present just a few examples of how this selection process works, affecting the periodization, and the evaluation of genres, authors and literary works.

For instance, the supremacy given to chivalry and piety in the definition of the national character implied giving more relevance to certain genres, such as epic or mystic poetry, and underestimating, on the contrary, others such as lyric poetry. It is a well-known fact that Romanticism, in its search for the roots of all national literatures, contributed to a revival of medieval ballads and epic poems. In the case of Spanish literature, this essentially meant gathering popular 'romances' (short epic-lyrical medieval poems which had already attracted the attention of Herder and Schlegel) as they were considered to constitute the 'true national poetry': 'Esta poesía tan espontánea, tan llena de vida, fue por lo mismo maravillosamente fecunda, llegó a ser la verdadera poesía nacional' (Gil de Zárate 1844: I, 371);<sup>30</sup> 'Lo primero que llama la atención en los romances antiguos castellanos es el espíritu verdaderamente nacional que en todos y cada uno de ellos domina' (Ticknor 1851-1856, I: 135); 'reúne la muy estimable circunstancia de contener la verdadera epopeya española, puesto que es la genuina expresión de la religión, de la historia, de la poesía, en una palabra, de la civilización de aquella época' (Revilla and Alcántara 1872, II: 329).

Medieval epic poetry was not the only genre exalted as 'national': since the very origins of German Romanticism, Spanish Golden Age drama – and, more precisely, Calderón de la Barca – was singled out as the perfect representation of Spanishness (because of its identification with Catholicism, honour and gallantry), to the detriment of Lope de Vega, who was considered his inferior or immediate predecessor.<sup>31</sup> During the nineteenth century, the balance between

30 This positive attitude towards medieval epic ballads or 'romances' did not, however, include at first the *Poema de Mío Cid*: although it is mentioned by all historians as the first literary work written in Spanish, it is rejected by Bouterwek (1829) and Sismondi as merely 'una historia rimada, en alejandrinos bastante incorrectos' (see Bouterwek 2002: 25). The reception of the *Poema de Mío Cid* evolved during the nineteenth century, receiving its definitive consecration with the studies and works of Menéndez y Pidal and his school.

31 'Si consideramos el teatro español en Lope de Vega, su autor más célebre y el que le dio

Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca (the two main magnetic poles of Spanish Golden Age drama) turned towards the former, but, in any case, the genre as such continued to be the core of the Spanish literary canon, and the perfect example of what can be achieved by following solely the dictate of their national character: '¡Cuánto aventaja el drama creado por él, en consonancia con el espíritu nacional, y con la vida íntima del pueblo, a todo aquello que hubiese alcanzado sólo con el arte imitativo!' (Schack 1885–1888, II: 429).

This preference for medieval epic poems and Golden Age drama exemplifies a certain paradox inside the early Romantic literary historiographic paradigm: on the one hand, the Schlegel brothers contributed to the deification of the supreme genius, who can achieve the highest levels of beauty and truth;<sup>32</sup> on the other hand, they also required that true poets express the true national essence of their people.<sup>33</sup> As a consequence, only those erudite authors who were considered 'true national geniuses' (Calderón and Cervantes, for instance) were happily accepted inside the literary canon, while others (i.e. Garcilaso de la Vega or Góngora), who supposedly betrayed their nationality (by introducing foreign influences or simply by writing non-popular literature and stepping away from their national roots) were desecrated:

Debilitaban [los poetas cultos] grandemente la fuerza y vigor primitivos de la musa castellana, convirtiéndola a extrañas regiones que desconocía, y divorciándola del todo de los géneros populares. (Amador de los Ríos 1861–1865, III: 236)

Garcilaso hubiera hecho aún más por sí y por la literatura de su patria si, en lugar de imitar tan completamente a los grandes poetas italianos, que justamente admiraba, hubiera acudido más a menudo a los elementos del antiguo carácter nacional. (Ticknor 1851–1856, II: 48)

Of course, no analysis of the Spanish literary canon would be complete without a reference to the role of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which was to be considered, during the whole century, one of the centres (if not the main one) of Spanish literary history. As Close has shown (2005), the new reading was based on the consideration of *Don Quixote* as a romantic hero, and as a symbol both of human

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leyes, esas ventajas generales solo se nos presentarán bajo un aspecto dudoso; y no concebiremos en general muy buena opinión de la excelencia del drama español' (F. Schlegel 1843, II: 114); 'pero si quiere comprenderse de un modo general el espíritu del teatro español, preciso es considerarlo en su perfección, es decir, en Calderón, el último y el más grande de los poetas españoles' (1843, II: 117). Cf. Oleza 1996.

32 'Genius is the almost unconscious choice of the highest degree of excellence, and, consequently, it is taste in its highest activity' (A. W. Schlegel 1815; see Schlegel 2006: 19).

33 'He dicho ya muchas veces que a mi entender no se podía considerar la existencia de una poesía popular, sino como una prueba del desorden y de la decadencia de la verdadera poesía: esta, en efecto, no debe ser abandonada exclusivamente ni al pueblo ni a los sabios, y debe por el contrario, ser común al pueblo, a los hombres instruidos y a toda la nación' (F. Schlegel 1843, II: 77). The distinction between popular / erudite and its consequences in the definition of 'national literature' needs further analysis; see, for a first approach applied to national drama, Pozuelo Yvancos 2000.

suffering and of Spanish national character.<sup>34</sup> Salcedo Ruiz's interpretation of *Don Quixote* is especially explicit in his fidelity to this Romantic reading:

Sin perder nada de su individualidad española, se ve muy claro que en el hidalgo loco el romanticismo caballeresco, el idealismo soñador no refrenado en sus justos límites por el buen sentido de la vida, se ha condensado de tal suerte y con tal intensidad, que ya no podrá crearse jamás un ser de fantasía que lo represente y simbolice mejor; cuanto se haga después por los ingenios de la humanidad ha de ser copia más o menos desfigurada de este valentísimo y finísimo caballero, enamorado del bien y de la justicia, que quiere realizar uno y otra en el mundo, y que está loco, no porque pretenda esto, que es la más noble cordura humana, sino porque lo intenta por un procedimiento inadecuado, y careciendo en absoluto de medios para que no resulte ridícula su generosa empresa. (Salcedo Ruiz 1910: 227)

Cervantes, in turn, was declared to be both the Spanish national novelist and a universal genius, without finding both qualities mutually contradictory: it is precisely by being loyal to his people's character and traditions that Cervantes gains his universality:

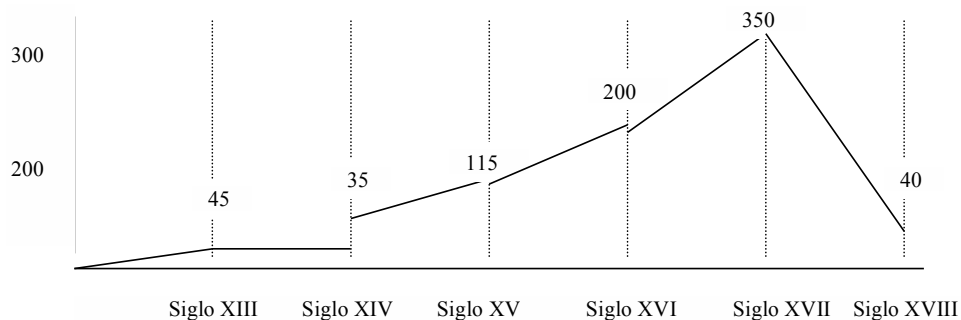
Los grandes poetas, Homero, Dante, Shakespeare y Milton, llegaron sin duda a mayor elevación, y se pusieron más en contacto con los atributos más nobles de la naturaleza del hombre; pero Cervantes, escribiendo bajo la influencia natural y libre de su genio, reconcentrando instintivamente en su ficción el carácter del pueblo en que nació, se ha hecho el escritor de todos los tiempos y de todos los países, de los ignorantes como de los sabios. (Ticknor 1851–1856, II: 251)

But it is not only individual authors and works, not even literary genres, that are evaluated according to this interpretative scheme: literary periods are considered national or non-national, considering their proximity to the national spirit. Of course, this is not the only criteria to establish the periodization and evolution of Spanish literature, an evolution which, on the other hand, follows with regularity – and sometimes explicitly – the organic scheme of birth–growth–maturity–old age (and regeneration). This is obvious not only in the way authors and works are presented but also in the number of pages devoted to each period. If we examine some of the histories written during the nineteenth century, we will see a significant rise in the volume of text devoted to each century until the seventeenth century (which is, in all cases, the peak of Spanish literature, its Golden Age<sup>35</sup>), and then an obvious and sudden fall for the eighteenth century, with a new peak, in those histories that include the nineteenth century, starting to show at the end of the narrative arch depicted in figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 below:

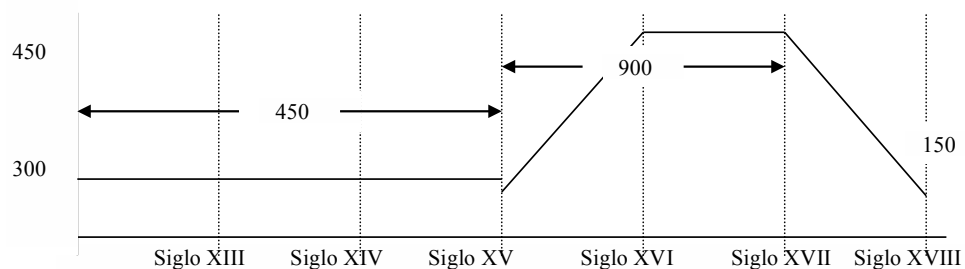
34 'A mi entender, es una concepción cuestionable en sus principios fundamentales, que podríamos resumir así: a) Se idealiza al héroe y se atenúa radicalmente el carácter cómico–satírico de la novela; b) Se considera que se trata de una novela simbólica, cuyo simbolismo expresa varias ideas bien sobre la relación del alma humana y la realidad, bien sobre la naturaleza de la historia de España; c) Se interpreta el simbolismo de la novela (y, de modo más general, el conjunto de su espíritu y estilo) de forma que refleje la ideología, estética y sensibilidad del periodo contemporáneo' (Close 2005: 15).

35 For the concept of 'Golden Age' and its evolution, see Blecua 2004.

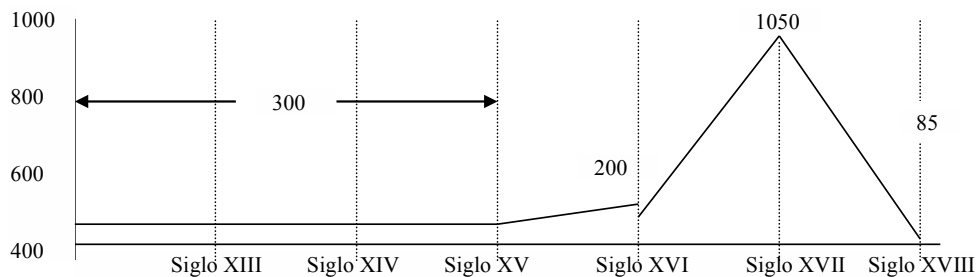
*Simonde de Sismondi*



*G. Ticknor*



*A. F. von Schack*



*Fitzmaurice-Kelly*

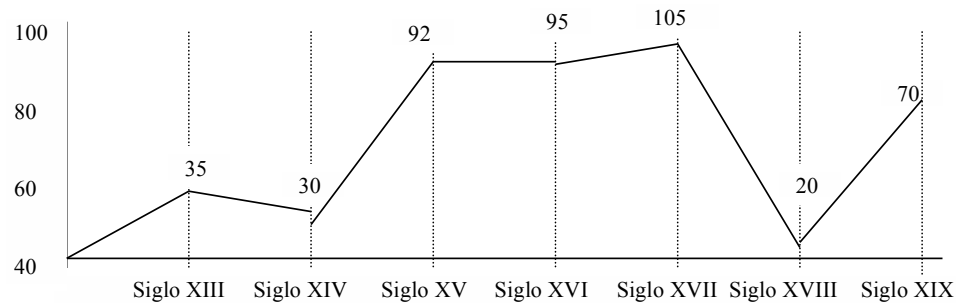


Fig. 1: Number of pages devoted to each century in their works by Simonde de Sismondi, G. Ticknor, A. F. von Schack and J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly

This curve, although based on mere page numbers by century, is of course representative of a qualitative and aesthetic evaluation of those periods: for instance, the deep critical valley that affects Spanish eighteenth-century literature is not caused, obviously, by a lack of works or authors during that period, but by a decrease of the critics' and historians' interest in them.

The previous pages have shown a complex and multidimensional relationship between literary history and national identity: through the study of its limits (its external and its conceptual limits) we have been able to establish how the concept of nation and *Volksgeist*, formed and developed by early German Romantic philosophers and critics, is crucial in the configuration of modern literary history, not only because it establishes its object (chronologically, geographically, linguistically) but because it also affects the way in which texts, authors, genres and periods are read and assessed. The contradictions and problems encountered by the national model of literary history, as shown in the previous analysis, can also be considered a contribution towards the reflection on new (comparative, non-narrative, postmodern) historiographic trends, some of which are already being developed. Of course, it is still necessary to explore more deeply the ways in which national literary history is implemented in Spain and in Europe from 1800 onwards; its consequences on the configuration of the literary canon, and also its problems, paradoxes and contradictions. I hope, in any case, that this essay may serve as a starting point, or as a general, comprehensive background on which such future studies can be built.

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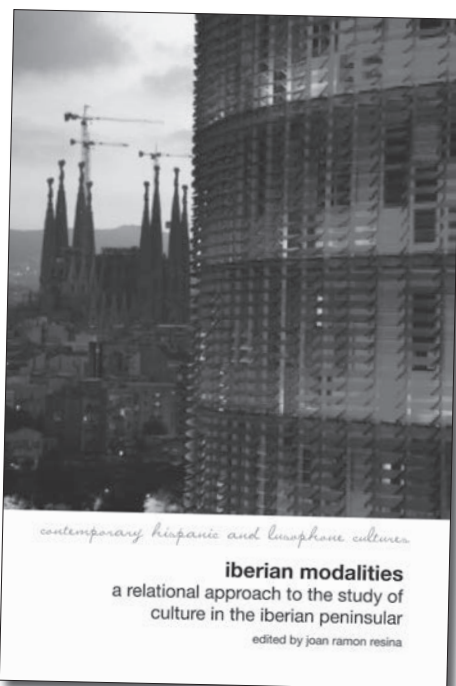
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