# The beginnings of scholarship on early medieval book illumination (1700-1850): between classicism and ethnicity[1]

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In 1817, in his *Bibliographical Decameron*, the English cleric and bibliographer Thomas Frognall Dibdin assigned the production of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts to a period before the Middle Ages, which he called the 'Earlier Ages'. In 1853, the great art connoisseur and recently-appointed curator of the « Musée des souverains », Horace de Viel-Castel, used a similar classification in his 'Notice sur la peinture des manuscrits':

> I would suggest that the interesting aspect to be studied in the manuscripts is, first of all, the entire Merovingian epoch as well as the Carolingian epoch up to the 13th century when the last misconceptions about ancient art disappear and we can see the beginning of the period conventionally called the Midde Ages, namely, the intermediate time between Antiquity and the Renaissance. [2]

This concept of 'intermediate times,' referring to the period between the end of Antiquity and the reign of St. Louis, is frequently found in modern scholarship during the eighteenth century up into the first half of the nineteenth century. It is of crucial importance to determine when art in the first centuries AD –particularly in illuminated manuscripts, often being the most outstanding artistic witnesses for this period – began to be included in nineteenth century scholarship; *it is equally important* to understand the context and manner in which this art was interpreted.[3]

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[1] A first version of this paper was given at the symposium organized by Marie Jacob and Chrystèle Blondeau, 'Le XIXe siècle en lumière : redécouverte et revalorisation de l'enluminure médiévale en France au temps du livre industriel', Rennes, May, 18-19, 2017. I wish to express my gratitude to Heidi Gearhart for her helpful comments, suggestions, and linguistic revision of this paper, as well as to Ester Zago for her accurate translations of the French quotations.

[2] 'L'époque de l'art intéressante à étudier dans les manuscrits est, à notre avis, en première ligne, toute l'époque mérovingienne, l'époque carlovingienne, et sa continuation jusqu'au XIIIe siècle, où disparaissent les derniers errements de l'art antique, et où commence ce que l'on est convenu d'appeler le moyen-âge, c'est-à-dire l'époque intermédiaire entre l'Antiquité et la Renaissance' : Horace de Viel-Castel, *Statuts de l'ordre du Saint-Esprit au droit désir ou du Nœud*, Paris: Engelmann et Graf, 1853.

[3] For a wide survey on eighteenth and nineteenth century historiography on medieval art, with a specific focus on Romanesque art, see Jean Nayrolles, *L'invention de l'art roman à l'époque moderne (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles)*, Rennes: PUR, 2005; Alyce A. Jordan and Janet T. Marquardt, ed., *Medieval Art and Architecture after the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

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Drawing on primary sources for the period, such as Tacitus, Bede, or Paul the Deacon, who based their identification of the era on the barbaric invasions and their alleged negative consequences,[4] early scholars of medieval art called the epoch 'the dark ages'. Medieval history has been built upon this commonplace and it is only relatively recently that scholars have reevaluated the impact of the so-called invasions and the meaning of the concept of 'ethnicity,' commonly used to distinguish different groups of populations, and to construct nationalistic paradigms.[5]

Vestiges of this early medieval period have suffered from such a negative perception. Artifacts have often been considered 'barbaric' or 'primitive' – if not simply ignored – and it was not until the first decades of the twentieth century that the art-history discourse began to change dramatically.

However, the pejorative manner in which the age of the purported invasions or migrations was considered is not the main reason for the contempt toward early medieval art in comparison to other periods such as the Gothic and the Renaissance, to give just two examples. Rather, this disdain was based primarily on ideological and aesthetic principles. From the time of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who saw in Greek art the epitome of universal Beauty, as Giorgio Vasari had done two centuries earlier, a fascination with the Greco-Roman world and its artistic expressions was instrumental in shaping the vision of art historians: these scholars established Renaissance art as the paradigm for the classical canon. As a result, only Byzantine, Carolingian, and fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries Gothic art have been considered as worthy of attention due to their affiliation with the heritage of Antiquity, whereas earlier medieval periods have been ignored.

And yet, it would have made sense to consider the Early Middle Ages like the later periods of the Middle Ages, when in the early 1800, art history began to reject Winckelmann's legacy and the universality of the classical canon. Instead, the concept of the genius of peoples, celebrated by philosophers such as Friedrich Schlegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and other Romantic writers, was highlighted in order to claim the heritage of the barbaric populations that caused the fall of Rome. As a result, in some countries such as Great Britain, France, and Germany, artifacts, then regarded as barbaric in character or origin, began to be considered and classified according to their geographical provenance and ethnic affiliation, which could also be described as racial, as there is not always a clear

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[4] See on this issue Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988; *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Clement Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, Sven Meeder, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015; Bruno Dumézil, ed., *Les Barbares*, Paris: PUF, 2016.

[5] Among the many studies on the ethnic issue, see Patrick Amory, 'The Meaning and Purpose of Ethnic Terminology in the Burgundian Laws', *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993), 1-28; Patrick Geary, 'Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages', *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983), 15-26; Id, *The Myth of Nations. The Medieval Origins of Europe*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002; Walter Pohl, 'Ethnicity, Theory and Tradition. A response', Andrew Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity. Critical Approaches to Ethnogesis Theory*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2002, 221-240.

distinction between concepts of race, ethnicity, nation, and peoples in the nineteenth century.[6] However, this approach to artifacts, which has had a powerful influence on human and social sciences in the nineteenth century and beyond, depends upon a biological understanding of the evolution of art as Winckelmann conceived it. Based upon notions of childhood, adolescence, and maturity, this evolutionist paradigm has sometimes resulted in the marginalization of art of the first centuries of the Middle Ages, considered as a period of cultural decline, in contrast to the Gothic age, or, paradoxically, in defense of early medieval art as a native manifestation of barbaric populations. Instead, the invaders regenerated Roman art, already in phase of decadence, thus contributing to shape European civilization against Mediterranean culture.

During the same period, some nineteenth-century French art historians established a filiation between ancient Greece and Gaul, seeing in Gallic art a continuation of Greek art, which they persisted in considering as the normative aesthetic reference. These many contradictions are linked to different ideals of civilization and are at the foundations of art history as an academic discipline. The overview of the very beginnings of scholarship on early medieval book illumination appears more complex and shifting than at first sight, therefore deserving historical contextualization.

This essay offers a survey of eighteenth and nineteenth-century art history scholarship's fields of interest and methods of approach, as they have much changed in the course of European national construction.[7] The study will shed light on the two main historiographical paradigms laying at the very core of inquiries about early medieval illumination, namely, classicism and ethnicity. I shall argue that both paradigms, along with the Byzantine one, have profoundly shaped our appreciation and interpretation of early medieval illumination,[8] as well as its long-marginalized position within modern scholarship on manuscript painting.

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[6]For this crucial topic, see Eric Michaud, *Les invasions barbares. Une généalogie de l'histoire de l'art*, Paris: Gallimard, 2015, esp. 18, where the author explains why the appropriation of the barbaric legacy has generated what he calls 'the theory of racial determination of cultural forms'.

[7]For a broader view, see Patrick Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; Id., *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002; Agnès Graceffa, *Les Historiens et la question franque. Le peuplement franc et les Mérovingiens dans l'historiographie française et allemande des XIXe et XXe siècles*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2009; Bonnie Effros, *Uncovering the Germanic Past: Merovingian Archaeology in France, 1830-1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; Ian Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014; Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550-850*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

[8] Lawrence Nees developed a similar approach for twentieth-century scholarship: Lawrence Nees, 'Ethnic and Primitive Paradigms in the Study of the Early Medieval Art', ed. Celia Chazelle and Felice Lifshitz, *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies*, London, 2007, 41-60. For a broader view see also Jonathan J. G. Alexander, 'Medieval Art and Modern Nationalism', in G.R. Owen-Crocker and T. Graham, eds., *Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives. A Memorial Tribute to C.R. Dodwell*, Manchester, 1998, 206-223.

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I shall limit this paper to illuminated manuscripts for two reasons: on the one hand, they are our main artistic evidence for artistic production in the period, given the relative scarcity of architecture, wall painting, or sculpture, as noted above; as such, they are well represented in scholarly research. On the other hand, other objects such as jewelry come within the field of archeology, whose fields of investigation, aims, methodology, and historic developments as a discipline differ from those of art history. This is another extremely wide subject that is beyond the scope of this essay[9]. Rather, I will focus on early medieval book illumination, this being the period that has suffered the most from nineteenth-century racial views as well as from artistic and historical contradictions. In addition, I shall cull some examples from Romanesque illumination[10], as the boundary between the two periods is often blurred, with the result that the latter was often treated in the same way as the former. Finally, most of the material in this essay is drawn from English and French scholarship. In these two countries academic research is closely tied to a centralized government and to nationhood, unlike other European countries, such as Germany, still divided into small entities during a large part of the nineteenth century and where the approach to medieval art is significantly different.[11]

**Antiquarianism, *Histoire savante* and the search for origins**

During the first half of the nineteenth century, studies of Early Medieval book illumination were primarily linked to paleographical, historical, and archeological issues. It was believed that medieval images, like other material objects, provided documentary information. Along with texts, objects with iconographic details, would contribute to know he past better, and to reconstruct it in a global perspective.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the philological approach was dominant among scholars who examined manuscripts of the Early Middle Ages. In France, Maurists, Jean Mabillon (1632-1707), and Bernard de Montfaucon (1655-1741),[12] for example, were the first to study manuscripts as illustrations of the past. They were closely followed by German scholars, such as Benedictine Gottfried

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[9] This field has been recently discussed by Matthias Friedrich in his Ph. Dissertation at the University in Freiburg in Breisgau, *Image, Ornament, and Aesthetics: The Archaeology of Art In the Merovingian World (C. Ad 450–750)*. I thank Patrick Geary for providing me with this reference.

[10] For Romanesque illumination, see Adam S. Cohen, 'The Historiography of Romanesque Manuscript Illumination', *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolf, Blackwell, 2006, 357-381.

[11] For Germany, see Andrea Worm, 'The Study of Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts in German Scholarship ca. 1750–1850', in Janet T. Marquardt and Alyce A. Jordan, *Medieval Art and Architecture after the Middle Ages*, Cambridge Scholars, 2009, 246-273.

[12]In his *Monumens de la monarchie françoise* (Paris, 1729-1733), Montfaucon includes, for example, a copy of the Vivian/Charles the Bald Bible (Paris, BnF latin 1) with the portrait of Charles the Bald (I, pl. 26).

Bessel (1672-1749),[13] Coloman Sanftl (1752-1809),[14] and Christian M. Engelhardt (1775-1858),[15] as well as by the Englishman Joseph Strutt (1749-1802),[16] who presented himself as the English counterpart of Montfaucon. For all these scholars, who used written documents to mold history into an objective science, paleography, texts, and images were invaluable sources for the nation's history, its culture, and customs. They believed that images, in particular, offered visual evidence about costumes, architecture, ornamentation, furniture, or objects of daily life, and, as such, they are described in scholarly publications. In the Foreword to his *Monumens*, Montfaucon clearly states that his attention to 'coarse material' (*matériau grossier*) is motivated by the best interest of the Nation.[17] Likewise, Joseph Strutt surveyed Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in his main book, *A Complete View*, using them as specimens of natural history, symbols of patriotism and continuity with the present, due to the purported realism of their images, more visible, he claimed, than in French manuscripts.[18] Nicolas Xavier Willemin (1763-1833) undertook a similar project[19] in his *Monumens français inédits pour servir à l'histoire des arts, depuis le VIe jusqu'au commencement du XVIIe*, a posthumous work published in 1839 with

[13]In his *Chronicon Gotwicense* (1732), Bessel includes two plates from a twelfth-century Antiphonar from Saint-Pierre of Salzburg, for their documentary interest: costumes, writing material, etc.

[14]*Dissertatio in aureum, ac pervetustum SS. Evangeliarum codicem ms. monasterii S. Emmerami Ratisbonae*, 1786: one of the very first monographs about a medieval manuscript, the Codex Aureus. Just as the Maurists, he is interested in the content of the manuscript and its script, but he expresses a new interest in the manuscript's artistic decoration giving three full-size engraved plates of the paintings. He stresses the splendour of the paintings and the manuscript's historical importance. See on this topic Andrea Worm, 'The Study of Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts in German Scholarship ca. 1750–1850', Janet T. Marquardt and Alyce A. Jordan, *Medieval Art and Architecture after the Middle Ages*, Cambridge Scholars, 2009, 246-273.

[15]Facsimile of the *Hortus deliciarum* by Herrade de Landsberg published in 1818, prefaced by a monographic study on the manuscript and its miniatures. The author stresses their documentary interest with regard to the cultural history of the Middle Ages (customs, costumes, art). This sumptuous publication was made possible thanks to the financial support of Maximilien 1st (1756-1825), King of Bavaria.

[16]Strutt had a great admiration for Montfaucon's *Monumens de la monarchie françoise*. The historical approach developed in his main work, *A Complete View*, had a significant influence on the history of illumination and medievalism in England: *A Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England: from the establishment of the Saxons in Britain to the present time ... To which is prefixed an introduction, containing a general description of the ancient habits in use among mankind, from the earliest period of time to the conclusion of the seventh century*, London, 1796.

[17]Bernard de Montfaucon, *Monumens de la monarchie françoise*, Paris, 1729-1733, II.

[18]Joseph Strutt, *A Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England: from the establishment of the Saxons in Britain to the present time ... To which is prefixed an introduction, containing a general description of the ancient habits in use among mankind, from the earliest period of time to the conclusion of the seventh century*, London, 1796.

[19]Françoise Arquié-Bruley, 'Les *Monuments français inédits (1806-1839)* de N.-X. Willemin', *Revue d'Art canadien*, n. 10, 1983, 139-156.

descriptions written by his friend André Pottier, curator at the library of Rouen. Pioneering a more comprehensive study of medieval art in France, Willemin assembled engravings from original works together with his own copies made with tracing papers or drawings,[20] manuscripts' paintings, architectural elements, representations of fabrics, mosaics, and works of art. His purpose was to compare the respective developments of different arts in any given period and to grasp the character of medieval civilization through its artistic vestiges. However, despite his primarily historical approach, what clearly distinguishes Willemin's method from that of his predecessors and makes it interesting is that he eliminates every notion of hierarchy between major and minor arts. He proposes a global history of art isolated from the Greco-Roman model, as in the Musée des Monuments français created by Alexandre Lenoir.[21] This reason convinced Willemin to study manuscripts of the Early Middle Ages. For instance in his book he included illustrations from the Charlemagne Gospel Book (Paris, BnF NAL 1203), the Bible of St Paul-Outside-the-Walls (Rome, Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls), with the portrait of Charles the Bald, the Psalter and the Second Bible of Charles the Bald (Paris, BnF latin 1152 and latin 2), the Gospels of Francis II (Paris, BnF latin 257), with some architectural elements, the Psalter of St. Germain-des-Prés (BnF latin 11550), and the Gradual of Prüm (BnF latin 9448), with representations of people to show 'ancient habits'.[22] At the same time, in their book *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France* Charles Nodier and Baron Taylor included lithographs from the above mentioned Charlemagne Gospel Book, with commentaries;[23] another painter, Jean-Baptiste Joseph Jorand, devoted a specific and significant study to the calligraphy of the Second Bible of Charles the Bald, entitled *Grammatographie du IXe siècle*, in which he reproduced and discussed all the initials of the manuscript.[24]

    As mentioned earlier, paleographical and historical concerns are at the heart of these studies. Aesthetic comments are few and far between, and, when they exist, they are rarely laudatory. Although he is one of the first scholars to show some interest in the aesthetic qualities of illuminated manuscripts and to have laid the foundations for a better understanding of the Middle Ages, Abbé Rive (1730-1791) had a negative opinion about the Early Middle Ages. In his *Essai sur l'art de vérifier les miniatures* published in 1782, Rive takes into account only manuscripts produced after the fourteenth century. In the accompanying *Prospectus*, he clearly states that *'from the fifth century A.D. until the tenth, manuscript miniatures exhibit some beauty, particularly in Greece […] From the tenth until the fourteenth century almost all of them are*

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[20]Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Voyage bibliographique, archéologique et pittoresque en France*, 1825, 211: the author recounts that he often saw Willemin in the royal library, copying certain manuscripts with miniatures using a pencil and tracing paper.
[21]https://www.inha.fr/fr/ressources/publications/publications-numeriques/dictionnaire-critique-des-historiens-de-l-art/willemin-nicolas-xavier.html
[22]Plates 3, 6-11, 26-28.
[23]Charles Nodier, Isidore de Taylor et Alphonse de Cailleux, *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France, Languedoc*, 1, Paris : Engelmann, 1833.
[24]Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Jorand, *Grammatographie du IXe siècle, types calligraphiques tirés de la Bible de Charles le Chauve manuscrit de la Bibliothèque royale*, Paris, 1837.

*hideous, reflecting the barbaric times in which they were painted'.* [25] Strutt states his view in his book mentioned above, *A Complete View*, where the art of book illumination before the fourteenth century is ignored. In the Appendix to volume 3, the section entitled 'A short account of the rise and progress of the art of design in England' shows that the author is unable to appreciate the style of the manuscripts of the Early Middle Ages; in particular, the portraits of the Evangelists of the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library, Cotton Ms. Nero D.IV) which, although reproduced in his book, are harshly judged.

In most cases, the same historical perspective also dominates concerns of 'antiquarian' scholars and collectors, such as François-Roger de Gaignières who owned the Gaignières Gospels (Paris, BnF latin 1126); Jean-Baptiste Colbert acquired a very large number of manuscripts for both his own library and the royal library (manuscripts from Le Puy, Moissac, Metz…), or Antoine-René Voyer, Marquis de Paulmy (1722-1787), to mention only these few names. The Marquis de Paulmy did not restrain himself in his severe critique of paintings in manuscripts from the Early Middle Ages. About an Apocalypse from the eleventh century, he declares, for instance, that 'the miniatures are ridiculous and done incorrectly, a proof of the antiquity of the manuscript;' about a Commentary on the Apocalypse from the tenth century, he states that 'the miniatures are badly drawn, another proof of their antiquity'.[26] And yet, despite this disdain for Early Medieval book illumination, it is during this time that the first facsimiles of a few Early Medieval manuscripts were published. During the Renaissance, there had been copies or projects of copies of manuscripts from late antiquity, such as the Chronograph of 354, the Vatican Virgil,

[25] 'Depuis le cinquième siècle après Jésus Christ jusqu'au dixième, les miniatures des manuscrits conservent encore quelque beauté, & surtout en Grèce […]. Depuis le dixième jusqu'au milieu du quatorzième, elles sont presque toutes affreuses, & se ressentent de la barbarie des siècles où elles ont été peintes.' : 'Prospectus d'un ouvrage proposé par souscription par M. l'abbé Rive : Essai sur l'art de vérifier l'âge des miniatures peintes dans des manuscrits depuis le quatorzième jusqu'au dix-septième siècle inclusivement, de comparer leurs différents styles et degrés de beauté, et de déterminer une partie de la valeur des manuscrits qu'elles enrichissent,' s.d., 11-12. See about Abbé Rive, Alan Munby, *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures, 1750-1850*, Oxford, 1972, 14-19, 140; Sandra Hindman, Michael Camille, 'Curiosities: Appreciation of Manuscript Illumination in the Eighteenth century', *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age*, exh. cat., ed. Sandra Hindman, Michael Camille, Nina Rowe, Rowan Watson, Evanston, Illinois: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, 2001, 5-45, esp. 13-16; Andrea Worm, 'Reproducing the Middle Ages: Abbé Jean Joseph Rive (1730-1791) and the Study of Manuscript Illumination at the Turn of Early Modern Period', *Early Modern Medievalisms. The Interplay between Scholarly Reflection and Artistic Production*, ed. Alicia C. Montoya, Sophie van Romburgh, Wim van Anroij, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010, 347-390; Francesca Manzari and Anna Delle Foglie, *Riscoperta e riproduzione della miniatura in Francia nel Settecento: L'abbé Rive e l'Essai sur l'art de vérifier l'âge des miniatures des manuscrits*, Rome, 2016.

[26] See Marquis of Paulmy's handwritten catalogue about his own books, Paris, BnF Ars. 6279-6297. Quoted by Alan Munby, *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures, 1750-1850*, Oxford, 1972, 20.

or the Cotton Genesis.[27] In the seventeenth century, the first manuscripts to be reproduced through engravings were the *Vita Aegil*, made during the Carolingian age, by the editor Christoph Brouwer in 1616 and the Martyrology of St. Jerome from Echternach (Paris, BnF Latin 10837), published by the Jesuit Heribert Rosweyde and printed by Plantin-Moretus in 1626. A few decades later, around 1670, Cardinal Camillo Massimo (1620-1677) ordered engravings of miniatures of the Vatican Virgil (Vatican, BAV, Cod. 3225) that were published in the next century, in 1741.[28] In 1754, Edward Rowe Mores[29] published the Caedemon, an Anglo-Saxon manuscript from the late-tenth or early-eleventh century, now in Oxford (Bodleian Library, Junius 11).

Similar research stimulated as well the development of the interpretation of images, or, iconographic science, among archeologists, such as Adolphe Napoléon Didron and the clergymen Charles Cahier, Arthur Martin, and Augustin Joseph Crosnier.[30] Their studies shed light on several manuscripts of the Early Middle Ages. After the subsequent development of the historicist approach in the field of architecture, all publications, among them manuscripts from the Early Medieval and Romanesque periods, were used by archaeologists and architects for the restoration of historical monuments or the construction of new monuments in neo-Romanesque style. For example, plates in *Peintures et Ornements des manuscrits* by Bastard d'Estang were used to restore several buildings in the North and South of France.[31]

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[27] See Carl Nordenfalk, *Color of the Middle Ages. A Survey of Book Illumination based on Color Facsimiles* [exhibition, Art Gallery, Pittsburgh, March, 12 – April, 18, 1976], Pittsburgh University Gallery, 1976; Jonathan G. Alexander, 'Facsimiles, Copies, and Variations: The Relationship to the Model in Medieval and Renaissance European Illuminated Manuscripts', *Retaining the Original, Multiple Originals, Copies and Reproductions* (*Studies in the History of Art* 20), Washington, National Gallery of Art, 1989, 61-72; Francesca Manzari and Anna Delle Foglie, *Riscoperta e riproduzione della miniatura in Francia nel Settecento: L'abbé Rive e l'Essai sur l'art de vérifier l'âge des miniatures des manuscrits*, Rome, 2016, 97-101.

[28] See Pierre de Nolhac, 'Le Virgile du Vatican et ses peintures', *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la BN* XXXV, 2, Paris, 1897, 25 sq. ; José Ruysschaert, 'Lectures des illustrations du « Virgile du Vatican » et du « Virgile romain »', *Monuments et Mémoires de la fondation Eugène Piot* 73 (1991), 25-51; David H. Wright, 'From Copy to Facsimile: A Millenium of Studying the Vatican Vergil', *The British Museum Journal* 1991, 12-35. I am grateful to François Avril for sharing these bibliographical references.

[29] *Figurae quaedam antiquae ex Caedmonis Monachi paraphraseos in Genesin exemplari pervetusto, in bibliotheca Bodleiana, deliate.*

[30] See on this topic Jean Nayrolles, *L'invention de l'art roman*, 185-263, and Charlotte Denoël, 'Naissance de l'iconographie religieuse au XIXe siècle. Le milieu des archéologues et des sociétés savantes', *Bulletin archéologique du CTHS*, 31-32 (2005), 195-205.

[31] *Peintures et ornements des manuscrits, classés dans un ordre chronologique, pour servir à l'histoire des arts du dessin depuis le IVe siècle de l'ère chrétienne jusqu'à la fin du XVIe siècle*, Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1835-1869. See Jocelyn Bouquillard, *Le Comte Auguste de Bastard (1792-1883), archéologue et imprimeur lithographe*, thèse de l'École des chartes, 1995, II. Les *Peintures et ornements de manuscrits*, histoire d'une entreprise de reproductions lithographiques ; Id., 'Les *Peintures et Ornements des manuscrits* du comte de Bastard. Histoire d'une entreprise de reproductions lithographiques d'enluminures sous la Monarchie de Juillet', *Bulletin du*

Such a documentary use of miniatures of the Early Middle Ages for paleographical, historical, or practical purposes was often coupled with a quest for identity, as part of the 'Gothic revival'. As already observed by Montfaucon and Strutt, this search for an epoch long gone served as a pretext to inscribe the present into the past. Nineteenth-century scholarship endorsed this identity quest, in particular in Victorian Great Britain where several English antiquarians and bibliophiles, searching for their roots and seeking to preserve their national heritage, studied Anglo-Saxon and Norman manuscripts.[32] This was especially the case of Thomas Frognall Dibdin (1776-1847), mentioned in the introduction. The well-known bibliographer paid great attention to the physical aspect of the books, which he evokes in quite a satirical way in his famous work *Bibliomania*;[33] he hunted for new materials, among them medieval manuscripts, to satisfy his curiosity. As a librarian to Earl Spencer III, he was sent to the continent in 1818 in order to purchase rare books for his employer. In 1821, he wrote the *Bibliographical, Antiquarian, and Picturesque Tour in France and Germany*, which, like his *Bibliomania*, had a considerable influence on bibliographical taste and stimulated interest in rare books among the aristocracy in England, and even beyond, when it was translated into French four years later. In this book, Dibdin shows great interest in Norman libraries that housed manuscripts and books related to English history. At the library of Rouen, (welcomed by a *cicerone*, of whom he gives a flowery description) he depicts two treasures remarkable for their antiquity and the style of their paintings, the Missal of Robert de Jumièges (Rouen, BM, ms. 274) and the Benedictionary of Canterbury (Rouen, BM, ms. 369).[34] He applies the same historical and ideological criteria to imperial manuscripts of the Carolingian age, in particular the Charlemagne Gospel Book (Paris, BnF NAL 1203). In 1811, this manuscript, which had been kept in Toulouse since the Middle Ages, was offered on behalf of the city of Toulouse to Napoleon Bonaparte when his son, the King of Rome, was baptized. This diplomatic gift was clearly motivated by the ideological intention to establish a connection between Napoleon and Charlemagne, who ordered the manuscript when his son Carloman received the baptism under the name of Pepin. Later, the manuscript was brought to Paris where it joined the imperial collection. In 1814, Napoleon ordered it moved to the library of the Louvre, where it remained after his fall. Dibdin consulted this famous manuscript there in 1818, with the authorization of the Louvre's chief librarian, Antoine-Alexandre Barbier. Dibdin gives a glowing description of it, without forgetting to mention the note related to the baptism of Pippin in the year 781 according to the calendar: 'the most precious

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*bibliophile*, 1996, n° 1, 109-150 ; Id., 'Fac-similés d'enluminures à l'époque romantique', *Nouvelles de l'Estampe* 160-161 (oct/nov 1998), 6-17.

[32] This concern for national heritage appeared early among the English, who started examining medieval art with an archaeological approach, establishing nomenclature in order to classify it, at the very beginning of the eighteenth century; see Jean Nayrolles, *L'invention de l'art roman à l'époque moderne (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles)*, Rennes: PUR, 2005, 46-56.

[33] Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Bibliomania, or, Book-madness: A Bibliographical Romance*, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1842.

[34] *Voyage bibliographique, archéologique et pittoresque en France* I, 202, 209-223.

of this kind that France has, not only due to its date but also due to the fact that Charlemagne owned it'.[35] Afterwards, Dibdin purchased a copy of the miniature of Christ in this manuscript, painted by the artist Elzidor Naigeon who won the Grand Prize of Painting in 1824.

This double interpretation, historical and ideological, of early medieval illumination – which may also be applied to other medieval periods – persists during most of the nineteenth century. However, with the emergence of art history as a discipline in the 1800s, concomitant to that of medieval art history, manuscript painting emerged as a field of study in itself within the larger scope of art history. Indeed, the many studies devoted to this new topic in the second half of the nineteenth century focused on the aesthetic aspect of manuscript painting. Henceforth, medieval book illumination was evaluated according to a new set of criteria:  rather than analyzing manuscripts for their documentary or historical value, scholars increasingly looked at manuscripts according to aesthetics and nationalistic criteria. This shift has greatly contributed to evaluate the increasingly negative assessments made by early scholars on early medieval and Romanesque manuscript painting.

**The classical canon**

Under the influence of Winckelmann, who passionately admired ancient Greece and its artistic model, nineteenth-century art historians held the classical canon as a reference and an ideal, proclaiming the superiority of Greek art.[36] Winckelmann was not the first, however. Already in the fourteenth century, Petrarch, using the metaphor of light usually applied to Christ, opposed the brightness of antique culture to the darkness of medieval barbarity.[37] Ever since, medieval art has been the subject of a well-known evolutionist interpretation, taking as its norm the style of Classical Greek art. This interpretation is particularly indebted to the theories of Jean-Baptiste Séroux d'Agincourt (1730-1814), heir to Caylus and Winckelmann, and, as such, called the 'Winckelmann of the times of barbarity'. [38] The six volumes of his *Histoire de l'art par les Monumens depuis sa décadence au IVe siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XVIe siècle*, published between 1810 and 1823, had a considerable

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[35] 'le plus précieux de cette espèce que la France possède ; car il n'est pas seulement du temps, il a été aussi la propriété de Charlemagne lui-même.' : *Ibid.*, IV, 47 sq. Dibdin's text was separately published under the following title: *Notice sur les Heures de Charlemagne, mss. de l'an 781, de la Bibliothèque particulière du roi, au Louvre, tirée de la 29e lettre du 'Voyage bibliographique, archéologique et pittoresque de M. T. F. Dibdin, en France et en Allemagne', précédée d'un jugement sur l'ouvrage anglais et d'un aperçu de cette bibliothèque, formée en 1814, par M. Barbier* [suivie d'une Notice sur R. Porson, bibliothécaire de l'Institution de Londres, par Barbier neveu], Paris : impr. de Plassan, 1823.

[36] The bibliography on Winckelmann's reception is huge. An important study, with extensive bibliography, is Edouard Pommier's, *Winckelmann, inventeur de l'histoire de l'art*, Paris: Gallimard, 2003.

[37] Francesco Petrarca, *Epistolae metricae*, III, 3.

[38] Henri Loyrette, 'Seroux d'Agincourt et les origines de l'histoire de l'art médiéval', *Revue de l'art* 48 (1980), 40-56.

impact on generations of scholars studying the medieval epoch.[39] The title of the
book reveals the evolutionist approach of its author, who distinguishes three
periods in art: Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. According to him,
the Middle Ages coincides with the decadence of artistic forms inherited from
Antiquity, whereas the Renaissance dovetails with its revival. The concept of
decadence plays a significant role in Séroux's thesis, who observes that there was an
artistic desert between the fourth century and the end of the thirteenth: 'Soon
decline begins, decadence follows, immediately ushering barbarism. Art completely
disappears: yet some of its practices and methods remain; and their crude use
produces the monuments that today reveal their long degradation. '[40]

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[39] Pascal Griener, 'La fatale attraction du Moyen Âge. Jean-Baptiste Séroux d'Agincourt et
"l'histoire de l'art par les monuments" (1810-1823)',  *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie
und Kunstgeschichte* 54 (1997), 225-234. See also Marc Fumaroli, 'Seroux d'Agincourt
et « l'Europe littéraire '*, in *Papes, princes et savants dans l'Europe moderne: mélanges à la mémoire
de Bruno Neveu*, ed. Jean-Louis Quantin and Jean-Claude Waquet, Genève : Droz, 2007, 369-
398 ; Daniela Mondini, *Mittelalter im Bild – Seroux d'Agincourt und die Kunsthistoriographie um
1800*, Zurich, 2005.

[40] 'Bientôt le déclin commence, la décadence le suit, et celle-ci amène promptement la
barbarie. L'Art disparaît totalement : mais quelques-uns de ses usages et de ses procédés
restent ; et l'emploi grossier que l'on en fait produit les monuments qui nous attestent
aujourd'hui sa longue dégradation.': I, Préface, III. In his Discours préliminaire, Séroux adds,
p. III : 'But for the second period, called the late Empire, the Middle Ages, or the centuries of
decadence, there is nothing or almost nothing. At this point, it is like being in an immense
desert, where nothing but disfigured objects, scattered fragments appear; it seems as if,
ashamed of what Art produced during this long interval, every day Time took the trouble to
efface its images: their deformity should actually condemn to eternal oblivion the small
number it has preserved, if now the great history of the human mind did not need them; if,
in order to preserve Art from such a degradation, it might not in fact be useful to retrace
their cause, to show their origin; if it were not necessary, in the end, to attach to the historic
chain of Art this essential link still missing to its completion. The search for monuments
suitable to shape it was unpleasant, painful, intractable, but urgent, because they
disintegrate daily …; p.V  'Particularly for the period of art's renewal, I have to look for my
examples in Italy, the only country where fate led art when it left Greece for the second time.
It is as far as Italy that Winckleman followed its traces, it is there that he saw the end of the
history of art, at the time of its fall under Constantine; it is also there that he picks up the
thread: indeed we can see that Winckleman chose the best part, optimam partem elegit; and
what he left me to describe was a gruesome epoch when, subjected to decay like all mortals,
Art seemed to have come to its end and die. I would have gladly turned away my eyes from
this spectacle, without touching the layer of dust that thickened more and more on the
details and the proofs of this deplorable decadence; but, as I said, the whole of History and
Philosophy seemed to me to protest against this oblivion and  want to fill such a void.' ('Mais
pour la seconde période, qu'on nomme le Bas-Empire, le Moyen Âge, les siècles de
décadence, on n'a rien ou presque rien. Parvenu à ce point, on se trouve comme dans un
désert immense, où l'on n'aperçoit que des objets défigurés, des lambeaux épars ; il semble
que, honteux de ce que l'Art produisit dans ce long intervalle, le Tems prenne chaque jour le
soin d'en effacer les images : leur difformité devrait même condamner à un éternel oubli le
petit nombre de celles qu'il a conservées, si l'histoire générale de l'esprit humain n'en avait
besoin ; si, pour préserver désormais l'Art d'une pareille dégradation, il n'était utile d'en

In volume two, which he devotes to painting, Séroux discusses manuscript miniatures at length. His appreciation for the aesthetic value of illumination relies on two factors: its fidelity to the classical style of the Greek school, and its affinities with the painting of the *grand genre*. Moreover, Séroux classifies manuscripts according to nationalistic styles, opposing the Greek school to the Latin school, and the royal schools to regional schools:

> In order to make visually comprehensible the losses that occurred in the Greek and the Roman schools at the same time between the 10th and the 11th century, I have assembled on table XLVII several specimens chosen from each one of the two schools. […] The paintings of the Greek school, appearing on the lower part of the table, show the superior quality that has always distinguished this school. […] As mentioned earlier, the paintings in the manuscripts can be attributed to two kinds of artists: professional painters, and calligraphers who meddled with painting. The difference that can be sensed between the works of the two artists is obvious. It is also obvious that talents can be different between artists of the same country from those of another. […] Even more obviously there must be differences between the style of artists from the kingdom's capital, the head-school, and that of artists working in the provinces and establishing schools that can be called secondary.[41]

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raconter les causes, et d'en faire voir l'origine ; s'il n'était nécessaire enfin d'attacher à la chaîne historique de l'Art cet anneau essentiel, qui manque encore à son complément. La recherche des monumens propres à le former était rebutante, pénible, hérissée de difficultés, mais urgente, puisqu'ils se détruisent journellement… ' ; p. V : ' J'ai dû, surtout pour l'époque du renouvellement de l'art, prendre mes exemples en Italie, le seul pays où le sort le porta, lorsque, pour la seconde fois, il eut quitté la Grèce. C'est jusqu'en Italie que Winckelmann a suivi ses traces, c'est là qu'il en a terminé l'histoire, au moment de sa chute sous Constantin ; c'est aussi là que j'en reprends le fil : on voit donc que Winckelmann a choisi la meilleure part, *optimam partem elegit* ; et qu'il ne m'a laissé décrire qu'une période funeste, où, sujet comme les mortels à la faiblesse et à la décadence, l'Art parut, comme eux, s'éteindre et mourir. J'aurais volontiers détourné mes regards de ce spectacle, sans toucher au voile qui s'épaissit de plus en plus sur les détails et les preuves de cette décadence déplorable ; mais, ainsi que je l'ai dit, l'Histoire générale et la Philosophie m'ont semblé réclamer contre cet oubli, et vouloir que le vide fut rempli.'

[41]'Afin que ces pertes se présentent à nos yeux d'une manière plus sensible, dans l'École Grecque et l'École Latine tout à la fois, au passage du Xe au XIe siècle, j'en ai réuni sur la planche XLVII plusieurs exemples, puisés dans chacune des deux Écoles. […] Les peintures de l'École Grecque, qu'on voit dans la partie inférieure de la planche, conservent l'espèce de supériorité qui a toujours distingué cette École. […] Les peintures des manuscrits sont dues, ainsi que je l'ai dit, à deux espèces d'artistes, aux peintres de profession, et aux calligraphes qui se mêlaient de peindre. On sent quelle différence il doit y avoir entre les travaux des uns et ceux des autres. On sent aussi combien les talens peuvent avoir été différens entre des artistes d'un même pays et ceux des autres. […] A plus forte raison doit-il exister des différences entre le style des artistes de la capitale d'un royaume, chef-lieu de l'École, et celui des maîtres qui habitent les provinces, et qui forment des Écoles qu'on peut appeler secondaires. ' : II, 63.

By distinguishing professional painters from calligraphers, Séroux seeks to demonstrate that miniature painting does not have the same aesthetic qualities as the painting of the *grand genre*. Indeed, it is a minor form of art.[42] For Séroux, only Renaissance illuminations are worthy of interest, because only then were painters of manuscripts also painters of the *grand genre*. Unlike the painters of previous centuries, they were also the only ones to show a strong sense of composition, to practice naturalistic drawing, to know the ways to express feelings, and to use high quality materials.

Thus, Séroux describes many manuscripts of the first centuries of the Middle Ages with such pejorative terms as 'poor,' 'degenerated' (Vatican Greek Menologion, Vatican, BAV, Cod. Grec. 1613), or 'tough' (Vatican Terence, Vatican, BAV, Vat. Lat. 3868). Even the paintings of the Carolingian Bible of St. Paul-Outside-the Walls (Rome, Cathedral of Saint-Paul-Outside-the-Walls) are not spared by his contempt, even as he praises the calligraphy of the text:

> Unfortunately, the style and execution of the paintings with which it is decorated could not equal the writing's beautiful forms: in this respect its only merit is to give us a remarkable example of the condition of art among the Latins toward the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century. If one compares these paintings to those of the Vatican's Vergil, executed in the fifth century, it is possible to evaluate the losses that this field of human knowledge had suffered in the span of three hundred years. Indeed, one cannot examine even briefly plates XLI and XLII, representing together in small size the manuscript's miniatures, without being shocked by the confusion reigning over the composition. It is so bad that it robs sight and mind, so to speak, of any possibility to even recognize the story the artist wanted to represent. […] Art's decadence is even more evident in drawing, which is its fundamental element. In general, the proportion of the figures is bearable, but it is obvious that the principles of proportions have been forgotten and the ignorance about shapes is overwhelming. […] The style of naked figures is revoltingly vulgar. Adam is no more the handsomest of men, or Eve the most beautiful of all women. […], on the contrary, here Eve appears as the ugliest of all creatures, the traits of her visage are hideous, all her limbs shapeless…[43]

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[42] II,vol. 2, 85.

[43] 'Malheureusement, le style et l'exécution des peintures dont il est orné, ne pouvaient pas répondre aux belles formes de l'écriture : à cet égard, son seul mérite est de nous donner un exemple très remarquable de l'état où l'Art se trouvait parmi les Latins, vers la fin du VIIIe siècle, ou le commencement du IXe siècle. Si l'on en compare les peintures avec celles du Virgile du Vatican, exécutées au Ve siècle, on jugera des pertes que cette branche des connaissances humaines avait souffertes dans l'intervalle de trois cents ans. On ne peut en effet considérer un instant les planches XLI et XLII, qui présentent en petit l'ensemble des miniatures de ce manuscrit, sans être frappé de la confusion qui règne dans les compositions ; elle est telle qu'elle interdit, pour ainsi dire, à l'œil et à l'esprit tout moyen de reconnaître même l'histoire que l'artiste a voulu représenter. […] La décadence de l'Art est encore plus sensible dans le dessin, qui en est la partie fondamentale. La proportion des

Seroux's aesthetic criteria – his preference for certain compositions and naturalistic renderings – lead him to focus his survey on Byzantine manuscripts that would prove the superiority of the Greek school. In so doing, he goes against his encyclopedic aim, ignoring the history of illumination until the sixteenth century, whether in France, England, or Germany. According to Séroux, the Latin school allows us 'to observe the progress of decadence, which seems to have reached its last degree between the seventh and the tenth centuries'. [44]

It is noteworthy that even though similar ideals of Greek beauty, composition, and progress in the arts inform Dibdin's contemporary survey on the art of illumination and composition, the *Bibliographical Decameron,* was published as early as 1817. In the first volume Dibdin is one of the first to show some interest in manuscripts made between the fifth through fourteenth centuries and in manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon origin. As the earliest and most extensive survey on illuminated manuscripts in Europe, Dibdin's study had a significant influence among English scholarship,[45] and, like his other books, greatly contributed to increase Victorian taste in illuminated manuscripts. Disagreeing with his antiquarian predecessors such as Abbé Rive and Strutt, who ignored manuscripts before the fourteenth century, Dibdin presents early Anglo-Saxon manuscripts as key witnesses of national and artistic history. This appreciation leads him to provide detailed and laudatory descriptions of the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library, Cotton Ms. Nero D.IV),[46] of the St. Chad Gospels (Cathedral of Lichfield), and of the Benedictionary of St. Aethelwold (London, British Library, Add. MS 49598). Only the Athelstan Gospels (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. ii) suffer from a negative judgment: 'dismally barbarous,' 'I fear the female part of my audience would not scruple to express their surprise, or even loathing, at the sight of those dirty apple-green and smoke-dried old figures intended to represent the Evangelists!'[47]

We find the same artistic concerns in the seminal work of the architectural draughtsman, antiquarian, and illuminator Henry Shaw in his *Illuminated Ornaments Selected from the Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, another landmark in the Victorian period of British surveys of illuminated manuscripts.[48] Published in London in 1833, this book provides a general view on the ornamental and decorative features of

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figures est en général supportable, mais l'oubli des principes y est absolu et l'ignorance des formes excessive. […] Le style des figures nues est d'une grossièreté révoltante. Ce n'est plus Adam, le plus beau des hommes, ni Eve, la plus belle des femmes […]. Eve au contraire paraît ici la plus hideuse des créatures ; les traits de son visage sont affreux, tous ses membres difformes […]' : II, 59-62.

[44] II, 55.

[45] Alan Munby, *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures, 1750-1850*, Oxford, 1972, 71, 74.

[46] 'The proudest bibliomaniacal monument of the earlier period of our history.'

[47] I, LII-LIII.

[48] Alan Munby, *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures*, 140-141. See also Carl Nordenfalk, *Color of the Middle Ages. A Survey of Book Illumination based on Color Facsimiles*, exhibition catalogue, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Gallery, 1976, 20-22; Sandra Hindman, 'Facsimiles as Originals: An Unknown Illuminated Manuscript by Henry Shaw', *The Journal of Walters Art Gallery* 54 (1996), 225-232.

illuminated manuscripts, with accompanying commentaries and a general
introduction by Sir Frederic Madden, assistant keeper of Manuscripts at the British
Museum. In the introduction, Madden criticizes the work of his predecessor Dibdin
for not engaging in a critical reflection about the progress of the arts, although he
recognizes the high quality of printed plates in his book. He also criticizes the work
of Séroux d'Agincourt, whom he blames for selecting only manuscripts made by
Greek and Italian artists and for neglecting other European regions, in particular
England and France, where the art of illumination had reached a more advanced
stage in the tenth and eleventh century than in Italy. To support his assertions, he
refers to an observation by the antiquarian John Cage, published in his survey on
the Benedictionary of St. Aethelwold (London, British Library, Add. MS 49598).[49]

Madden and Shaw follow Vasari's concept of progress in the arts. This view
is clearly illustrated by the unequal distribution of illustrations according to periods
(one manuscript for Antiquity, two for the seventh-tenth c., one for the eleventh,
four for the twelfth c., then about thirty manuscripts for the thirteenth to the
seventeenth c.), and by the many laudatory descriptions of Renaissance miniature
painting. It is worth pointing out that the two authors did take into account a few
manuscripts from the Early Middle Ages, such as the Gellone Sacramentary (Paris,
BnF latin 12048), and Visigoth and Franco-Gallic manuscripts.[50] Furthermore, they
identified a few outstanding schools of illumination: the Hiberno-Saxon school
(characterized by a style very different from others), the imperial schools of
Charlemagne and Charles the Bald (who recruited some Italian or German artists
working after Greek models and recalling antique traditions through the use of
colors and precious metals, purple, gold and silver), the Winchester school in
England (with its remarkable vegetal ornaments),[51] and the Greek school of the
eleventh century. It should be emphasized that this classification of manuscripts into
geographical schools, where civilization determined the style, is quite new in
nineteenth-century scholarship of medieval illumination. This method derives from
similar classifications for the study of paintings on walls, canvas and panels. In the
architectural field, Romanesque architecture was also subject to classifications, as
evidenced by studies of certain art historians, such as Ludovic Vitet.[52]

Another peculiarity of Shaw's book, quite unusual for the epoch and the
subject, is his focus on the elaboration of capital letters in the twelfth century. Shaw
found the elegant ornaments of Romanesque initials remarkable, and thus tried to
reproduce many manuscripts kept at the British Library to testify to their high
aesthetic quality. Following this publication and thanks to the developments of
chromolithography, books focusing on ornaments and details of illuminations

[49] *Archaelogia* 24 (1832), 30.

[50] His examples are from the *Nouveau Traité de diplomatique* by Montfaucon.

[51] In most later publications, the Winchester school is described as an 'opus anglicum'; see
Owen Jones et Henri Noël Humphreys, *The Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*, 1849.

[52] Cf. Jean Nayrolles, *L'invention de l'art roman*, 115-121.

proliferated during the next two or three decades, fostered by Victorian taste and fashion for manuscripts arts.[53]

## The ethnic classification

Shaw's innovative ornamental approach to book illumination deserves our attention, because it echoes the theories of the time, which found in ornament evidence of ethnicity and civilization. In this context, Viollet-le-Duc's thought is particularly enlightening. Convinced of the significance of racial determinism in culture and art, and casting Greek and Gallic arts (which he saw as related) against the art of Rome, the famous architect defended a doctrine of cultural mixing as the root of artistic genius.[54] Thus, he interpreted abstract Romanesque ornament as a manifestation of the Aryan genius, stating for instance that Saxon manuscripts

> existing in London and belonging to the Xth, XIth, and XIIth century, mostly very beautiful manuscripts, offer a great number of illustrations whose ornamentation, in style and composition, recall those fragments of sculpture we are speaking about. These men from the North, these Saxons with their long knives seem to belong to the last wave of emigration from the plateau situated in the North of India. All things considered, whether they are called Saxons, Normans, Indo-Germans, they come from the same root, the great Aryan root. [55]

A few decades later, this racial obsession was also conveyed by Louis Courajod (1841-1896), spiritual heir to Viollet-le-Duc. This controversial art historian spent most of his career in at the Louvre as curator of sculptures and art objects of the Middle Ages, considerably influencing scholars interested in medieval art. What makes Courajod's views relevant to our subject is his keen interest in what he calls

[53] Rowan Watson gives a comprehensive list of handbooks of medieval illumination published in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century in his paper 'Publishing for the Leisure Industry. Illuminating Manuals and the Reception of a Medieval Art in Victorian Britain', *The Revival of Medieval Illumination. Nineteenth-Century Belgium Manuscripts and Illuminations from a European Perspective*, Thomas Coomans and Jan De Maeyer ed., Louvain, 2007, 102-107. See also Alice Beckwith, *Victorian Bibliomania*, Providence, 1987.

[54] For this issue, see Eric Michaud, *Op. cit.*, 129-131.

[55] 'qui existent à Londres et qui datent des Xe, XIe et XIIe siècles, manuscrits fort beaux pour la plupart, présentent un grand nombre de vignettes dont l'ornementation ressemble fort, comme style et composition, à ces fragments de sculpture dont nous parlons. Ces hommes du Nord, ces Saxons, hommes aux longs couteaux, paraissent appartenir à la dernière émigration partie des plateaux situés au nord de l'Inde. Qu'on les nomme Saxons, Normands, Indo-Germains, à tout prendre, ils sortent d'une même souche, de la grande souche âryenne' : Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, 'Sculpture', *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle*, VIII, 1866, 99. In another writing ('De l'art étranger et de l'art national', *Annales archéologiques* 1845, p. 303-308), Viollet-le-Duc calls for the acknowledgment of Gothic art as national French art.

'the occidental barbarity'. Seeing Barbaric art as a cultural manifestation of the Indo-Germanic races, he established it as a positive model set in opposition to ancient Latin culture and French academism. In his lectures on 'Barbaric art' of the Early Middle Ages, he argues in favor of the idea that decoration is the best way to express the Barbaric temperament.[56] Thus ornamental art from Scandinavian and German peoples, for example, is defined as 'the art of a race, grown out of national principles, in the blood, part of a  people's temperament'. 'We can trust the artistic sense of a people. It is a spontaneous sign, an instinctive motion of the hand, a nervous movement, indeed calligraphy betraying the feelings of a soul that cannot lie'.[57]

Widespread among the Romantics, this Hegelian concept that both art and culture reflect the genius and the soul of a people, goes hand in hand with the racial theories and discourse about blood that dominated human and social sciences in the nineteenth century. Although Courajod did not share Viollet-le-Duc's views about the superiority of the Aryan race, he is indebted to him for the idea of Northern/Barbarian, and Arabic achievements. His fierce opposition to ancient Latin culture encouraged him to interpret Gallic art as a synthesis of the oriental and occidental civilizations, the antithesis of Roman culture, and to identify Byzantine influences in Celtic and barbaric ornamentation.[58] For Courajod, all peoples were of 'mixed blood,' and their culture was largely drawn from successive contributions, Gallic and barbaric as well as oriental.

Whether racist or racial, these biological theories of style that influenced most of the surveys of medieval art during the second half of the nineteenth century and a large part of the twentieth century,[59] became prevalent in the studies of illuminations from the 1850s, with the classification of miniatures according to ethnic school. This phenomenon is evident in several English publications such as a book by the English entomologist John Obadiah Westwood (1805-1893) about Insular manuscripts. This perfect representative of Victorian England, a close friend of Darwin, wrote in 1868 a survey of great importance for the knowledge of Irish and Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, *Facsimiles of the Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish Manuscripts*.[60] Here it is significant that the new use of the term 'Anglo-Saxon' for manuscripts is linked to a very precise terminology employed

[56]Louis Courajod, *Leçons professées à l'école du Louvre (1887-1896)*, I, Paris, 1899, p. 157-158, 184, 227. Quoted in Eric Michaud, *Op. cit.*, 195.
[57]'un art de race, sorti de principes nationaux, fixés dans le sang, faisant partie du tempérament du peuple'. 'Nous pouvons nous fier à l'ornement d'un peuple. C'est un geste irréfléchi, inconscient de la main, un mouvement nerveux, une écriture enfin qui trahit les sentiments de l'âme et qui ne peut pas mentir.' : Louis Courajod, *Leçons…*, *Op. cit.*, I, 186.
[58]'la vieille ornementation celtique, sortie des mêmes origines orientales,' *Leçons…*, *Op. cit.*, I, 184.
[59]As evidenced in particular in Charles Rufus Morey, 'The Sources of Medieval Style', *Art Bulletin* 7 (1924), 35-50. See on Morey's views Jonas Nordhagen, 'C.R. Morey and his Theory on the Development of Early Medieval Art', *Konsthistorisk Tijdsskrift* 61 (1992), 1-7 and Lawrence Nees, 'The Originality of early Medieval Artists', *Literacy, Politics, and Artistic Innovation in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Celia Chazelle, 1992, 77-109, esp. 80.
[60] London: Quaritch, 1868.

since the beginning of the nineteenth century in surveys of English architecture during the five centuries following the end of Antiquity.[61] Emphasizing the aesthetic qualities of the manuscripts in numerous and lengthy descriptions, Westwood highlights the superiority of Irish and Anglo-Saxon art compared to other contemporary schools of painting that existed after the disappearance of the art of illumination in Italy and Greece. He situates the flowering of this art between the end of the fifth and the end of the eighth century; he addresses the issue of the origin of style, defending the idea that the art of interlacing is profoundly original. According to him, interlacing was a purely insular creation, not originated in Byzantium or Rome; rather, it had then influenced Scandinavian art and Franco-Saxon style on the continent. For these scholars, the theory of 'pure races', according to which some races remained uncontaminated by exogenous inputs – a theory widespread in the nineteenth century – was a fundamental assumption in their analysis.

Similar views appear in Digby Wyatt and William Robert Tymms's work, *The Art of Illuminating as Practiced in Europe from the Earliest Times*, printed a few years earlier, in 1860[62]. While Wyatt describes his book as a manual for the practice of illumination, focused on the art of ornamentation; in the introduction he also outlines the history of book illumination in an innovative way, providing an extensive survey of different stylistic schools from Antiquity to the fifteenth century. He begins by presenting major antique monuments, and then moves on to medieval times, opposing Byzantine and Latin civilizations, in an analysis clearly reminiscent of Séroux d'Agincourt and his evolutionist views. And yet, even as he defends the superiority of the former over the latter, he also stresses that during the age of Christian missions the Celts had been able to compete with the Byzantines: 'the first attempts were made to rival, in the Extreme West, the arts and spiritual grace of the East'. Dedicating considerable attention to insular art, Wyatt explicitly refers to the work of Westwood, whom he likely knew well, as Tymms engraved the illustrations of Westwood's book. Following his predecessor, he demonstrates that the art of this region had reached a high stage of refinement ('almost marvelous') in the sixth and seventh centuries and that it was an autochthonous creation. Only a small number of insular manuscripts were influenced by Byzantine art, such as the Cotton Psalter (London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius C VI), whereas others distinguished themselves for their strong originality. Thus, Wyatt intentionally discusses in detail Anglo-Saxon art, 'because it is a theme on which some national self-gratulation may be justifiably entertained'.[63]

Apart from this outstanding peculiarity, one of the merits of this publication is its marked interest in the French Romanesque school after Carolingian art.

[61] John Britton is one of the very first to try to classify English medieval architecture according to a chronology, describing the first stage (597-1066) as 'Anglo-norman'; see John Britton, *The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain*, Londres, 1807-1826, foreword. See also Jean Nayrolles, *Op. cit.*, 47.
[62] William Robert Tymms, *The Art of Illuminating as Practised in Europe from the Earliest Times: Illustrated by Borders, Initial Letters, and Alphabets*, London: Day and Son, 1860.
[63] William Robert Tymms, *Op. cit.*, 21.

Charlotte Denoël          The beginnings of scholarship on early medieval book
                          illumination (1700-1850): between classicism and ethnicity

Acknowledging its vitality and   emphasizing the beauty of its initials, Wyatt
provides an extensive enumeration of French centers that produced a wide range of
richly illuminated manuscripts, such as St. Martial of Limoges (where the influence
of Byzantine art could still be felt), Metz, Le Mans, Montmajour, Reims, St. Germain-
des-Prés and St. Denis. Notably, too, Wyatt was the first to use the term
'Romanesque' in describing manuscript illumination. The term had been in
widespread use for architectural analysis since its introduction by English and
French scholars at the beginning of the nineteenth century,[64] but it had not yet
reached the field of book illumination studies. Wyatt's analysis, therefore, certainly
brought the field into its own.

**A *via media* between Classicism and Ethnicity: The Byzantine paradigm**

Around the same period in France, Count Auguste de Bastard d'Estang (1792-
1883)[65] used similar ethnic criteria to classify medieval manuscripts. The theories of
this influential archaeologist, great collector and bibliophile regarding the
superiority of Greek art, relied on the studies of Winckelmann and Séroux
d'Agincourt. Bastard undertook the latter's monumental but incomplete work
*Peintures et ornements des manuscrits*;[66] its luxurious hand-painted lithographic plates
were displayed twice at the Universal Exhibitions of 1851 in London and in 1878 in
Paris, in order to continue where Winckelmann had led off.[67] Establishing a stylistic
classification based on civilization (Greek/Latin), ethnicity, or region, in this work
Bastard focused on the manuscripts of the Early Middle Ages. Of the 48 manuscripts
reproduced, 39 date before the eleventh century, and most of them are Carolingian.[68]

[64]This term appears at the same time, in 1817-1818, by William Gunn (1750-1841) and Charles
de Gerville (1769-1853); see Jean Nayrolles, *Op. cit.*, 54-56 and 81-91.
[65]For Bastard d'Estang, see Alan Noel Munby, *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures, 1750-
1850*. Oxford, 1972, 145-146; François Avril, 'Notice sur l'œuvre du comte de Bastard', *Le «
Gothique » retrouvé avant Viollet-le-Duc*, exh. cat., ed. Louis Grodecki, Paris : Hôtel de Sully,
1980, 104; Jocelyn Bouquillard, *Le Comte Auguste de Bastard (1792-1883), archéologue et impri-
meur lithographe*, thèse de l'École des chartes, 1995 ;
https://www.inha.fr/fr/ressources/publications/publications-numeriques/dictionnaire-
critique-des-historiens-de-l-art/bastard-d-estang-auguste-de.html
[66]*Peintures et ornements des manuscrits, classés dans un ordre chronologique, pour servir à l'histoire
des arts du dessin depuis le IVe siècle de l'ère chrétienne jusqu'à la fin du XVIe siècle*. Paris: Im-
primerie impériale, 1835-1869, 13 parties, gr. in-fol., pl. lithographiées et coloriées, 20 livrai-
sons [a great part of the text was destroyed in 1848; only a few extracts remain, in the form of
printed proofs stored in the Manuscripts Department of the Bibliothèque nationale de
France, Facsim. fol. 9]. For this publication, see Jocelyn Bouquillard, 'Les *Peintures et Orne-
ments des manuscrits* du comte de Bastard. Histoire d'une entreprise de reproductions litho-
graphiques d'enluminures sous la Monarchie de Juillet', *Bulletin du bibliophile*, 1996, 1, 109-
150.
[67]*Exposé sommaire de la publication*, 1839, 902.
[68]The 48 manuscripts are the Godescalc Gospel Book (Paris, BnF, ms. NAL 1203), the
Charlemagne Gospels (Paris, BnF, ms. Arsenal 599), the Gospels from Saint-Médard of
Soissons (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 8850), the Gospels of Metz (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 8849), a collection
of medicinal plants (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 6862), the Gospels of Metz (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 9388),

Bastard's main goal was to shed light on the artistic legacy of Antiquity in French art through Byzantine art, in the same way that Viollet-le-Duc had established a genealogy between Greek and Gallic arts, as Bastard states in his *Exposé sommaire de la publication*: 'Paintings in books show that the art of drawing has been brought at different times directly from Consantinople to the nations of Germanic race and that the Greeks held on to their superiority in painting until the XIII century…'[69] Later, in a letter to Horace Viel-Castel dated February 9, 1853, Bastard goes into this matter in great detail:

> 'My dear Count, …In spite of the coarseness of Merovingian times, the teaching that came to us from the Greeks had left in Gallic lands such profound traces that they are still found in the second race. The Evangeliary of St Sernin in Toulouse, called 'Heures de Charlemagne', now at the Louvre, dating from the second half of the eighth century, proves this Byzantine influence: the hieratic forms are kept despite the general neglect of artistic practice. At the end of the eighth century, the palatine school of Aix-la-

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the Bible of Théodulfe (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 9380), the Bible from St. Germain-des-Prés (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 11504-11505), an Evangelistary for the use of Chartres (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 9386), the Ebbon Gospels (Epernay, BM, ms. 4), the La Rochefoucauld Gospels from St. Frambourg of Senlis (Paris, Bibliothèque de Sainte-Geneviève, ms. 26), the so-called Loisel Gospels (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 17968), the Drogo Sacramentary (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 9428), the First and Second Bibles of Charles the Bald (Paris, BnF, mss. lat. 1-2), the Gospels of François II (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 257), the St. Denis Sacramentary (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 2290), the Rotrade Sacramentary (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 12050), the Psalter of Charles the Bald (Paris, BnF, ms. lat 1152), the Metz Missal (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 1141), the Colbert Gospels (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 324), the Gospels of Claude Fauchet (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 270), the St. Maur des-Fossés Bible (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 3), the Isidore Astronomy (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 5543), the Gospels of Du Fay (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 9385), the Gospels from the Célestins (Paris, BnF, Arsenal, ms. 1171), the Gospels of Gaignières (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 1126), the First Bible of St. Martial of Limoges (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 5), the Haimon Commentaries (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 12302), the Chronicles from Saint-Germain-des-Prés (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 12117), the Benedictional from Nevers (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 17333), the St. Denis Missal (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 9436), the St. Maur-des-Fossés Missal (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 12054), the Montmajour Gospels (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 889), the St. Sever Apocalypse (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 8878), the Second Bible of St. Martial of Limoges (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 8), the Homelies by Origène (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 11615), La Somme le Roy (that was in his own collection et now in the British Library, ms. add. 28162), the Grandes Chroniques de France (Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 2813), the Grandes Heures du Duc de Berry (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 919), the Livre des merveilles (Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 2810), the Antiquités judaïques by Flavius Josèphe (Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 247), the Siège de Rhodes (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 6067), the French translation of the Ovide Epistles by Octovien de Saint-Gelais (Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 873), the Henri II Hours (Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 1429) and the Chronicles by Jean Du Tillet (Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 2848). See on this publication Léopold Delisle, *Les collections de Bastard d'Estang à la Bibliothèque nationale: Catalogue analytique*. Chartes, sceaux, peintures et ornements des manuscrits, recueils divers, Nogent-le-Rotrou : impr. de Daupeley-Gouverneur, 1885.

[69]'Les peintures des livres prouvent aussi que les arts du dessin ont été, à diverses reprises, directement apportés de Constantinople aux nations de race germanique, et que les Grecs conservèrent dans la peinture, jusqu'au XIIIe siècle, une constante supériorité…' : *Ibid.*, 902.

Chapelle had received new teaching directly from Greece. It is the moment
of the Franco-Greek Renaissance. The Gospels of Charlemagne, given by
Louis the Pious to the church of St Medard of Soissons, show perfect Greek
details in design as well as in execution. Indeed, it is obvious that the art of
drawing has been brought directly from Byzantium at different times; but
the soil where the seed was cast very soon gave fruits so different from the
original kind, and so different from each other, that for a long time this
production has been wrongly designated as absolute derivation of Byzantine
art'.[70]

This concept of a Byzantine component in Frankish art is certainly nothing
new: it was widely held at the same time among art historians, in particular art
historians of Romanesque architecture, such as Ludovic Vitet and Arcisse de
Caumont; however, the use of such concepts in a discussion of manuscript
illumination was new.

Despite his efforts to uphold the superiority of Byzantine art, Bastard admits
the idea of a national French art, leading him to classify miniature paintings in
stylistic schools linked to ethnic names:

The series of facsimiles of paintings begins with Charlemagne (the oldest
known miniature issued from a French paintbrush goes back to the year 778),
and they continue without interruption until the end of the sixteenth century.
The old palatine Franco-Gallic school at Aix-la-Chapelle; the school renewed
at the time of Alcuin with the arrival of Greek and Scottish-Irish painters; the
central school of St Martin of Tours that creates or keeps the new Gallic-
Franco style; the school of Reims whose teaching seems to have been brought
from Italy; the Franco-German style of Metz and the school characterized by
the Franco-Saxon style; paintings from Autun, Auxerre, Arras, St Martin of
Limoges, Mont-Majour in Provence, St Sever in Aquitaine, St Denis in
France, le Mans, Chartres and Paris in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries

[70]'Mon cher Comte, … Malgré la barbarie des temps mérovingiens, l'enseignement qui nous
vint des Grecs avait laissé dans les Gaules des traces si profondes que l'on en trouve encore
jusqu'à l'avènement de la seconde race. L'Évangéliaire de saint Sernin de Toulouse, dit les
Heures de Charlemagne, aujourd'hui au Louvre, et qui date de la deuxième moitié du VIIIe
siècle, prouve cette influence byzantine : les formes hiératiques en sont maintenues,
nonobstant l'abandon général de la pratique de l'art. A la fin du VIIIe siècle, l'école palatine
d'Aix-la-Chapelle avait reçu directement de la Grèce un nouvel enseignement. C'est le
moment de la Renaissance franco-grecque. Les Évangiles de Charlemagne donnés par Louis
le Débonnaire à l'église Saint-Médard de Soissons nous montrent certains détails tout à fait
grecs, par le dessin comme par l'exécution. Il est donc évident que les arts du dessin nous ont
été, à diverses reprises, apportés directement de Byzance ; mais le sol où fut jetée la semence
donna bientôt des fruits si éloignés du type originaire, et si différents les uns des autres, que
c'est à tort qu'on a longtemps désigné ces produits sous la dénomination absolue d'art
byzantin.' Horace de Viel-Castel reproduced this letter in his 'Notice sur la peinture des
manuscrits' that he publishes as a foreword to the facsimile edition of the *Statuts de l'ordre du
Saint-Esprit au droit désir ou du Nœud*, Paris: Engelmann et Graf, 1853.

all appear in turns in this collection. [71]

[71]'Avec Charlemagne commence la série des fac-similés de peintures (la plus ancienne
miniature connue sortie d'un pinceau français remontant à l'an 778), et ils se continuent sans
interruption jusqu'à la fin du XVIe siècle. La vieille école palatine gallo-franque d'Aix-la-
Chapelle ; - l'école renouvelée au temps d'Alcuin par l'arrivée des Grecs et des Scots-
Irlandais ; - l'école centrale de Saint-Martin de Tours, qui crée ou conserve le nouveau style
gallo-franc ; - l'école de Reims, dont les enseignements semblent apportés d'Italie ; - le style
franco-germain de Metz et l'école caractérisée par le style franco-saxon ; - les peintures
d'Autun, d'Auxerre, d'Arras, de Saint-Martial de Limoges, de Mont-Majour en Provence, de
Saint-Sever d'Aquitaine, de Saint-Denis en France, du Mans, de Chartres et de Paris, aux XVe
et XVIe siècles, figurent tour à tour dans ce recueil.' : *Exposé sommaire de la publication*, 1839,
901. In his letter adressed to Viel-Castel, Bastard develops similar ideas : 'All the schools
flourishing in France in the ninth century, undoubtedly produced by the palatine school of
Aix-la-Chapelle are: 1)the central school of St Martin of Tours founded by Alcuin that creates
or preserves the Gallic-Franco-style, the Carlovingian style itself; 2) the Franco-German
school of Metz, founded by Drogon, Charlemagne's natural son, to which I have given this
name because it shows the birth of the Franco-German style; 3) the school of Reims, founded
by Archbishop Ebon where I notice the presence of Italian, Byzantine, and Saxon influence
together; the German school that developed at St-Gall only in the ninth century; the Rhine
schools ceased to imitate it at the time of the new Byzantine influence introduced under the
emperor Otto the Red, after his marriage with princess Theophanie (972). These are, in my
opinion, the main art centers in France during the ninth century. Moreover, painting was
practiced in other cities, such as le Mans, Arras, and perhaps Autun. In this regard, Italy had
plunged into barbarism and Germany did not yet exist. I forgot to mention here that
Scottish-Irish missionaries had brought a new way of decorating books since the eighth
century. It seems to me that this style, that I have called Franco-Saxon, must have come from
Belgium where, already in Pepin's time, the nuns from Eyck were known for their ability in
writing with gold and silver. I do not need to speak to you of the barbarism of the tenth
century or of the awakening that happened when after the year one thousand when people
thought about building again and decorated with paintings the churches built according to
the old method.'
('Les écoles florissantes en France au IXe siècle, et qui sans doute sortirent toutes de l'école
palatine d'Aix-la-Chapelle sont 1° l'école centrale de Saint-Martin de Tours fondée par
Alcuin, et qui crée ou conserve le style gallo-franc, le style carlovingien proprement dit, 2°
l'école franco-germaine de Metz, fondée par Drogon, fils naturel de Charlemagne, et à
laquelle j'ai donné ce nom, parce qu'elle nous montre la naissance du style franco-germain, 3°
l'école de Reims, fondée par l'archevêque Ebon, et où je remarque, à la fois, une influence
italienne, byzantine et saxonne, 4° l'école germaine qui s'est développée à Saint-Gall
seulement au IXe siècle, et que les écoles du Rhin ont cessé d'imiter lors de la nouvelle
influence byzantine introduite sous l'empereur Othon le Roux, par suite de son mariage avec
la princesse Théophanie (972). Voilà, selon mon opinion, les principaux centres de l'art en
France durant le IXe siècle ; mais on peignait dans d'autres villes, telles que le Mans, Arras et
peut-être Autun. L'Italie était à cet égard plongée dans la barbarie, et l'Allemagne n'existait
pas encore. J'oubliais de mentionner ici que les missionnaires Scot-Irlandais nous avaient
apporté, dès le VIIIe siècle, une manière nouvelle d'orner les livres. Ce style, que j'ai appelé
franco-saxon, me paraît venir de la Belgique, où déjà, au temps de Pépin, les religieuses
d'Eyck étaient renommées pour leur habileté à écrire en lettres d'or et d'argent. Je n'ai pas
besoin de vous parler de la barbarie du Xe siècle et du réveil qui eut lieu, lorsque après l'an
mil on songea à édifier de nouveau et à orner de peintures les églises construites suivant

Greek antique art is also the main stylistic reference in the book that Paul Lacroix, known as 'Bibliophile Jacob' (1807-1884), and Ferdinand Séré have published in 1849, *Le Moyen Âge et la Renaissance*. In the second tome of this work, Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac wrote a section on illuminated manuscripts , in which he evaluates their decoration according to canons of classical art.[72] However, only manuscripts showing the influence of Greek artists receive his praise: he clearly prefers Byzantine manuscripts and those of the Carolingian and Ottonian emperors, while he severely criticizes Anglo-Saxon and Visigoth manuscripts, because of their coarse, barbaric, character, which, in his opinion, revealed the decadence of those civilizations. It was not until the twelfth century when 'the Orient regenerated the Occident' under the influence of the crusades, and especially from the thirteenth century onward, when 'Sarracen or Gothic art dominated almost the entire Europa,' that Champollion-Figeac sees the beginning of a revival, which becomes more evident in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is significant that it is precisely this period that was chosen seventy years ago by Abbé Rive to begin his history of the art of miniature painting.

## Conclusion

Nineteenth-century historiography on the history of early medieval illumination largely relies on Greek and ethnic paradigms. Whether fighting, ignoring, or combining each other, these two paradigms were also widespread in all areas of art history and closely linked to processes of nation building. This triangularity explains why, during a large part of the nineteenth century, certain periods of illumination in the Merovingian era, in tenth- or eleventh-century France, or in Italy any time between the sixth and the thirteenth centuries, were ignored by scholars because they were seen as too 'barbaric'. It also explains how, paradoxically, other autochthonous schools were reevaluated in name of barbarity fighting the hegemony of Greek art. Particularly widespread in England and, to a lesser extent, in France, this ethnic-racial vision of early medieval book illumination, the initiative set the art of Northern Barbaric populations against the Mediterranean Classical tradition, with an important impact on historiography at the end of the nineteenth century  and the first decades of the twentieth century. Several influential art-history figures affiliated to the so-called 'First Vienna School', such as Franz Wickhoff, Alois Riegel, and Josef Strzygowski, played a key role in the promotion of autochthonous legacies, whether Germanic, Celtic, or insular[73]. Despite some diverging interpretations and the affiliation of some of them to pan-Germanism, all three argued for a reevaluation of the Early Middle Ages in relation to Late Antiquity or

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l'ancienne méthode.') See Viel-Castel, 'Notice sur la peinture des manuscrits', *Statuts de l'ordre du Saint-Esprit au droit désir ou du Nœud*, Paris: Engelmann et Graf, 1853.

[72]The text by Champollion-Figeac is reproduced in Paul Lacroix, *Les arts au Moyen âge et à l'époque de la Renaissance*, Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1877.

[73] On the Vienna school, see in particular Christopher S. Wood, *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, New York: Zone Books, 2000.

to the Orient.[74] Franz Wickhoff, for example, devoted in 1895 a monograph to a late antiquity manuscript, the Vienna Genesis (Vienna, Österreischiche National Bibliothek, Cod. theol. gr. 31). His work is a landmark in the rediscovery of early medieval art, in particular because of its emphasis on the aesthetic characteristics of late antiquity style *per se* and the Roman origins of its style.[75] These views were also shared by the formalist and positivist Alois Riegl, who contributed substantially to the rehabilitation of the art of late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, as well as its inclusion within the field of academic research.[76] Instead of attempting to link both arts to classical standards, he rejected the concept of decline which had been long linked to them by applying new criteria for their appraisal; he examined other media traditionally overlooked, and demonstrated the leading role played by the art of Germanic populations. Even though severely criticized by Wickhoff and Riegel, Joseph Strzygowski's approach had significant influence.[77] Supporting the thesis that saw the oriental sources of early medieval art in opposition to the Greek or Roman canon dominant in art history, he elaborated a Nordic myth of ornamentation, which was a Northern-European feature, whereas the illusionistic style was characteristic of Mediterranean civilization.

The rehabilitation of art of during the first centuries AD, as well as the groundbreaking art-history methods elaborated within the Vienna School, greatly benefited scientific studies of early medieval manuscript illumination in the following decades. Their foundations were laid by key German art historians, particularly Ernst Heinrich Zimmermann (1886-1971), whose seminal survey of pre-Carolingian ('Vorkarolingische') illumination was published in 1916, after his

[74] For these issues, see Eric Michaud, *Les invasions barbares. Une généalogie de l'histoire de l'art*, Paris, Gallimard, 2015, and two articles by Lawrence Nees, 'Introduction', Id., éd., 'Approaches to Early-Medieval Art,' *Speculum* 72, n°4, oct. 1997, 959-969 and ''Ethnic and Primitive Paradigms in the Study of the Early Medieval Art', Celia Chazelle et Felice Lifshitz éd., *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies*, Londres, 2007, 41-60. See also Pierre Vaisse, *Josef Strzygowski et la France*, in *L'histoire de l'histoire de l'art*, Roland Recht ed., *Revue de l'art* 146, 4 (2004), 73-83, Jas Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity : Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901', *Art History* 25 (2002), p. 358-79, Rémi Labrusse, 'Délires anthropologiques : Josef Strzygowski face à Alois Riegl', Thierry Dufrêne and Anne-Christine Taylor ed., *Cannibalismes disciplinaires. Quand l'histoire de l'art et l'anthropologie se rencontrent*, Paris: INHA-Musée du quai Branly, 2009, 149-162.
[75] Franz Wickoff and Wilhelm Ritter von Härtel, *Die Wiener Genesis. Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen der allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 15-16, Vienne: F. Temsky, 1895. Furthermore, Wickoff participated also in the edition of a collection devoted to illuminated manuscripts from Austria: *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der illuminierten Handschriften in Österreich*, 8 vol., Leipzig: K. W. Hiersemann, 1905-1938.
[76] Alois Riegel, *Die Spätrömische Kunstindustrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn*, 2 vol., Vienna: K.K. Hof-und Staats-druckerei, 1901; *Kunstgewerbe des frühen Mittelalters auf Grundlage des nachgelassenen Materials Alois Riegel*, ed. E. Heinrich Zimmermann, Vienna: K.K. Hof-und Staats-druckerei, 1923.
[77] Joseph Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom? Beiträge zur geschichte der Spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst*, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1900; Id., *Origins of Christian Church Art: New Facts and Principles of Research*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923.

monograph on the Fulda school in the Carolingian and Ottonian Ages.[78] Wilhelm
Köhler (1884-1959) had been Wickhoff's assistant and his studies on the various
Carolingian schools of illumination, published from 1930-1933, remain essential
reading.[79] Indeed, both authors continue to assert that art during the early Middle
Ages owes much to art-history's predominant Greco-Roman canon – instead of
seeking to establish a filiation between Coptic and Insular arts – and they use a
geographical classification indebted to nineteenth-century ethnic paradigms.
Furthermore, their works charted out a new approach to analyzing early medieval
manuscript illumination. From this point on, early medieval manuscripts seem to
gain a new status, as evidenced by the increased use of new names as 'pre-
Carolingian' or 'Carolingian' from the beginning of the twentieth century.

        Along with these studies, it is important to mention that some modern artists
affiliated with Primitivism, Surrealism, Art Brut or Minimalism also played a
significant role in the rehabilitation of art in the first centuries AD, which they saw
as a means of freedom or regeneration, in contrast to the perceived restrictions of
Classical art.[80] In assessing that Gallic art was the instrument of a millenarian
struggle against the 'Greco-Latin contagion', the Surrealist André Breton has clearly
articulated the relationship between non-representational ancient art and the search
for new forms of expression and spatial construction among modern artists.[81] The
minimalist artist Frank Stella was probably thinking in the same way, when he
compared the drip-painting practiced by Jackson Pollock with the carpet pages of
'Celtic' art in his junior thesis,[82] an art that Jean Babelon, the director of the Cabinet

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[78] Ernst Heinrich Zimmermann, *Vorkarolingische Miniaturen*, 4 vol., Berlin, 1916; *Die fuldaer
Buchmalerei in karolingischer und ottonischer Zeit*, Halle, 1910.

[79] Wilhelm Köhler, *Die karolingische Miniaturen*, Berlin, 1930-33 sq. This collection was
continued by Florentine Mütherich, after Köhler's death.

[80] For the interest in medieval art among modern artists during the first half of the twentieth
century and its influence on the rediscovery of medieval art, see Madeline H. Caviness,
'Broadening the Definitions of 'Art': the Reception of Medieval Works in the Context of Post-
Impressionist Movements', *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, ed. P.J. Gallacher and H.
Damico, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989, 259-282.

[81] 'Triomphe de l'art gaulois' (1954), *Le surréalisme et la peinture*, Paris, Gallimard, 1965, 332.
Quoted by Eric Michaud, *Op. cit.*, 226.

[82] In 1957-1958, Frank Stella wrote two theses on insular art when he studied with the art
history professor and abstract painter William Seitz at Princeton University. I haven't been
able to find the junior thesis that Stella wrote in 1957, despite extensive search in Princeton
University archives held at The Mudd Manuscript Library and Archives of American Art in
Washington, and after investigating Stella himself, who didn't keep much archival material
from this period. However, the art critic William S. Rubin explicitly mentions it in 1970, with
a confusion between the junior and the senior thesis: William S. Rubin, *Frank Stella*, New
York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970, 9. I assume Rubin is the source of the references on
Stella's thesis provided by Jörg Zutter, *Frank Stella*. Flin Flon 1970', *Artonview* 31 (March
2002), 21-23, then by Dana Doyle's Dissertation *Stella's Stripe*s, California State University,
Long Beach, 2008. The second thesis, the senior one, is kept at the Mudd Manuscript Library:
Frank Philip Stella, *Art in Western Christendom*, *Senior thesis*, Princeton University, 1958:
https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/dsp01z029p608b I am grateful to Rebecca K. Friedman,
assistant librarian at the Marquand Library, for her assistance with my research.

des Médailles at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, praised for its 'surrealist
magic […] [that was] a reaction to the Mediterranean way of thinking, imposed as a
model'.[83]

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[83] 'magie surréaliste […] [qui était] une réaction à la raison méditerranéenne d'abord subie
comme un modèle.' : 'Originalité de l'art gaulois', *Pérennité de l'art gaulois* [Exposition, Paris,
Musée pédagogique], Paris, 1955, 21. Quoted by Éric Michaud in *Les invasions barbares*, 226.