



Alternative Paradigms for the Historical Museum: Lenoir's Monuments Français and Du Sommerard's Cluny

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Abstract

This paper considers two French museums that can lay claim to being the first historical museums, and, in a special sense, the first national museums to be created in Europe. The first was set up in the 1790s, during the French Revolution, by Alexandre Lenoir, who was memorably pictured at the time defending the tombs of the French monarchy at the Abbey of St Denis from the assault of iconoclasts. Installed in the former monastery of the Petits-Augustins on the left bank of the Seine in Paris, this remarkable institution survived throughout the Empire, and was only closed after the return of the Bourbon dynasty to France in 1815/16, when many of the monuments that he saved from vandalism returned to their former locations. The second had a very different origin. Alexandre du Sommerard, a wealthy magistrate, began in the 1820s to collect a wide variety of objects of medieval and Renaissance origin, and was pictured as 'L'Antiquaire' by the artist Charles Renoux in 1825. Having rented the entire first floor of the medieval Hôtel de Cluny in the Latin quarter of Paris in the early 1830s, he installed his collection and welcomed visitors there from around 1834. After his death, in 1843, the French state officially purchased the collection and the building for the nation, and inaugurated the Musée de Cluny, now known as the Musée National du Moyen Âge.

I shall be speaking today about two French museums that can lay claim to being the first historical museums, and, in a special sense, the first national museums to be created in Europe. The first was set up in the 1790s, during the French Revolution, by Alexandre Lenoir, who was memorably pictured at the time defending the tombs of the French monarchy at the Abbey of St Denis from the assault of iconoclasts. Installed in the former monastery of the Petits-Augustins on the left bank of the Seine in Paris, this remarkable institution survived throughout the Empire, and was only closed after the return of the Bourbon dynasty to France in 1815/16, when many of the monuments that he saved from vandalism returned to their former locations. The second had a very different origin. Alexandre du Sommerard, a wealthy magistrate, began in the 1820s to collect a wide variety of objects of medieval and Renaissance origin, and was pictured as 'L'Antiquaire' by the artist Charles Renoux in 1825. Having rented the entire first floor of the medieval Hôtel de Cluny in the Latin quarter of Paris in the early 1830s, he installed his collection and welcomed visitors there from around 1834. After his death, in 1843, the French state officially purchased the collection and the building for the nation, and inaugurated the Musée de Cluny, now known as the Musée National du Moyen Âge.

I should make it plain from the start that I am also attempting to sum up, briefly, a debate about the significance of these two museums, and their relationship to one another, that goes to the heart of what we might mean by a historical museum. I hope it won't seem self-indulgent if I link this debate to the sequence of my own writings on the subject. These date back over a third of a century, but as my study of 1984, *The Clothing of Clio*, has just been reissued in paperback, and published in a Russian translation this year, I might be forgiven for thinking that the issues are still alive. I first aired my thoughts about these two museums when lecturing at Princeton and Wesleyan universities in 1977. The outcome was an article in the journal *History & Theory*, published in 1978, and translated into Italian for the journal *Lotus* in 1982, where it was accompanied by an article of Dominique Poulot on 'The birth of the museum of architecture in France during the Revolution'. In 1984, I published *The Clothing of Clio*, of which one chapter was a revised and expanded version of my earlier article, and in 1986 Dominique Poulot published an essay in Pierre Nora's famous collection, *Les lieux de mémoire*, in which he discussed my article in the light of his own interpretation of the Monuments français, and commented on my interpretation of its relationship to Cluny.¹ I won't go any further into the bibliography around these two museums, which has swelled from a tiny trickle into a vast flood. But I will suggest that there is a fundamental issue at stake here about the identity of the historical museum, which still bears close examination.

Dominique Poulot's position is clearly stated in the 1986 piece. I had argued that the two museums stand in opposition to one another, in so far as they represent two alternative modes of visualising history. He suggests: 'The difference between the century rooms at the Petits-Augustins and that of the 'Chamber of François 1er at Cluny, though it be eloquent, should not mask their common ambition to figure history as it has been 'really' incarnated. The virtuosity of the first attempt had moreover left such memories that the transformation of the Du Sommerard collection into a public museum took place under the auspices of Lenoir'. I absolutely agree with the second sentence, but I am still inclined to query the first. And since I also spent a full chapter of *The Clothing of Clio* trying to set the context of what the German historian Leopold von Ranke meant when he said the historian should recount how things 'really' happened – 'wie es eigentlich

gewesen' – I am not so ready to accept that one and the same concept and practice of historical recreation can be stretched to include both museums.²

I will pass rapidly to discussing the surviving views of these two museums, and analysing some of the reminiscences that indicate how they might have been viewed at the time. But first I should refer to the little chart that I originally used to clarify my approach. In the 1970s, we had all learned from Michel Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* to test the proposition that different 'epistemes', or regimes of knowledge, had succeeded one another in European history since the Middle Ages. Thomas Kuhn had built on the work of Bachelard to argue that the sciences proceeded not through continuities, but through what he termed a 'paradigm shift', in which again one regime was discontinuous with its predecessor. Moreover Hayden White had proposed in *Metahistory* (1973) that the predominant historians of the nineteenth century 'emplotted' their work in accordance with different rhetorical strategies – such as metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. As indicated in my chart, these arguments led me to propose a structuralist model (employing Saussure's concepts 'syntagm' and 'system') that conveyed the essential difference between the two museums.³ In the *Monuments français*, the ordering principle would be essentially the 'century room', in which 'specimens' of sculpture are arranged, next to one another, but with no overarching thematic unity. In Cluny, by contrast, the wager is to combine diverse material objects in such a way as to create an overall sense of 'lived' history – 'le vécu'.

How do we set about resolving this question of how the two museums might have communicated a sense of history? Obviously the surviving artistic representations of the different collections are themselves viewed through the prisms of particular sensibilities and styles. When Hubert Robert paints a room in the *Monuments français* around 1803, he endows it with the same atmospheric gloom as he was employed in the representation of caves and grottoes. When an artist of the next generation, Jean-Lubin Vauzelle (b.1787) depicts the 13th century room for a valedictory publication in 1816, he pays much more attention to colour and detail, though he also cheekily adds his own name to the side of a tomb.⁴ Besides these visual records, the expressed intentions of the respective founders, Lenoir and Du Sommerard, must indeed be taken very seriously – though Francis Haskell's excellent essay on the *Monuments français* shows that Lenoir was obliged to take almost contradictory positions as the phases of the Revolution proceeded, in order to sustain his initiative in rescuing the symbols of the tyranny of the Ancien regime. First of all, he was committed to a narrative of rise and decline, which was to encourage young artists to grasp the opportunity to rescue French art from its monarchical past. Later he addressed himself more specifically to creating local colour and historical atmosphere.⁵ As a third category of reception, the accounts of visitors to these museums are obviously of prime importance – though, as we shall see, such accounts might date from many years after the original visits, and so be subject to the inevitable distortions of memory.

Let me emphasise from the start, however, that contemporaries did indeed express regret for the destruction of the *Monuments français* in 1816, and linked it to the future development of the Musée de Cluny. The historian Jules Michelet's comments on the subject are well-known, and I will be considering them closely in this paper. But it is also noteworthy that Prosper de Barante, the historian whose *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne* was the first major work of Romantic historiography to appear in the mid-1820s, commented on the subject when he presented the report advocating the acquisition of Du Sommerard's collection by the French state in 1843:

The Hôtel de Cluny will take the place [for young students] of that Musée des Petits-Augustins that we were wrong to destroy, and where, in our youth, when we also were students, we went and walked, beneath these old cloisters, among the tombs that M. Lenoir had preserved from the revolutionary destruction.⁶

So Cluny was seen by Barante as ‘taking the place’ of the Monuments français. But does that also mean that it offered the same kind of vision of history? The way in which Barante emphasises first and foremost the aspect of ‘preservation’ from revolutionary vandalism is consistent with the tone of one contemporary testimony that I believe I discovered, since I found it in the unpublished manuscript diary of a young Scottish aristocrat, Lord John Campbell, who visited the museum in 1802:

[...] we went to see The ci-devant Convent of the Augustins in which are deposited all the tombs and monuments which escaped the fury of the revolutionists, (they are arranged in different cloisters and apartments) each containing the specimens of statuary and sculpture during one century beginning with the earliest periods of the art, and receiving light through windows of coloured glass as nearly of the same antiquity as possible. Some very beautiful and curious specimens [...] are among them.⁷

Now I know that Pascal Griener, who is doing remarkable though as yet unpublished work on the Monuments français, would explain that foreign visitors often had a jaundiced view of the installation – maybe this British visitor was unaware of the fact that one of Lenoir’s first concepts had been the creation of a kind of secular equivalent to England’s Westminster Abbey! For me, nonetheless, the fact that Campbell (like Barante) notes particularly the aspect of preservation from the ‘revolutionists’, and that he views the objects as individual ‘specimens’, rather than for their collective impact, is significant.

I will return later to Barante’s interesting report advocating the acquisition of Du Sommerard’s collection for the nation. But for the present, it is worth noting that, being born in 1782, Barante became a student at the Ecole Polytechnique in 1798, and so his reported experience of the Monuments français dates from this period. 1798 was however was the very year of Michelet’s birth, with the consequence that his memories of the museum dated essentially from his childhood in the period of the Empire, roughly a decade later. Since Michelet’s account of these experiences does indeed bulk very large in all accounts of the impact of the museum, it is worth examining his texts in some detail.

First of all, as Haskell acknowledges, it is surely significant that Michelet’s first published record of his visits came as late as 1846, where he was already in middle age. What Haskell does not perhaps acknowledge sufficiently is the complex layering of these recorded memories. Initially, in 1846, it is in the context of a letter to Edgar Quinet, that prefaces his book, *Le Peuple*, that Michelet records the two strongest impressions that he received in his childhood: first of all came the reading of Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ*, then:

The next strongest impression of my childhood is of the museum of French monuments, which has so unfortunately been torn down [*détruit*]. It was there and nowhere else that I first received a vivid impression of history. I filled these tombs with my imagination; I felt the dead through the marble; and it was not without a little terror that I visited the low vaults, where Dagobert, Chilperic, and Fredegonde were sleeping.⁸

This recollection is then virtually repeated in a more elaborate form in footnote to the text of Michelet’s great History of the French Revolution, in the volume that appeared in 1853:

Here I am opening a wound in my heart. This museum, where my mother during my age of childhood poverty, nonetheless rich in imagination, where my mother so many times led me by the hand, it perished in 1815. A government born in a foreign country hastened to destroy this sanctuary of national art. How many souls had caught there the spark of history, the interest in great memories, the vague desire to remount the ages! I can still recall the emotion, always the same and always vivid, that made my heart beat when, very small, I entered beneath the sombre vaults and contemplated these pale faces, when I went and searched, ardent, curious, fearful, from room to room. I was searching for, what? I do not know: the life of then, no doubt, and the genius of the times. I was not quite certain that they were not still alive, all these marble sleepers, stretched out on their tombs; and when, from the sumptuous monuments of the 16th century gealing with alabaster, I passed to the low room of the Merovingians where was found the cross of Dagobert, I did not quite know if I would not see Chilperic and Fredegonde rising and sitting up.⁹

It is of course a wonderful passage, in which a tender scenario of the historian's childhood is refracted through the mind, and recreated in the prose, of the mature Romantic writer. But let us also bear in mind that this is a footnote to the main text, in which Michelet is specifically addressing the question of the place of the museum in French history, and consequently as a historical museum. First of all, Michelet establishes the crucial point that the Louvre is an international museum, a 'musée des nations', whereas the *Monuments français*, adopted by the Revolution in the same period, 'could be called [the museum] of France': it was indeed precisely a 'national museum':

[...] an incomparable treasure of sculptures drawn from convents, palaces, churches. A whole world of the historical dead, summoned from their chapels at the powerful voice of the Revolution, had come and taken themselves to this valley of Jehosaphat. There they were yesterday, with no plinths, often badly placed, but not in disorder. For the first time, on the contrary, true order, the only true, that of the ages. The perpetuity of the nation was reproduced there. France saw herself finally as herself, in her development; from century to century and from man to man, from tombs to tombs, she could effect in a sense an examination of her conscience. Who am I? she said. What is my social and religious principle? And what then is the life that beats in my heart?¹⁰

This is a very substantial claim, which allies the message of the 'destroyed' museum with the vast project of national self-examination that only the historian, that is Michelet himself, can undertake to bring to fruition. Indeed, it is Michelet the historian speaking, conscious that this is his self-appointed task, whereas in the footnote dealing with his childhood, we have the over-determined memory of Michelet the child and devoted son.

But let us focus for the moment on just one implication of his claim as a historian. Michelet admits that the sculptural objects are 'often badly placed, but not in disorder', because 'the only true' order is 'that of the ages'. My argument is indeed bound up in the hypothesis that the *Monuments français* and Cluny are not simply two museum types in a historical sequence, but alternative paradigms indicating different perceptions of the past. I would certainly not deny that the *Monuments français* had an 'order', but it is surely significant that Michelet's two retrospective views of the museum indicate rather different ideas on how that 'order' might be understood. My own view of the individuality of Cluny is pitched precisely against what is evidently the lack of understanding that even the curators of that museum displayed, in the not so distant past, with the regard to the system that Du Sommerard was putting into place for the first time. As late as 1972, the official guide to the collections (still the only one available when I was originally working on the material) wrote about his achievement in this way:

Engravings and old paintings allow us to imagine with what picturesque disorder the Du Sommerard collection was then presented. It is romantic taste that had presided over the assemblage of objects. It was a matter of evoking history much more than of giving value to works of art. All the genres, all the periods were mixed up; on the beds rested helmets, cuirasses and gauntlets; on the coffers of the Renaissance, precious Byzantine ivories were the neighbours of enamelled salt-cellars, mirrored boxes, and Gothic locks; the most beautiful embroidered hangings disappeared behind Venetian mirrors and trophies of arms; suits of armour, upright, lance in hand, guarded the sleep of the collector. Quite often, he had composed furniture from antique fragments, but of diverse provenance; quite often, let us admit it, he had not known how to recognise a forgery, since archaeological criticism was only then at its beginnings.¹¹

It is a nice paradox that the worthy curator of the 1970s who celebrates the progress of historical knowledge seems quite incapable of appreciating the originality of an installation that, for the first time, was presenting the past not in terms of detached ‘monuments’, but as a vivid spectacle of interconnected objects, all of which could be woven together to stimulate a coherent narrative of the past. This is precisely what a visitor like Madame de Saint-Surin was doing when she published her description of the Hôtel de Cluny in 1835. She certainly had no particular trouble in linking together the different elements that the curator of the 1970s found so incongruous:

Lifting up the tapestries across the doorways, we pass into the Room of François I. His bed is there, with elegant caryatids supporting the roof; his armour is laid out on the counterpane; you would think it was the hero resting! Two knights standing at the foot of the bed, with lance in hand and lowered visor, seem to stand guard over their master. At the sight of these pictorial episodes, the imagination is struck and tempted to take the marvel for reality.¹²

If Madame de Saint-Surin was in no doubt that the knights were there to guard their master, François I, she was also willing to be convinced by the spectacle of two suits of armour engaged in a game of chess, in the window embrasure: ‘two knights seated in front of one another are getting ready to move the first pawns; and certainly with less imagination than Hoffmann had when he wrote his fantastic tales, it appears as if you are present at this game.’¹³ Only when her account migrates to the medieval chapel of the Abbots of Cluny, does she venture a slight criticism of the ingenuity with which Du Sommerard has sought to engage the imaginative response of his visitors:

Most the visitors repaired to the chapel where you can see, in the forms appropriate to the Middle Ages, all the furnishings suitable for a place of prayer. One thing alone seemed to us to contrast with the gravity of the place: this is a statue clothed in priestly robes which is standing before the lectern.

When you are on the point of penetrating into the oratory of the widow of Louis XII, you expect to find there a mysterious solitude; and the appearance of this canon of stone, in ceremonial costume, standing, motionless, with a face either pale or illuminated (we could not vouch for the colour of his complexion, for we shut our eyes), becomes for some a subject of surprise; whilst the others ... can only see the bizarre side of this phantom.¹⁴

I am certain that many of us have experienced just this kind of ambivalence when confronted with at a modern historical installation in a historical building. I think myself of the English Heritage restoration of Dover Castle – a splendid make-over of the building involving newly made furniture and hangings, made in authentic period style – which also incorporates hologram

projections of conversing figures in medieval dress who appear suddenly in a window or a dark passage. Are they just ‘surprising’, or are they ‘bizarre’ – and do they add something to the experience? But the point is that Du Sommerard is producing this complex of reactions for the first time. At the Musée de Cluny, the aim was to involve all the senses in a spectacle of historical recreation designed to make the past come to life again.

But of course Du Sommerard was not alone in inviting the Parisian public of the 1830s to assent to this novel form of representation. Note the particular terms that Madame de Saint-Surin employs to express his challenge to the visitors – ‘tak[ing] the marvel for reality’, and requiring of them ‘less imagination than Hoffmann had when he wrote his fantastic tales’. These words ‘marvellous’ and ‘fantastic’ relate specifically to the new fictional genres that had become all the rage in France – as elsewhere in Europe – the ‘Tales’ of the German writer E.T.A. Hoffmann being a noteworthy example. In other words, the visitors of the 1830s had become skilled in the ‘suspension of disbelief’, when reading tales that defied the laws of science and common sense. They were being invited to extend that imaginative capacity to encompass a site that claimed to resuscitate past history.

However the distinctive achievement of the Musée de Cluny was to stimulate the imagination not through words on the page, but through the presence of material objects. Balzac, so skilled at detecting the tastes of his fellow citizens in the period of the Restoration, wrote a wonderful novel in 1843-4, entitled ‘The Muse of the Department’. In this novel, he tells the story of an intelligent young woman called Dinah, living near Sancerre, and married to an older man who has profited from the Revolution to buy up a substantial estate, and incidentally a historic chateau. Dinah disdains his shrewd money-making, but makes it her special task to furnish the chateau of Anzy in period style:

Dinah wanted to give visible proof of her love for the most remarkable productions of Art: she threw herself into the ideas of the Romantic School, including within the sphere of Art, poetry and painting, the printed page and the statue, the piece of furniture and the opera. So she became a medievalist [*moyen-âgeiste*]. [...] Thus she acquired, in the first days of her marriage, the furnishings of the Rouget at Issoudun, at the sale that took place in 1824. [...] At the end of five or six years, the antechamber, the dining room, the two salons and the boudoir that Dinah had arranged for herself on the ground floor [...] was overflowing with masterpieces selected from the four surrounding departments.¹⁵

As usual, Balzac manifests a piercing eye for contemporary manners, and a concern for precise dating. Dinah’s fictional career runs parallel to the real career of Du Sommerard as a collector, and in case we have missed the point, Balzac informs us that Dinah’s visitors were able to experience at Anzy, by the 1830s, ‘catacombs of old-fashioned things arranged as in the home of the late Du Sommerard’.¹⁶

In other words, Du Sommerard was for Balzac an emblematic representative of a more general taste for historical objects that had begun to thrive during the Restoration, in parallel with the rise of the Romantic movement in France – the distinctive feature of Romanticism being its all-encompassing nature as a cultural tendency, involving ‘poetry and painting, the printed page and the statue, the piece of furniture and the opera’. The Musée de Cluny thus differed from the Musée des Monuments français in particular because its creator could feed upon an integrated culture that gave material content to such formerly abstract notions as the ‘Middle Ages’; and the ‘Renaissance’.

Nor do we have to take Balzac's word for it. There is a small corner of the Gallery of the Petit Palais in Paris where you can view examples of the furniture commissioned by a rather up-market version of Dinah de La Baudraye. Aimée Carvillon des Tillières, a fabulously rich young heiress born in 1797, married in 1817 the future Marquis d'Osmond, heir to an ancient Norman family, and immediately started to transform the furnishings of her family home in the smart district of the Chaussée d'Antin in Paris.¹⁷ No chairs in the Empire style for her! She promptly commissioned the fashionable cabinet-maker Jacob-Desmalter to design a Gothic study in which a set of fabulous chairs adorned with the Osmond arms and motto was among the principal ornaments.

These Gothic chairs were, of course, highly fanciful, rather than authentic, examples of Gothic furniture. However the installation of two of their number in the basement gallery of the Petit Palais in Paris cleverly suggests the continuum between representations and material objects that would be increasingly reinforced as the pace of the Romantic movement accelerated. To their left, there is hung one of the earliest examples of the paintings of the so-called Troubadour School: Marius Granet's *Blanche of Castille delivering prisoners*, which dates from 1801. Such works were much prized during the Empire, and specially interested female patrons since the fashion for collecting them was set by the Empress Josephine. Hanging directly above the magnificent chairs of Mme d'Osmond is another 'Troubadour' painting by Ingres, in this case dating from the Restoration period. Also, to keep company with the neo-Gothic furniture, there is a genuine 15th century Gothic chest that has been placed nearby – or rather a chest that rates as 'mostly' genuine (the label tells us), since now we look more carefully at the dating of such artefacts than was the case during the French Restoration.

I have reached the point where I can offer a provisional conclusion by setting out the case for distinguishing Cluny from the *Monuments français*. It is fundamentally a matter of the success with which Cluny assimilated, and contributed to, a new, integrative notion of historical culture that included material objects, and used them to evoke the fantasy of a resuscitated past. When Prosper de Barante presented his favourable report to the Chamber of Peers on 15 July 1843, he had no doubts about the propriety of turning the Du Sommerard collection into a national museum. Some of the arguments that he marshalled were specifically in answer to various objections that had been raised. It had been maintained that France already had a national museum: the Louvre. Barante side-stepped that objection: 'The museum of the Louvre will be for the artist; the Hôtel de Cluny for the worker. In the first, the imagination will take fire; in the second, practice will be perfected and ennobled'.¹⁸

But the main feature that in his view characterised the future museum, and gave it its integrity, was that it appealed to a sense of history. As he put it: 'Its principal merit lies in bringing together so many objects, that are found to be connected by a historical link. [Son mérite principal c'est la réunion de tant d'objets, qui se trouvent rassemblés par un lien historique]'.¹⁹ In this respect, Cluny would indeed, as he claimed, 'replace' the *Monuments français*. But it was not just a question of 'more of the same'. The past as a subject of study had itself acquired a much deeper hold over the imagination, and generated so much broader expectations, in the period that followed the Fall of the Empire in 1815 – with the effect that the vanished *Monuments français* also, from this later perspective, came to be regarded in a new, nostalgic light.

All the most powerful voices from whose work I have quoted here were speaking with hindsight, and their commentaries begin essentially in the 1840s – Barante, and of course Michelet, speak as historians, Balzac as a chronicler of his own times. But I am not in the end contesting the point that there was a continuity in the development of historical culture over the entire first half of the 19th century that includes the very earliest years of the period, those of Michelet’s childhood and Barante’s early manhood. In a recent article, I have returned to the question of the genesis of the ‘Troubadour’ style that I briefly mentioned in connection with the Petit Palais installation. A summary of this paper will help to conclude my argument.²⁰

In 1802, a young artist from Lyon, Fleury Richard, composed a small painting of *Valentine de Milan* mourning for her husband, the assassinated Duc d’Orléans. Richard had begun by sketching Valentine after her funeral effigy in its temporary location, the Musée des Monuments français. The lively drawings in a notebook that is kept in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon show how Richard brings to life the recumbent figure – a feat acknowledged even by Richard’s studio master David, who rightly saw in his use of light a radically new departure. Painters made creative use of the monumental specimens of Lenoir in this fashion, and when the monuments had been restored to their former locations, a painting like Charles-Marie Bouton’s *Fourteenth-Century Room in the Musée des Monuments Français* (1817) kept alive the memory of the Petits-Augustins as a scene for historical reenactment – though in this case the action is a rather unconvincing representation of the madness of King Charles VI.²¹

Yet, even in respect of the Troubadour school, I am inclined to make a crucial distinction: not so much a chronological distinction as in the case of the two museums, but one that sets apart two types of historical representation, the first of which happens to be characterised by the work of Fleury Richard, and the second by his close friend, and no doubt ultimately his rival, Pierre Révoil. When Révoil painted his *Convalescence of Bayard*, first shown at the Paris Salon of 1817, he provided what was almost an emblem of the ideology of the new Bourbon regime. The legendary French warrior Bayard was famed for having spared the Italian city of Brescia from pillage, despite being himself gravely wounded, and was rewarded for his generosity by being tended in the city until he had recovered from his wounds. The scene of the recovering warrior is scattered with curious historical objects, a testament to the fact that Révoil himself was one of the first serious collectors of medieval materials. Items from his collection later entered the Louvre, and can be seen there today.

Every aspect of this painting is placed under the sign of ‘Restoration’ – the recovery of Bayard’s health, the recovery by the citizens of their cherished possessions, and of course the recovery by the Bourbon dynasty of their former throne. Yet Richard’s work had been about something rather different – not Restoration, but Resurrection: in other words, the absorption of the spectator in an imagined past. This strain of Troubadour painting was also very much alive in the 1820s, as one can see in Renoux’s painting of praying figures in a Gothic nave, painted in 1826 – the year after he portrayed Du Sommerard as ‘The Antiquary’. Du Sommerard was certainly a practitioner of ‘Restoration’, in the sense that he salvaged innumerable disregarded objects and gave them a new status in his collection. But he also inherited the different ideal anticipated by Richard, which could indeed be termed the ‘Resurrection’ of the past.

I conclude by mentioning an article from a magazine of 1837 that places under the category ‘France – Monuments’ an illustrated article on the ‘Tombs of St Denis’.²² By that time, of course,

the tombs that had spent the years of the Revolution and Empire safely stored in Lenoir's Monuments français were back in position at the Royal Abbey of St Denis, as if they had never been moved. The article itself is based on Lenoir's report concerning not just the removal of the sepulchral monuments, but the actual exhumation of the remains of the historical figures which had been laid to rest there over the ages. St Denis had, by and large, recovered its previous aspect, with the tombs and their contents being replaced mainly in the crypt and underground chapels of the abbey church. Yet the vivid memory of their period in the museum still gripped the imagination of some of the great French historians of the age – writers like Barante and Michelet who had visited them at different points of their youth. When he looked back at this childhood experience in the famous letter to Quinet, published in 1846, Michelet could see the intervening years of the development of the Romantic Movement very clearly, and he could define his own practice as a historian as a fitting role for the movement's culminating phase: 'Let it be my share in the future, to have, not attained, but defined the goal of history, to have named it with a name that no one had spoken. Thierry called it *narration*, and M. Guizot *analysis*. I called it *resurrection*, and this name will endure'.²³ Not only historical texts, but museums also, still bear witness to the intrinsic diversity of historical culture that the French experience of the early nineteenth century so effectively revealed.

Notes

- ¹ See Stephen Bann, 'Historical Text and Historical Object: The Poetics of the Musée de Cluny', *History and Theory*, XVII, 3 (1978), pp. 251-66; Dominique Poulot, 'Modelli d'architettura in Francia all'epoca della Rivoluzione', *Lotus* 35 (1982), pp. 32-35; Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A study of the representation of history in nineteenth-century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 77-92; Dominique Poulot, 'Alexandre Lenoir ...', in Pierre Nora (ed), *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1986), Vol.2, pp.497-531.
- ² See Bann, *Clothing of Clio*, pp.8-31.
- ³ See *ibid.*, p.87.
- ⁴ The 13th century room as represented by Vauzelle is reproduced in the end-papers of Francis Haskell, *History and its images* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 1993).
- ⁵ See *ibid.*, pp.241-46.
- ⁶ Prosper de Barante, *Etudes littéraires et historiques* (Paris, 1858), Vol.2, p.421. All translations from the French are my own unless stated otherwise.
- ⁷ Bann, *Clothing of Clio*, p.83.
- ⁸ Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple* (Paris, Hachette : 1846), p.xxvi. Translation by John P. McKay, in Jules Michelet, *The People* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 14.
- ⁹ Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française* (Paris : Gallimard, Pléiade, 1952), Vol. 2, p. 538.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ Francis Salet and Geneviève Souchal, *Le Musée de Cluny* (Paris : Editions des Musées nationaux, 1972), p.18.
- ¹² Quoted in Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (New York: Twayne, 1995), p.146.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.147.
- ¹⁵ Honoré de Balzac, *La Comédie humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade: 1952), Vol.4, p.64.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁷ The comtesse d'Osmond was the sole heiress of a fabulously wealthy entrepreneur who had died in 1812. With the duchesse de Berry, wife of the Bourbon heir to the throne, she contributed to the fashion for the neo-gothic, especially in the redecoration of her Parisian hôtel, situated at 8 Rue Basse du Rempart.
- ¹⁸ Barante, *Études*, p.420.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p.425.
- ²⁰ See Stephen Bann, 'Two kinds of Historicism: Resurrection and Restoration in French Historical Painting', *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, Vol.4, No.2 (2010), pp.154-71.
- ²¹ See Stephen Bann and Linda Whiteley, *Painting History: Delaroche and Lady Jane Grey* (London: National Gallery Company, 2010), pp.56-7.
- ²² Ernest Breton, 'France: Tombeaux de Saint-Denis', *Magasin universel*, Vol. 4 (March 1837), pp.169-71.
- ²³ Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p.xxxvii.