Since the publication of Barrat-Peacock & Hagen’s edited volume *Medievalism and Metal Music Studies* in 2019, introducing the medievalising inclinations of metal music has become less necessary. Nowadays, it is widely accepted that the (Western) European Middle Ages play an important role in the aesthetics, the poetics, and even the ethics of metal music, with some genres being particularly prone to medievalisms (SLIDE 2): classical heavy metal and true metal, with their focus on sword-and-sorcery warriors; power metal, specially, epic metal, with their medievalising fantasy lyrics; black metal, with its fascination for the “dark” in the historical construct of the Dark Middle Ages, and, more generally, pagan metal, in which the therm “pagan” originally applies to North European pre-Christian cultures between the 8th and the 12th centuries.

The fascination of metal music for the Middle Ages neither needs explanation. It relies on the hypermasculine, epic-heroic, overly-simplistic, idealised portrait of the European Middle Ages in Western pop culture (and romantic nationalism and fascism, before that), and responds to a fundamental feeling of disappointment and inadequacy towards the present. Metal medievalism is nothing but a longing for a simpler, freer, more fulfilling lifestyle with no greyzones at all, but crystal clear vital objectives, mixed with an important dose of nostalgia for an imagined lost power. Furthermore, like medieval epics themselves, metal medievalisms serve to create an exclusive communal feeling of identity as metal fans: the same role models, the same heroes, the same foes, the same imaginary. That this is primarily a feeling of male bonding is something that I will not be addressing this time.

The power of epics to instil feelings of awe, identification and belonging is to a great extent behind the admiration of nationalisms, past and present, for the Middle Ages. Not for nothing, romantic nationalism located the origin of European national identities in the medieval period, so that medieval heroes and sagas, either real or legendary, became national icons as well, for example, The Cid and the *Cantar de mio Cid* in Spain, Jeanne d’Arc or the *Chanson de Roland* in France, or the *Nibelungenlied*
in Germany. But it also gave birth to a more general European, white, male identity that has been perpetuated by Western pop culture and, at the same time, lies behind the appropriation of the Middle Ages by the far-right.

In metal music, the Middle Ages can also be either global or national. When they are global, they function exclusively as a metal trope, and the national origin of the medieval subject, if there is any and it is not completely fictional, is irrelevant. In this case, the medieval is recognised as a rhetoric convention, even though the hegemonic Anglophone picture of the Middle Ages and its preferred subjects are best represented. Not for nothing, this is the image of the medieval that prevails in Western pop culture as well, and precisely because it dominates Western pop culture it has become some kind of global motif. Occasionally, bands resort to alternative Middle Ages as a variation of the original metal trope, be it a way of intentionally detaching oneself from a hegemonic picture of the Middle Ages, a sign of appreciation for the culture for which they are relevant or a mere instrumental approach. However, when the medieval topic of choice has well defined national or regional ties that are shared by the band, their decision can respond to a desire to communicate and vindicate the own cultural background as well. Thereby, bands observe and naturalise the medievalising metal trope, which becomes a symbol of a very specific cultural identity, national or regional.

Others have written about this use of the Middle Ages in metal music at length. I myself have explored the use of the medieval legendary, literary and historical character of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, El Cid, by Spanish and non-Spanish bands. In this occasion, I aim to explore how Leonese identity and political Leonesism reflect in the lyrics of Llvume, a black-folk metal band from Salamanca (Spain), and Klanghör, a symphonic metal band from Zamora (Spain). With this purpose, I will focus on the songs that deal with the legendary character of Vellido Dolfos, a key figure in the epic subject of the siege of Zamora and an antagonist to El Cid.

The first thing that might have called your attention probably is that, despite my paper addressing Leonese identity and Leonesism, no reference has been done to León yet. This is because Leonese identity and Leonesism are not associated to the current province of León, but to the Región de León (Region of León) (SLIDE 3), one of the historic regions defined by the 1833 territorial division of Spain, which reflects the
historic autonomy of the Kingdom of León during the Middle Ages. This region comprehended the current provinces of León, Zamora and Salamanca, the last two being from where the bands Klanghör and Llvm come (SLIDE 4). The historic region of the Región de León survived as such until the end of Franco’s dictatorship with his death in 1975, but without any real administrative function or powers; it was just a convenient geographical classification. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 restructured the national territory in the administrative entities known as comunidades autónomas (autonomous communities) and, as a result, in 1983 the historic Región de León was appended to the provinces of Ávila, Burgos, Palencia, Segovia and Soria (SLIDE 5). These historically belonged to the medieval Kingdom of Castile and to the 1833 historic region of Castilla la Vieja (Old Castile), therefore, the newly created comunidad autónoma received the name of Castilla y León (Castile and León).

The decision of conjoining Castile and León in a sole administrative region was not met without resistance. Leonese identity had developed considerably during the first four decades of the twentieth century, both culturally and politically, and the newly recovered democracy brought with it the first official Leonesist groups, which advocated for the autonomy of the historic region of León (SLIDE 6). Certain political groups took it beyond the historic region and started speaking of the “País Llionés” (Leonese country), the slightly bigger region in which Leonese language is still spoken. Nowadays, Leonesism is still very active and diversified (SLIDE 7). Most Leonesism simply advocates for the autonomy of the historic region of León, which they consider at a political disadvantage against Castile. Its most dedicated manifestations can also oscillate between traditional Spanish nationalism and social communism.

Besides the “Purpurada”, the Leonese flag with a purple background instead of the white one with which it appears in the conjoint flag of Castile and León, Leonesism also has an unofficial icon of their fight against Castile: the legendary figure of Vellido Dolfos (SLIDE 8). Vellido Dolfos is central in the epic account of the siege of Zamora by the king of Castile, Sancho II, in 1072. The legend says that Vellido Dolfos, a nobleman of Zamora, decided to put an end to the siege of his town by killing Sancho. With this aim, he presented himself before the Castilian king and claimed that he was being chased down by Arias Gonzalo, the military leader of the defense of Zamora, and
wanted to take revenge on him by joining Sancho and telling him how to enter the city walls through a secret wicket-gate. The king accompanied him to check the secret door and Vellido Dolfos pierced him with his own spear, which he was holding while the king was “attending the call of the nature”. Vellido Dolfos then re-enters Zamora through the secret door, which, since then, Castilians name “Postigo de la Traición” (Betrayal Wicket-Gate), the official name until 2010, and Leonese name “Portillo de la Lealtad” (Gate of Allegiance), the official name since 2010. What happens after the death of Sancho II is irrelevant to this paper, but it is important to notice that, in the legend, the action of Vellido Dolfos puts a definitive end to the siege of Zamora, which continued being autonomous until the death of its ruler, Urraca de Zamora, in 1101, and motivates indirectly the banishment of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, El Cid.

The name difference between Postigo de la Traición (Betrayal Wicket-Gate) and Portillo de la Lealtad (Gate of Allegiance) condensates the essence of the antagonism between León and Castile: the hero of the Leonese is the villain for the Castilian, and the other way round. Vellido Dolfos, who, had he been real, exclusively protected the interests of his city, Zamora, is presented as the defender of Leonese identity against Castilian hegemony. And this is exactly the portrait of Vellido Dolfos that we find in the music of Klanghör and Llvme.

In 2005, Klanghör recorded Zamora, a fourteen-song demo devoted to the epic theme of the siege of Zamora (SLIDE 9). It starts with the celebration of the 1063 royal court, in which Fernando I divides his kingdom among his children short before his death in 1065 (“Curia regia”), follows with the 1068 Battle of Llantada between his sons Sancho, heir of Castile, and Alfonso, heir of León (“La Llantada”), and moves to the siege of Zamora, the city inherited by his daughter Urraca (“Mi ciudad”). The legendary intervention of Vellido Dolfos and the following challenge of Arias Gonzalo come next (“Vellido” and “El Reto”). The demo ends with an imaginary reflection of the dead father of Alfonso, Sancho and Urraca, Fernando I, about the consequences of dividing his kingdom among his children (“Desengaño”).

The Leonese and, more concretely, the Zamorano cultural identity of Klanghör is evident in their choice of topic and sources. They do not only sing about their city and their city’s past, but they resort to oral traditions and legends from Zamora. Their main
source is the *Romancero del Cid* (SLIDE 10), as evident in the punctual references to some verses (SLIDE 11), the re-elaboration of some motifs (SLIDE 12) or the retelling of whole ballads (SLIDE 13). This indirect way of referring to the *Romancero del Cid* makes it difficult for outsiders of the Zamorano culture to understand what the songs are about. The quoted ballads are so central to Zamorano culture that most people know, if not all, at least a few of them by heart, so that they would recognise immediately the references. Outside Zamora, even in the historic region of León, people are less likely to be this familiar with this part of the oral tradition, despite the *Romancero del Cid* being central to Castilian culture and, in general, to Spanish culture. You have to come from Zamora to enjoy this demo in its entirety, but Leonese and Castilian and Spanish fans can identify with its topic as well, because the epic theme of the siege of Zamora is part of the cultural identity of all of them, but to a different extent and with different implications.

There is only one song in which this equilibrium is broken: “Vellido” (and one strophe of “El Reto”) (SLIDE 14). There, the Castilian king is presented as a “treacherous invading king” (in green) and Vellido Dolfos is presented as a loyalist (in yellow) and as the saviour of Zamora, who is unjustly considered a traitor by his own people (in red) (SLIDES 15 AND 16). This portrait is irreconcilable with a non Leonese interpretation of the legendary account of the siege of Zamora and can be understood as a manifestation of the inquietudes that led to the renaming of the Postigo de la Traición (Betrayal Wicket-Gate) to Portillo de la Lealtad (Gate of Allegiance) in 2010, just five years after this demo was released. Therefore, Klanghör can be sided with Leonesism when it comes to Vellido Dolfos, but they do not actively support the autonomy of the historic region of León, as far as I know. For them, Vellido Dolfos is not important as an icon of Leonesism, but as an icon of the city from which they come and of their cultural identity. Not for nothing, in 2004, one year before the *Zamora* demo was released, there was a two-song single entitled *Mi Ciudad* with the songs “Mi Ciudad” (“My City”) and “Vellido”. What a better declaration of love for your hometown than a song on defending its walls until death, and a song on a local hero who ruined his reputation to save it from a siege?
By contrast, Llvme’s Vellido Dolfos, the Vellido Dolfos of the song “Purtiellu de la Llïaltá” of the 2012 album *Yía de nuesu* (SLIDE 17), is not exclusively presented as the hero of and from Zamora (in green), but he is presented as a subject of the kingdom of León (in yellow), despite Zamora being Urraca’s state and, therefore, an independent city. This is a sign that Llvme is singing about Vellido Dolfos as an icon of Leonesism, not as the hero of Zamora, and explains that a band of Salamanca, a totally different city and region, feels the urge to sing about the local hero of a different town. The use of the first person plural possessive “nuesu” (“our”) to refer to the kingdom of León and of “foriatu” (“foreigner”) to refer to the Castilian king, Sancho II, only makes the ties to Leonesism more evident: Castilians are the other, we, Salamanca, Zamora and León, are Leonese. This antagonism intensifies in the last verse (in orange), in which Rodrigo de Vivar, El Cid, stands for Castile. The whole song becomes then a celebration of the victory of the Leonese (not of Zamora) over the Castilian.

The whole album *Yía de nuesu* is very much concerned with Leonese culture and identity in general (SLIDE 18). Despite a certain focus on the city and the region of Salamanca, the hometown of Llvme, evident in the songs “Helmantica” (pre-Roman name of Salamanca) and “Mirobriga” (pre-Roman name of Ciudad Rodrigo), most tracks of this album deal with more general Leonese topics. “1188-1230” makes reference to the last king of the medieval kingdom of León, Alfonso IX (1171-1230); “Vettonia” makes reference to the Vettones, the pre-Roman people that inhabited the modern Spanish provinces of Ávila and Salamanca, as well as parts of Zamora, Toledo, Cáceres and some areas of the eastern border of modern Portugal; “Vaqueirada’l baitse” and “Xota chaconeada” are traditional folk dance songs, “Conceyu” makes reference to the traditional administrative form of the region and, as we have already seen, “Purtiellu de la Llïaltá” tells the story of the Leonese hero Vellido Dolfos. As evident from the choice of topics, from the pre-Roman past to still existing forms of folklore, through the medieval past of León as an independent kingdom, Llvme understands Leonese identity as a cultural continuum bound to a region slightly bigger than the historic region of León. Not for nothing, the title of the album translates as “it belongs to us” or, more literally, “it is ours”, where “it” probably has to be interpreted as “this land” or “this cultural heritage”.
However, the most evident sign of Leonesism is the use of Leonese, the historic language of the kingdom of León, for the lyrics. Modern Leonese is no unitary language, but a subset of dialects derived from Astur-Leonese, one of the vernacular Romance dialects that developed in the Iberian peninsula and, as such, different from Castilian, that is, what we know now as Spanish. Socioculturally, it still is negatively connoted as a rural and uncultured dialect, but since 2007 it is protected under the law of Castile and León, and there have been some unfruitful tries to standardise it and to increase the number of speakers. As a result, the decision of Llvme to sing in Leonese is political: they are vindicating Leonese as an important component of Leonese history, culture and identity that should not be despised for having survived mainly in the spoken language of rural areas and of less educated speakers. Llvme aims to dignify Leonese through their music, but it also serves as a way of distinguishing themselves from and symbolically excluding Castilians, who cannot immediately understand their lyrics.

Judging by their Facebook profile, the Leonesism of Llvme is limited to this vindication and dignifying of Leonese culture and identity; they seem not want to be related to political Leonesism, although Leonesist political groups review their albums and consider them ideological allies. In fact, in the interviews that followed the publication of Yía de nuesu they declared that (SLIDE 19): “Nosotros reivindicamos con el grupo un leonesismo cultural, no queremos meteros en política con este asunto. Defendemos el leonés a muerte porque es nuestra lengua y está en peligro de extinción; cada vez la habla menos gente. Ya solo la hablan los mayores en las zonas del oeste. Yo tengo la suerte de ser de un pueblo de esas zona del Reino de León, de haber conocido la lengua y saber hablarla. Es algo que tenemos que reivindicar; no me imagino a Llvme cantando en otro idioma, simplemente somos y queremos ser nosotros mismos”.

Llvme’s overt rejection of regional politics leads us slowly to the conclusions of this paper. Both analysed bands, Llvme and Klanghör, fashion themselves as non-political, but their manifestations of their, respectively, Leonese and Zamorano cultural identities are not free from political implications. This is particularly evident in the case of Llvme, who distance themselves from political Leonesism (in red) but refer to their home region as “Reino de León” (“Kingdom of León”) (in green) (SLIDE 20), which is
in itself a political statement. However, they are not doing anything that is not customary in metal music. When confronted with the political implications of their lyrics, many bands that use to sing about medieval topics appropriated by the far-right or white supremacism defend themselves by saying that they are not political, but vindicating their cultural heritage. And, frequently, they really believe that their music is apolitical.

In the cases of Llvme and Klanghör, the ideological implications behind their lyrics are relatively innocuous. Leonesism did never cost anybody their life, even not when the Leonesist terrorist group Tierra Lleunesa (Leonese Land) was active in 1986, and the dignification of Leonese language driven by Llvme is more than a desirable outcome. Moreover, Llvme and Klanghör are bands with a limited audience. However, the situation is not as harmless when it comes to bands with larger audiences that deal with more serious political implications such as racism, islamophobia or misogyny and still claim to be apolitical and to sing exclusively about their cultural heritage or history. Therefore, it is important for us, as scholars but, above all, as fans, to realise that cultural narratives are anything but apolitical, in metal music and beyond. And metal musicians? My advice is to check out what kind of people your discourse does attract. If it attracts far-right sympathisers, it is possible that your cultural narrative is more politically coloured as you are aware of.
“Postigo de la Traición” / “Purtiellu de la Llïáltá”
Medievalisms, Heavy Metal and Leonese Identity in 21st Century Spain

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LEONESISM AND THE PAÍS LIONÉS

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LEONESISM

Demonstration (1983) – © RAIGAÑU

© Twitter: @regionleonesa

© País Llionés Autogovernu

Demonstration (2007) – © 20minutos

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VELLIDO DOLFOS

Sancho II, the Strong (Zamora, 1038/39 – ibid., 07/10/1072)

Rodríguez de Losada (1892/94)

Postigo de la Traición/Lealtad

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KLANGHÖR – ZAMORA (2005)

TRACKLIST:
1. Zamora (instrumental) ➔ Royal court (1063)
2. Curia Regia ➔ Battle of Llantada (1068)
3. La Llantada ➔ Siege of Zamora (1072)
4. Anhelo Imposible ➔ Murder of Sancho II (1072)
5. Leyenda y Realidad ➔ Challenge of Arias Gonzalo
6. Mi Ciudad ➔ Reflection of Fernando I
7. Vellido
8. La Puerta de la Traición (instrumental)
9. Se Acaba
10. El Reto
11. Buscando Gloria
12. Mater Mea (instrumental)
13. Desengaño Part I
14. Desengaño Part II (instrumental)

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KLANGHÖR – TRADITIONAL SOURCES

TRACKLIST:
1. Zamora (instrumental)
2. Curia Regia
3. La Llantada
4. Anhelo Imposible
5. Leyenda y Realidad
6. Mi Ciudad
7. Vellido
8. La Puerta de la Traición (instrumental)
9. Se Acaba
10. El Reto
11. Buscando Gloria
12. Mater Mea (instrumental)
13. Desengaño Part I
14. Desengaño Part II (instrumental)

Urraca’s complaints
Urraca’s disappointment
Urraca, under siege
Murder of Sancho
Challenge of Arias Gonzalo

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ROMANCERO DEL CID (BALLADS)

Recordarás,
su arma ciñe,
espuelas de oro viste.

(Leyenda y realidad)

Mi padre te dio las armas,
mi madre te dio el cavalo,
yo te calcé espuela de oro,
porque fuesses más honrado.

(Afuera, afuera, Rodrigo)

Desde una torre mocha
se extiende una voz procaz
de una mujer llorosa:
“Mi Ciudad”

(Mi Ciudad)

Doña Urraca en tanta cuita
se asomaba a la muralla,
y desde una torre mocha
el campo del Cid miraba.

(jRey don Sancho, / ya que te apuntan las barbas)
ROMANCERO DEL CID (BALLADS)

Tras el duro enfrentamiento dos de sus hijos cayeron y el vencedor también acabó muriendo. (El Reto)

El conde viendo sus hijos, que los dos le han ya faltado, quiso embiar el tercero aunque con temor doblado. (Ya se sale por la puerta)

Arias perdió la familia ante este hecho pero ganó libertad para su pueblo. (El Reto)

—¡Callad, mi ahijada, callad, no hagades tan grande llanto; por un hijo que me han muerto, vivos me quedaban cuatro; que no murió entre las damas, ni menos tablas jugando: mas murió sobre Zamora vuestra honra resguardando! (Por aquel postigo viejo)

© Frente Afirmación Hispanista

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Nos cuenta el romance que su hija se enojó porque ella no obtuvo ningún poder ni atención a esto el rey maldijo y expuso su intención.

(A curia regia)

—A mí, porque soy mujer, dejaísme desheredada. [....]
—Calledes, hija, calledes, no digádes tal palabra, que mujer que tal decía merece de ser quemada.

(Morir vos queredes, padre)

Vellido Dolfos guía al felón rey invasor a una supuesta puerta escondida para matarle, romper el dolor.

(Vellido)

—[...] y os entregaré a Zamora, aunque pese a Arias Gonzalo, que por un falso postigo en ella seréis entrado—. [...] el venablo que llevaba [...] con fuerza se lo ha tirado; diérale por las espaldas, y a los pechos ha pasado.

(De Zamora sale el Dolfos)
Vellido Dolfos guía
al felón rey invasor
a una supuesta puerta escondida
para matarlo, romper el dolor.
—Honor, poder y fuerza leal
a la ciudad donde nací,
si alguien pretendiera hacerle mal
así tendría que morir—.

¡Vellido! ¡Oh, Vellido!
Hacia ti fue la traición
de este pueblo,
pueblo que no agradeció
a su héroe libertador.

Vellido Dolfos guides
the treacherous invading king
to a supposedly hidden door
yo murder him, to break the pain.
—Honour, power and loyal strength
to the city where I was born.
If someone were to do it any harm,
they would have to die—.

Vellido! Oh, Vellido!
You were the betrayed one
by this people,
people who did not thank
their liberating hero.
Valles desiertos, tierra perdida, 
en la que hasta el tiempo grita, 
muere el tiempo, el mar agoniza, 
muere la angustia escondida, 
y renace clavada en mi pecho 
más fuerte que una tormenta, 
cuando los mismos por quien me entrego 
me injurian y me condenan.

¡Vellido! ¡Oh, Vellido! 
Hacia ti fue la traición 
de este pueblo, 
pueblo que no agradeció 
a su héroe libertador.

Deserted valleys, lost land, 
in which even time screams, 
time dies, the sea id dying, 
the hidden anguish dies 
and reborns nailed to my breast 
when the same for which I sacrifice 
insult and condemn me.

Vellido! Oh, Vellido! 
You were the betrayed one 
by this people, 
people who did not thank 
their liberating hero.
Ya tiempo después
la inquietud se sigue manteniendo
¿quién puede saber
si este hombre fue
héroe o rastreado?

No era verdad, eso fue un error
nunca ha habido aquí algún traidor.
—Yo [=Vellido] he perdido más
que nadie aquí
fue por mi ciudad
y ahora me juzgan a mi
¿Por qué estoy aquí?

Some time after that
uncertainty is still there.
Who knows
If this man was
A hero or despicable?

It was not true, it was a mistake;
there was never a traitor.
—I [=Vellido] have lost more
than anyone here.
It was for my city
and now they judge me.
Why am I here?
You sou d'eiquí…
Zamora, la mia tierra,
nu mediu nuesu reinu…
Bellu Dolfos…
Urraca…
You daréi muerte al foriatu…
Baixaréi cun armas…
Sancho morrerá…
Morréu…
Urraca…
El tou hermanu coronáu sedrá…
Adefonsu de llión…
Rodrigo de Vivar derrotáu sedrá eiquí…
I am from here…
Zamora, my homeland,
in the middle of our kingdom…
Vellido Dolfos…
Urraca…
I will kill the foreigner…
I will go down with weapons…
Sancho will die…
He died…
Urraca…
And your brother will be crowned…
Alfonso of León…
Rodrigo de Vivar will leave defeated…
LLVME – YÍA DE NUESU (2012)

TRACKLIST:
1. 1188-1230 Reigh of Alfonso IX of León
2. Helmantica Pre-Roman name of Salamanca
3. Vettonia Pre-Roman name of the region
4. Vaqueirada’l baitse Traditional folk song/dance
5. Conceyu Traditional administrative form
6. Yía fatu a terra
7. Pramoséu (instrumental)
8. Purtiellu de la lliáltá Vellido Dolfos
9. Llibación nu alborecer
10. Xota chaconeada (instrumental) Traditional folk song/dance
11. Mirobriga Pre-Roman name of Ciudad Rodrigo
12. Fayéu de suenos (instrumental)

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Defendemos el Leonesismo, no queremos intervenir en política. Queremos defender la lengua y el territorio, porque se están quedando en el olvido. La lengua es la que nos unen, y la música es una forma de expresarnos. Queremos que la gente sepa que somos una lengua viva y que la valoran. No queremos que se olvide el Leonesismo, que es parte de nuestra identidad. LLVME – © Facebook
We are from Salamanca, from the South of the Kingdom of León, and we sing about things of our land. We are not vikings and we do not feel the urge to sing about viking warriors or from any other region. We sing about our own history, about our own heroes.
Thank you for your attention!

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