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Menéndez y Pelayo and the Catalan Renaixença **Joan M. Corominas**

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MENÉNDEZ Y PELAYO AND THE CATALAN RENAIXENÇA

JOAN M. COROMINAS

Because of the importance of the Catalan Renaixença, there has been no lack of attention given — both in Catalonia and abroad — to writers and influential figures who have contributed to this movement. Among those who played a very important role in the Renaixença by promoting, defending and lending his enormous prestige to it, was D. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo. Yes, it has often struck us how this has been overlooked. A case in point was the interesting Congress on the Renaixença held in Barcelona in 1984. Though the subject was treated exhaustively, we did not find any discussion on the connection between Menéndez y Pelayo and the Renaixença. Perhaps another slight to Menéndez y Pelayo was committed a few years early when a popular street in Barcelona was changed from his to its more ancient name. In our opinion there is no other Spanish-speaking critic who has treated this marvelous Catalan phenomenon with more depth, more affection and more justice. Of Tubino, one of the few contemporary Spanish-speaking critic who wrote on the Renaixença in *Historia del Renacimiento Literario en Cataluña, Mallorca y Valencia*, Don Marcelino says that his work is more worthy for its news than for its opinions.¹

We intend to summarize only the thoughts on the Renaixença of this illustrious critic which appear in the previous citation, namely the speech to H.M. the Queen and the studies dedicated to Don Joaquim Rubió i Ors, to Rubió Ors and Provençal-

¹ Menéndez Pelayo, *Estudios de crítica histórica y literaria* V. Obras completas, v. X. All further references will be taken from this collection.

ism, to Don Pau Milà i Fontanals and to Don Teodor Llorente. We will comment first on the speech in Catalan which he addressed to Queen Maria Cristina. This will be followed by a summary of how he contrasts the Catalan *Renaixença* with the renaissance of Provençal.

I. THE SPEECH OF THANKSGIVING
ADDRESSED TO H. M. THE QUEEN

Anyone who is familiar with the Catalan cultural and national phenomenon known as the *Renaixença* will agree the *jocs florals* played a most important role in this renaissance. There were pre-renascent figures (we purposely avoid the term pre-renaissant so as not to confuse it with the Renaissance), there were socio-political movements which prepared its advent and once born supported it, and there were, above all, great men who made it fertile, among these Rubió i Ors and Milà i Fontanals. But the maternal bosom which gestated it and brought it forth were the *jocs florals* because these were above all an accomplishment of the people. This is the way Don Marcelino sees it when in regards to Milà i Fontanals he writes:

Empresa tan magna como la restauración de una lengua y una literatura, y con ella del genio histórico de un pueblo, nunca ha podido ser obra exclusiva de una persona ni siquiera de un grupo de artistas. No hay escritor que aisladamente pueda ser considerado como símbolo o representación del movimiento catalán, al cual concurrieron causas de muy variada índole, no todas literarias tampoco.²

² "An enterprise of such magnitude as the restoration of a language and a literature, and with it the historic genius of a nation, never could be the exclusive work of one person or even a group of artists. There is no writer who by himself can be considered as a symbol or representative of the Catalan movement, which was the result of many diverse causes, not all which were literary." (*Ibid.*, 162, 163).

Menéndez y Pelayo attributes the decision to make catalan the exclusive language of the *jocs florals* to Milà i Fontanals. Twenty five years later Milà i Fontanals, remembering that decision, would admit it had had far greater consequences than he would have wished, but would add that in truth he was not sorry. Don Marcelino comments on this in a paragraph which summarizes his views on the importance of the *jocs* and the transcendence of the Renaixença. Given the significance of his opinions, which expressed by anyone else may appear hyperbole, we transcribe them in their entirety:

¿Y por qué había de arrepentirse? Una poesía lírica superior en cantidad y calidad a todo lo que el resto de la Península había producido después del romanticismo: grandiosas tentativas épicas que empiezan a tomar puesto en la literatura universal: un teatro verdaderamente popular en sus fundadores, y luego modernísimo en sus ideas y procedimientos, que por él principalmente han penetrado en España: un desarrollo de la novela de costumbres que compite dignamente con el de otras regiones afortunadas en este punto: una alborada de estudios lingüísticos que cuando lleguen a conquistar la disciplina del método levantarán sin duda el edificio gramatical y lexicográfico que todavía falta, y añadirán un capítulo nuevo a la filología románica: un movimiento fecundísimo de investigaciones históricas, desorientadas al principio por la pasión, pero encerradas después (y ojalá cada día lo estén más) en el cauce de la ciencia impersonal e incorruptible: una nueva eflorescencia artística, pródiga en frutos, prematuros a veces, pero de raro y penetrante sabor: un ideal estético que empieza a transformar la vida urbana, que aprovecha del renacimiento arqueológico los motivos tradicionales y los combina en nuevas ingeniosas formas...

Todo esto o casi todo pudo verlo o vislumbrarlo Milà en sus últimos años, y todo o casi todo procedía de aquel grano de mostaza que él y sus compañeros de letras confiaron a la tierra en 1859.³

³ "And why should he be sorry? a body of lyrical poetry superior in quantity and quality to all which had been produced in the rest of the Penninsula since ro-

The *jocs florals* were inaugurated in 1859. With the last words quoted above: "grano de mostaza ... confiaron a la tierra" Menéndez y Pelayo suggests the images we used earlier, that is, the fertilization provided by the writers and the maternal bosom which here is the *la tierra*.

Thirty years after the restoration of the *jocs florals* in 1888, Don Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo was entrusted with a speech of thanksgiving to Queen Maria Cristina who had traveled to Barcelona as a guest of honor of the World Fair and *jocs florals*. The widowed Queen was at this time the regent of Spain. Àngel Guimerà was the main mover of these *jocs*. The speech of Menéndez y Pelayo was in Catalan. He started by recalling to the sovereign that those who restored the *jocs* could never have imagined such an honor:

...ve, en aquest trigèssim aniversari de sa restauració á rebre honra tan gran com may pogueren somniarla aquells literats modestos que en una época, que ja comensa a ser llunyana, alsaren de la pols la oblidada lira de sos passats y tingueren lo valor de renovar lo cant de la llengua que mamaren amb la llet materna.⁴

manticism: great epic attempts which are beginning to take their place in world literature: a theater truly popular in its foundation, and then very modern in its ideas and processes, and through which we owe its introduction into Spain: a development of the period novel which competes well with that of other regions fortunate in this subject: a dawning of linguistic studies which after conquering the discipline of method will doubtlessly construct the gramatical and lexicographic edifice which still remains to be built, and will add a new chapter to romance language philology: a very fertile movement of historical investigation, at first confused, but later contained (and may it every day become more so) within the confines of impersonal and incorruptible science: a new artistic flowering, bearing many fruits, sometimes premature, but of rare and penetrating taste: an esthetic ideal which is beginning to transform urban life, which uses from the archaeological renaissance traditional motifs combined into new and ingenious forms... Milá was able to glimpse this or nearly all of this in the last years of his life, and all, or nearly all of this had its origin in that grain of mustard that he and his literary companions trusted to the earth in 1859." (*Ibid.*, 167, 168).

⁴ "It receives, on this thirtieth anniversary of its restoration, an honor so

Probably here he is alluding to the Aribau's ode:

En llemosí sonà lo meu primer vagit,
quan del murgó matern la dolça llet bevia

So he reminds the sovereign that Catalan is "rebrot generós del tronch llatí", a language which lay in sad and shameful prostration and even denied its own name:

...¿qui li havia de coneixer sots la disfressa d'aquelles peregrines denominacions de *llemosina* i *provençal* ab que solian designarla'ls pochs erudits que's dignavan recordarse d'ella, encara que fos per donarla per morta y rellegarla desdenyosament à algun museo d'antigualles?⁵

To the accurate and penetrating mind of Don Marcelino, Catalan was an independent language with full individuality and personality which had nothing to do with Provençal. In this regard Menéndez y Pelayo writes in the chapter dedicated to Rubió i Ors: "Las dos lenguas, por otro lado, han ido olvidándose tanto de su parentesco primitivo, que exigen de una y otra parte esfuerzos de aprendizaje no menos de los que requiere cualquier otra lengua romance."⁶ A little later he says that it would be sufficient to open a book of Provençal poetry to become at once convinced that in-

great as none of those modest men of letters could have dreamed when at a time, which is starting to become distant, they raised the dusty lyre of their ancestors and had the courage to resume singing the song they had sucked from their mother's milk." (*Ibid.*, 111).

⁵ "...who could recognize her in the disguise of those newly introduced names of *llemosin* and Provençal with which the few men of learning who deigned to remember her would call her, even though they would immediately dismiss her as dead and assign her scornfully onto a museum of antiquities?" (*Ibid.*, 111).

⁶ "The two languages, on the other hand, have been forgetting their old relationship to such an extent that they demand a learning effort go to from one to the other as great as that of any other romance language." (*Ibid.*, 122).

sofar as spirit is concerned, they have no more similarity than French and Spanish, or Italian and Portuguese poets would have.⁷ And we would add that the tone of Catalan is self-sufficient, ready for dialogue, while Provençal lacks that quality. Its voice is exotic and lonely, a voice from the past, from the beyond. Menéndez y Pelayo sees the complete autonomy of Catalan as of the Thirteenth Century:

Esta solidaridad fue rota de hecho desde fines del siglo XIII, y Cataluña nada perdió en ello, puesto que precisamente de entonces arranca el vigoroso desarrollo de los géneros en prosa, que son el verdadero nervio de su literatura. Por crónicas como las de Muntaner y Desclot, por un libro de filosofía como el *Arbre de scientia*, por una novela utópica como *Blanquerna*, por un libro de caballerías como *Tirant lo Blanch*, por un monumento legislativo como el *Libro del Consolat*, por una enciclopedia como la de Eiximenis, se puede dar sin cargo de conciencia todos los cancioneros y todas las cortes de amor de la Edad Media. La literatura catalana no fue grande, original y fecunda sino cuando dejó de ser literatura provenzal.⁸

Then, continuing with his speech, Menéndez y Pelayo insinuated to the Queen the reason why the Renaixença was different from the Provençal or Valencian renaissance: "es cert que en los llavis del poble la llengua continuava vivint, mes i que diferenta d'aquell bell catalanesch que en Muntaner parlava!"⁹ With these

⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁸ "This solidarity was broken in fact from the end of the Thirteenth Century, and Catalonia did not lose much in the process since mostly from that point the vigorous development of its prose started, which is the true nerve of its literature. For chronicles such as those of Muntaner and Desclot, for a book of philosophy such as *Arbre de Scientia*, for an utopian novel such as *Blanquerna*, for a book of chivalry such as *Tirant lo Blanch*, for a legislative monument such as *Llibre del Consolat*, for an encyclopedia such as Eiximenis', one may exchange, without the slightest remorse, all of the *cancioneros* and all of the courtly loves of the Middle Ages. Catalan literature only became great, original and fertile when it stopped being Provençal literature." (*Ibid.*, 122).

⁹ "It is true that in the speech of the people the language continued to live,

words Don Marcelino implies the sad state of Catalan prior to the *Renaixença*. He declares this to the Queen with the following words:

Rompuda la tradició, cadena d'or de les etats, triomfant per tot arreu lo neologisme, silenciosa la parla de les Muses, a no ser en poch's i devegades hermosos cants, que eran com foch-follets que feyan encara mes visible la obscuritat y negror de la nit, sols un miracle patent podia salvar la parla catalana de sa ruina y afanyosa descomposició y del aviliment en que per força ha de caure la llengua que, abdicant la corona imperial de la ciencia y de la poesia's resigna als usos de trivial é informe dialecte.¹⁰

We do not know whether with these severe words Menéndez y Pelayo wanted to remind the Queen that the dynasty she represented had been in fact the cause of this regrettable condition. It was precisely during this visit of the Queen to Barcelona that Àngel Guimerà wrote a message to her, sponsored by both the Centre Català and the Lliga de Catalunya, requesting Catalonia's autonomy.¹¹ Writing about Milà i Fontanals, Menéndez y Pelayo has the following comment about Felipe V and his *Nova Planta* decree to subjugate Catalonia:

La fiera y abominable venganza del primer rey de la dinastía francesa no pudo herir el alma de Cataluña aunque cubriese de llagas su cuerpo ensangrentado. Pudo

but, how different it was from that beautiful Catalan which Muntaner spoke." (*Ibid.*, 111).

¹⁰ "Once tradition, that golden chain which links the ages, had been broken, and neologisms had become dominant everywhere, and the voice of the Muses had become silent, except for the few and at times beautiful songs which like sparks in the night made even more visible the surrounding darkness, only a miracle could save Catalan from its rapid and ruinous decomposition and from the low state in which a language must fall which abdicating the imperial crown of science and poetry resigns itself to usages of a trivial and formless dialect." (*Ibid.*, 112).

¹¹ Francisco Caravaca, *Àngel Guimerà, Poeta de Catalunya*, Barcelona, 232.

destruir de mano airada la organización política y acelerar la muerte de instituciones que acaso ya estaban caducas y amenazadas de interna ruina; pero el grande espíritu que las animaba continuó flotando sobre los escombros humeantes de la heroica Barcelona en espera de tiempos mejores...¹²

The speaker seemed to want to indicate to the Queen the state of oppression and incomprehension that the rulers of Madrid had imposed on Catalonia when further he says:

Tot aixó ho sabeu y ho sentiü, Senyora, ab delicadesa de dona, ab esperit de sobirana. Y ¿qui pot dubtar que en aquest dia obté'l Reneixament catalá la senció suprema, ab dignarse vostra ma augusta acceptar la flor simbólica de nostres certamens... símbol de la pau y d'amor, no símbol de somniades rebeldíes, ni de discórdies, nï d'agravis.¹³

We must pay attention to the word *agravis* here. During the reign of her husband, Alfonso XII, Valentí Almirall had presented to this grandson of Ferdinand VII the same aspirations which now the Centre Català and the Lliga de Catalunya had presented to the Queen, and at that time the King had qualified them with the historic expression of *Memorial de agravios*.

Following this, Menéndez y Pelayo evoked the splendor of Catalan in a style at once romantic, historical, apologistic and me-

¹² "The fierce and abominable vengeance of the first king of the French dynasty could not injure the soul of Catalonia even though it would cover its bloodied body with wounds. It could destroy with an angry hand its political organization and accelerate the death of those institutions which perhaps were already decaying and threatened by internal destruction; but the great spirit which had given them life continued to hover over the smoking ruins of heroic Barcelona waiting for better times..." (*Op. cit.*, 163).

¹³ "You understand and are sensitive to all of this, Madam, with the delicacy of a woman, with the spirit of a sovereign. And, who can doubt that on this day the Catalan Renaissance receives the supreme sanction by your august hand deigning to accept the symbolic flower of our contests... a symbol of peace and love, and not a symbol of imagined rebellions, nor of discords, nor of offences." (*Ibid.*, 113).

dievalistic. A style probably echoes Carles Aribau's *Oda a la Pàtria*:

Plau-me encara parlar la llengua d'aquells savis
que ompliren l'univers de llurs costums e lleis,
la llengua d'aquells forts que acataren los reis,
defengueren llurs drets, venjaren llurs agravis.

Menéndez y Pelayo on this occasion says:

Y aquí la teniu, Senyora, llansant de sos llabis lo doll de la paraula armoniosa y eterna. Es la mateixa parla arrogant que un día ressoná per tots los contorns del Mediterrani... la llengua que com anell novial deixá'l Rey Conqueridor a Mallorca y a Valencia: la llengua en que dictavan ses lleis y escrivien ses gestes aquells gloriosos prínceps del Casal d'Aragó, qual corona reposa sobre'l front de vostre fill amigablement enlassada ab la corona d'Alfons lo Savi.¹⁴

By these last words Menéndez y Pelayo discloses his federalist concept of Spain based on its history and varied cultures. In regard to Milà i Fontanals he writes:

Vino después el formidable sacudimiento de la guerra de la Independencia, que, por lo mismo que era un movimiento genuinamente español, despertó y avivó toda energía local, organizando la resistencia en la forma espontánea del federalismo instintivo que parece congénito a nuestra raza y que quizá la ha salvado en sus mayores crisis.¹⁵

¹⁴ "And here you have her, Madam, launching from her lips a stream of harmonious and eternal words. They are in the same arrogant language which one day echoed through the confines of the Mediterranean... the language that the Conqueror King had bestowed Mallorca and Valencia as a wedding ring: the language in which those glorious princes of the House of Aragon, whose crown today rests on the head of your son bound together in friendly ties with the crown of Alfonso the Wise, had dictated their laws and written their illustrious deeds." (*Ibid.*, 112).

¹⁵ "The tremendous jolt of the War of Independence came later, which, as a genuinely Spanish movement, awoke and brought to life all of the energy of the

In the speech he refers to two crowns bound together by friendly ties. Maria Cristina was Austrian. And as a woman: "Tot aixó ho sabeu y ho sentiú, Senyora, ab delicadesa de dona, ab esperit de sobirana." And as an Austrian, Menéndez y Pelayo allows himself to criticize the absolute centralism of the Bourbons, which, unfortunately, fitted so well the mentality of the Trastamaras of Castille:

Vostre generós y magnánim esperit compren que la unitat dels pobles es unitat orgànica y viva, y no pot ser aquesta unitat fictícia, verdadera unitat de mort...¹⁶

He recalls to the Sovereign the indomitable nature of language, specially the language of poetry:

...y compren també que les llengües, signe y panyora de la rassa, no's forjan capriciosament ni s'imposan per força, ni's prohibeixen, ni's manen per llei, ni's deixen, ni's prenen per voler, puig res hi ha més inviolable y més sant en la consciència humana que'l *nexus* secret en que viuen la paraula y'l pensament.¹⁷

And, above all, this being the occasion of the *jocs florals* he pays special attention to the language of poetry:

people, organizing its resistance in the spontaneous form of an instinctive federalism which seems congenital to our race and which perhaps has saved it in the times of its worst crisis." (*Ibid.*, 163).

¹⁶ "Your generous and magnanimous spirit understands that the unity of people is organic and living and can never be a unity based on falsehood, truly a unity then of death." (*Ibid.*, 112).

¹⁷ "...and you understand also that language, the legacy of a race, is not forged capriciously nor can it be imposed by force, nor prohibited, nor decreed by law, nor given or taken away at will, for nothing is more inviolate and sacred to human conscience than the secret nexus in which thought and word live together." (*Ibid.*, 112).

...y entre totes les formes de la paraula humana, ¿quina mes de mal tórcer y mes indócil a tota imposició que la paraula artística, la paraula del poeta?, ni ¿quín poeta ha d'esser lo qui's veja forsat a traduhir son pensament y a buydarlo en un motllo estrany, y comporte en si mateix lo trist divorci de la idea y de la forma, com si en l'art la idea no fos ja una forma y se la pogués concébre escarida y nua...¹⁸

In the study dedicated to Teodor Llorente, speaking of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of being a true poet in two languages, he says:

Es indudable, que muchos de los poetas que más robustos sonen han arrancado en nuestro tiempo al arpa catalana, incluyendo el gran Verdaguer en primer término, no hubiesen sido grandes liricos, o lo hubiesen sido muy imperfectos, escribiendo en lengua que para ellos era oficial y aprendida meramente en los libros.¹⁹

Due to this imposition Menéndez y Pelayo can explain the silent and barren Catalan muse in the span between Boscán and Cabanyes i Piferrer:

La Historia'ns diu que en lo llarguissim periodo de mes de tres centuries en que'ls catalans deixaren de conrar son patri idioma; en lo llarguissim periodo que va de Boscán fins a Cabanyes i Piferrer, ni un sol poeta de primer ordre, ni ab prou feynes de segon, nasqueren en esta terra catalana...²⁰

¹⁸ "...and among all the forms of human speech, which is there more difficult to bend and less docile to being imposed upon than the world of the poet? or, which is the poet who can be forced to translate his thoughts and empty them into a strange mold, divorcing idea from form, as though in art idea was not already form and could be conceived naked..." (*Ibid.*, 112, 113).

¹⁹ "No doubt many of the poets who were capable of producing the strongest sounds from the Catalan harp, including first of all the great Verdaguer, would not have been truly lyrical, or would have been imperfect at it, if they had written in a language which was official and learned merely from books." (*Ibid.*, 235).

²⁰ "History tells us that in the very long period of more than three centuries in which the Catalans ceased to cultivate their native tongue, in the very long period

After refering to himself as an impartial critic not only because he was a celebrated Spanish-speaking man of letters but because he had been a disciple of Milà i Fontanals and owed to Barcelona a good deal of his literary education, he begs the Queen's forgiveness with the following words:

Perdonau, Senyora, que haja parlat de mi en tan alta ocasió en que sols deuria he-verhi paraules per una gran Reyna que doblament nos presideix, y per una gran poesia que renaix.²¹

II. THE CONCEPT OF THE RENAISEXÇA IN MARCELINO MENÉNDEZ Y PELAYO

Up to this point we have been commenting, somewhat superficially, on the speech of thanksgiving which Don Marcelino addressed to Queen Maria Cristina on account of the *jocs florals* of 1888. We will now direct our attention to Menéndez y Pelayo's thoughts on the Catalan Renaixença and the Provençal rennaissance.

The Renaixença was for Don Marcelino the product of romantic and historical movements of anglo-germanic origin, as can be deduced from what he writes concerning Rubió i Ors. Referring to his poetry he says:

La inspiración de estas poesías está derivada de fuentes muy diversas; pero en general puede afirmarse que el catalanismo de Rubió y los primeros que en Cataluña siguieron sus huellas (como es fácil comprobarlo leyendo *Los trovadors nous*, las

that goes between Boscán and Cabanyes i Piferrer, not a single first rate poet, and hardly one of second rate, was born on Catalan soil..." (*Ibid.*, 113).

²¹ "Forgive, Madam, that I should speak of myself on this high occasion in which only words directed to both the great Queen which presides over us and the great poetry which is being reborn should be pronounced." (*Ibid.*, 113).

obras de Balaguer y los primeros tomos de Juegos Florales) es una consecuencia del romanticismo histórico, que despertando en todos los pueblos el amor a lo tradicional, castizo y genuino, vino a abrir de nuevo las fuentes de la poesía popular... El ejemplo de Walter Scott en sus novelas históricas de asunto escocés, fue en esta parte el más decisivo y el que parece haber influido de una manera más eficaz en Cataluña.²²

This literary and cultural phenomenon occurs all over Europe, but not in the same manner as in Catalonia. That is, in Catalonia it is not only historical and literary, but also socio-cultural, political and in the end nationalistic. In the same work, a little later he says:

En este siglo han renacido, o intentado renacer, muchas literaturas de las que llaman regionales: cada día nos anuncian un nuevo renacimiento, y si todos llegasen a cumplida sazón, ¡cuán ardua habría de ser la tarea de los críticos futuros, que tuviesen que clasificar las literaturas, no ya por reinos y provincias, sino por municipios y villorrios! Afortunadamente el peligro no existe más que en apariencia. Nada renace sino lo que debe renacer; esto es, lo que solamente en apariencia está muerto.²³

²² "The inspiration of these poems is derived from diverse sources; however in general it may be affirmed that the Catalanism of Rubió and those who first followed in his footsteps in Catalonia (as can easily be verified by reading *Los trovadors nous*, the works of Balaguer and the first volumes of the *Juegos Florales*) is a consequence of historical romanticism, which awoke in people a love for traditional and genuine values and opened new sources of popular poetry... The example of Walter Scott in his historical novels on Scottish themes, played the most important and decisive role in this matter and appears to have exerted the greatest influence in Catalonia." (*Ibid.*, 117, 118).

²³ "In this century many so called regional literatures have been reborn or tried to be reborn: every day we are told of a new rebirth: if all were to mature, how arduous would the task of those critics be who had to classify these literatures not only by regions and provinces, but by counties and hamlets! Fortunately the danger is not real. Nothing is reborn but what must be reborn; that is, only that which is dead in appearance." (*Ibid.*, 120).

According to Menéndez y Pelayo neither the language of Catalonia nor its popular literature were dead; that is why Catalonia was able to react in a popular manner against the despotic and official imposition of a language and culture which were not its own. Catalonia remained silent and waited; and by so doing, it would take advantage of those opportunities that the government was offering in exchange for suppressing its language and attempting to kill its culture. Don Marcelino understands this in his work dedicated to *Milà i Fontanals*:

En medio de estos conflictos había surgido una nueva España, mal orientada todavía, pero muy diversa de la del siglo XVIII. Y Cataluña, colocada entonces en la vanguardia de nuestra civilización, dijo en muchas cosas la primera palabra, por boca de sus jurisconsultos, de sus filósofos, de sus economistas y de sus poetas; palabra de sentido hondamente catalán, aunque la dijese todavía en castellano. Fueron los poetas los primeros que, comprendiendo que nadie puede alcanzar la verdadera poesía más que en su propia lengua, volvieron a cultivarla artísticamente, con fines y propósitos elevados que nunca habían tenido los degenerados copleiros de la escuela del Rector de Vallfogona.²⁴

The *Renaixença* was possible because the language, history and culture remained alive in the people. The movement however was not possible in the other two Catalan speaking regions of the Kingdom of Aragon: Valencia and Mallorca. Its renaissance did not go any further than a few literary attempts by a handful of wri-

²⁴ "In the midst of these conflicts a new Spain had emerged, misguided still, but very different from the Spain of the Eighteenth Century. And Catalonia, at the vanguard of our new civilization, had the first word to say in many matters by way of its lawmakers, by way of its philosophers, by way of its economists and by way of its poets, in words that were deeply Catalan though still said in Castilian. The poets were the first who understood that only true poetry can be attained in one's own language and they began to cultivate it artistically, with high minded objectives and purposes which were far removed from the decadent popular song writers of the Rector de Vallfogona." (*Ibid.*, 163).

ters which congregated around a given magazine. In Valencia it was Tomàs Villarroya and Teodor Llorente who wrote for *El Ateneo*. In Mallorca Tomás Aguiló, Josep Maria Quadrado and Antoni Montis wrote for *La Palma* founded in 1840. Don Marcelino wrote extensively of these two renaissances in the speeches dedicated to Quadrado and Llorente. In neither region however did the renaissance find the roots it found in Catalonia. They also lacked the caliber of the men the latter had at the time. According to Menéndez y Pelayo Valencia's case is quite different from Catalonia's, and for that matter Mallorca's:

El caso de los valencianos es algo diverso, porque en realidad, Valencia, desde el siglo XVI, habla, piensa y siente en lengua castellana tanto, por lo menos, como en la suya nativa, y ha escrito tantas páginas de oro en la habla de la España central, que sin usurpación, puede considerarla como propia.²⁵

That is why for Don Marcelino the degeneration of Catalan in Valencia was more profound than in Catalonia:

Privada ésta de un centro de unidad, y no sostenida por la tradición literaria, que dormía casi toda en viejos códices, de pocos leídos, iba degenerando en dialectos provinciales, cuyo parentesco hubiera llegado a olvidarse, a no ser por la lectura, nunca abandonada, de Ausias March y de algunas crónicas.²⁶

For Don Marcelino the renaissance of Provençal is similarly not

²⁵ "The case of the Valencians is somewhat different, because in reality Valencia, from the Sixteenth Century, speaks, thinks and feels in Castillian as much, at least, as in its native tongue, and has written so many golden pages in the speech of Central Spain, that without usurpation, it may consider it as her own." (*Ibid.*, 236).

²⁶ "Being deprived of a unifying center and not supported by a literary tradition which by and large lay asleep in old books seldom read, it degenerated into provincial dialects whose kinship might have been forgotten had it not been for the never abandoned reading of Ausias March and some chronicles." (*Ibid.*, 236).

very praiseworthy. According to him, the renaissance of Provençal had no influence on the Renaixença simply because the latter preceded it. Speaking of Rubió i Ors he demonstrates there was no such connection:

De esta novísima poesía provenzal nada pudo llegar a oídos del *Gayter del Llobregat*, en 1839, por la sencilla razón de que tal poesía no existía entonces y tardó todavía algunos años en salir a luz. Salvo Jasmín que publicó su primera colección en 1835, pero que por su dialecto, tendencia y recursos poéticos nada tiene que ver con los maestros del Felibrige... hay que confesar que el renacimiento provenzal fué posterior al catalán, y de todo punto independiente de él, con absoluta y total incomunicación entre unos y otros poetas; incomunicación que duró hasta 1861, en que Mistral dirigió su célebre y bellísima salutación a los poetas catalanes, por haber él *oído* (*nota bene*) que de este lado de los montes se cultivaba literariamente una rama de la lengua provenzal. Conste, además, que hasta 1845 no publicó Roumanille su colección poética intitulada *Li Margarideto*, que sólo en 1852 apareció la antología titulada *La cansoum di Felibre*, donde vieron la luz pública los primeros versos de Mistral, y, finalmente, que *Mireya* no se imprimió hasta 1859, y *Calendau* hasta 1866.²⁷

As to the popular echo found by the Provençal renaissance Menéndez y Pelayo writes:

El talento de un poeta aislado (y es el caso de Mistral en Provenza) puede hacer creer en la existencia de una lengua y una poesía que en rigor han muerto hace siglos; pero todos los oropeles y raras ceremonias del filibridge no conseguirán hacer

²⁷ "This very new Provençal poetry could not have reached the ears of the *Gayter del Llobregat* in 1839 for the simple reason that such poetry did not exist yet and several years would yet go by before it would appear. Except for Jasmín, who published his first collection in 1835, but whose dialect, tendencies and poetic resources had little to do with the masters of Felibrige... one must confess that the Provençal renaissance occurred after the Catalan renaissance and in all respects was independent of it, with absolute and complete lack of communication between the poets of both movements; this lack of communication lasted until 1861 when Mistral directed his famous and beautiful salutation to Catalan poets be-

popular lo que apenas comprenden las poblaciones archi-afrancesadas del mediodía de las Galias. Para un marsellés, para un tolosano, para un hijo de Aviñón, Mistral es un poeta mucho más exótico, mucho menos de casa que Victor Hugo, Lamartine o Alfredo Musset.²⁸

To confirm what Menéndez y Pelayo said above it is sufficient to recall a text from Alphonse Daudet's *Lettres de mon Moulin*. In an article dedicated to Mistral (*Le Poète Mistral*), concerning *Calendal* he wrote:

Mais qu'importe Calendal? ce qu'il y a avant tout dans le poème, c'est la Provence — la Provence de la mer, la Provence de la montagne —, avec son histoire, ses mœurs, ses légendes, ses paysages, tout un peuple naïf et libre que a trouvé son grand poète avant de mourir... Et maintenant, tracez des chemins de fer, plantez des poteaux à télégraphe, chassez la langue provençale des écoles! La Provence vivra éternellement dans *Mireille* et dans *Calendal*.²⁹

Surely a sad consolation! According to Daudet, it was Mistral

cause he had *heard (nota bene)* that from this side of the mountains a branch of Provençal was being cultivated in a literary manner. The record shows that until 1845 Roumanille did not publish his collection of poems called *Li Margarideto*, that only in 1852 did the anthology entitled *La cansoun di Felibre* appear in which the first poems of Mistral were published, and finally that *Mireya* was not printed until after 1859 and *Calendau* until 1866." (*Ibid.*, 121, 122).

²⁸ "The talents of an isolated poet (and this is the case of Mistral in Provence) can make one believe in the existence of a language and a poetry which strictly speaking had died centuries ago; but all of the tinsel and strange ceremonies of the *filibrige* will not be able to popularize what is barely understood by the population of southern France so deeply steeped in French culture. For someone from Marseilles, Toulouse or Avignon, Mistral was a poet much more exotic and much less of home than Victor Hugo, Lamartine o Alfred de Musset." (*Ibid.*, 120).

²⁹ "But how important is Calendal? What we deal with before anything else in this poem is Provence — the Provence of the sea, the Provence of the mountains —, with its history, its customs, its legends, its landscape, an entire people, simple and free, who have found their great poet before their death... But now, lay the

who sang the immortal dirge to the entire culture and language of Provence.

In another speech, *Rubió y Ors y el Provençalismo*, Don Marcelino demonstrated that the first provençalist, the precursor of Raynouard, was the canon Bastero of Girona (1675-1745) who lived 15 years in Rome where he studied exclusively Italian and Provençal poetry. In his speech Menéndez y Pelayo recalls Schlegel's testimony: "Bastero was the first great Provençalist of Europe."

The thoughts of Menéndez y Pelayo on this subject may seem prejudiced. But Daudet, the great lover of Provence, who abandoned Paris, with all of the opportunities it had to offer, to live in a ramshackle mill in Provence, agreed with Don Marcelino.

Before concluding let us consider the question of whether Don Marcelino's speech to the Queen was his own or the work of one of his many Catalan friends. If Milà i Fontanals had still been alive at the time (he had been dead for four years), one may presume he had had a hand in its composition. We think that to help solve this enigma one must distinguish between language and concept. We do not doubt that the concepts expounded are those that Don Marcelino would have defended. A brief inspection of his works is sufficient to show this. In addition, Don Marcelino was not one to propound ideas of which he was not thoroughly convinced, even in the solemn occasion of addressing the Queen in Barcelona. Hence, we are convinced that, as far as the ideas are concerned, the speech is entirely Don Marcelino's.

As for the language employed, we may consider that he studied in Barcelona for several years and was a disciple of both Llo-

railroads, set the telegraph posts, chase Provençal from the schools! Provençal will live forever in Mirelle and Calendal." (*Lettres de mon Moulin*, Le livre de poche, 155).

rens i Barba and Milà i Fontanals, and that throughout his life he maintained a close friendship with great men in Catalan letters: Rubió i Lluch, J. Franquesa i Gomis, J.L. Estelrich and others. We may suppose that he could not only read Catalan ancient and modern literature but that he could also write and even speak it. At that time, prior to the reform of Catalan grammar, writing it may not have been a great problem. However, given that the speech was delivered to the Queen and before Catalan intellectuals and politicians, it is highly probable that someone helped in the composition.

In the second *Renaixença* we are living today, possibly more profound and definitive than the first, Catalonia must recognize the merits of a man who, though born in Castile, understood, loved and defended this socio-cultural movement which heroically fought, through letters, for its own identity. And so not only does Don Marcelino deserve a street in his name but a monument. And after considering the above we can only regret that an international congress on the *Renaixença* could not find an important place for Don Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo.

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