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Ramón Menéndez Pidal after Forty Years: A Reassessment ed.
by Juan-Carlos Conde (review)

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The poor quality of the reproductions of the woodcuts from the *pliegos sueltos* is to be lamented, particularly when images at higher resolution are easily had. The volume is affordable and readily accessible, although more so in Europe than in North America. As the unique source of both primary texts as well as a valuable introduction, it is highly recommended for libraries that collect in late medieval and early modern European, as well as Spanish, history and culture.

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Conde, Juan-Carlos, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal after Forty Years: A Reassessment. Papers of the Medieval Hispanic Research Institute 67 and Publications of the Magdalen Iberian Medieval Studies Seminar 1. London: Department of Hispanic Studies. Queen Mary, University of London, 2010. 167 pp. ISBN 0902238871x.

Six papers read at a conference held at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 2008 propose to reconsider the work of Menéndez Pidal (MP) at a distance of four decades. The conference organizer and editor of the volume, Juan-Carlos Conde, offers an introduction, “MP and Oxford: Now and Then” (9-30), recalling MP’s two visits to Oxford: in 1922, to receive an honorary degree, and in 1962 as Honorary President of the first congress of the Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas.

Alan Deyermond, “MP and the Epic” (31-60), recycles much of the anti-Pidal revisionism that informs his now classic history of medieval Spanish literature (1971). Dissenting sharply from MP’s methods in editing *Mio Cid*, Deyermond also disagrees with MP’s twelfth-century dating (c. 1140) for the poem as well as his ascribing its authorship to “lay minstrels, not ecclesiastical or learned poets” (40). He ignores the historical arguments advanced by Diego Catalán in *La épica española* that point to events of the years 1147-48 that might well vindicate a mid-twelfth-century date for *Mio Cid*. Referring to his own book on *Mocedades de Rodrigo*, Deyermond makes no reference to S. G. Armistead’s collected studies (2000), which offer a neo-traditionalist approach. Absent as well is any critique—positive or negative—of the “reconstructed” primitive version of the *Poema de Fernán González*, which MP published in the weighty tome of



Reliquias (1951). This edition stands as an exemplary application of MP's theory and technique to a very defective manuscript. In an appendix of more than three pages, Deyermond reproduces variant readings of two passages of *Mio Cid*, contrasting MP's paleographic and critical editions (1911) with five editions that have appeared since 1976. Curiously, this careful juxtaposition does not yield significant differences in one of the two cases. Noting that MP had paid little attention to the "literary" qualities of the poem, Deyermond commends Juan-Carlos Conde for his extensive new introduction to the Colección Austral re-edition of MP's 1913 Clásicos Castellanos version. Conde apparently deems Don Ramón's century-old "critical edition" (enhanced by additional footnotes and a pedagogical apparatus) to retain enough validity to stand as a textbook—despite its much more recent "British" competitors. Perhaps diplomatically, Deyermond does not comment on this new post-mortem victory won by MP's *Mio Cid*. Deyermond, who died in 2009, was always cordial to adversaries, and open to scholarly debate. However, in this summation, he stresses those aspects of MP's legacy which he considers unacceptable without considering some recent scholarship that supports neo-traditionalism.

Geraldine Coates, "MP and the Romancero" (63-70), is far less critical of MP than Deyermond. Without commenting on the current value of MP's sweeping theoretical and historical introduction *Romancero Hispánico* (1953), she prefers to review in detail the major studies of the last forty years. Coates covers the fieldwork and analytic studies done by neo-traditionalists, chiefly S. G. Armistead and D. Catalán, as well as by individualists such as Paul Bénichou and Daniel Devoto. Colin Smith's anthology *Spanish Ballads* (1965) is cited several times, but Coates does not mention the much more extensive and heavily annotated volume by Paloma Díaz Mas (1994), which is prefaced by a substantial essay by Armistead. Generous praise is awarded to the oral ballad collecting done by D. Catalán and his teams of colleagues and students, excursions originally conceived to augment a planned multi-volume *Romancero tradicional* of the entire Ibero-Romance corpus, a dream project that MP and his wife María Goyri had initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century. Coates overlooks Catalán's retrospective, the lavishly illustrated two volumes of *El Archivo del Romancero* (2001)—partly cultural history and often family memoirs—which may explain the academic and personal obstacles that caused the great pan-Hispanic *romancero* to be discontinued and remain a failed illusion.

David G. Pattison, "MP and Alphonsine Historiography" (83-94) praises MP's

pioneering work in that area, reviewing how his edition of the *Estoria de España*, which he titled *Primera Crónica General* (1906), remained nearly unchallenged for a half century. Beginning in the 1950's, studies by Luis Lindley Cintra and Diego Catalán overturned many of MP's suppositions about the process of compilation of the *Estoria*. Pattison explains that MP's interest in historiography began as an adjunct to his early work on the epic *Infantes de Lara* (1896) and *Cantar de mio Cid* (1908-11) when he sought to isolate "prosifications" of "lost epic" material. MP believed that the chronicles were "history", while more recent scholarship has stressed their literary qualities. A major innovation has been the recent work of Diego Catalán and his doctoral students in Madrid, who have worked on a new "versión crítica" of the *Estoria*. Although he mentions Catalán's *De la silva textual* (1997), Pattison does not delve into the exhaustive documentation in this nearly five hundred page analysis of the *Estoria* and its offshoots; this is a monumental synthesis of some forty years of research, and easily surpasses not only MP's Alphonsine research, but that of all other scholars as well.

Simon Barton, "MP and the History of Spain" (95-110), dissects the method and underlying ideology in two major works, *La España del Cid* (1929) and *Los españoles en la historia* (1947). Rightly placing MP's historiography within the regenerationist spirit of the Generation of 1898, with its concentration on Castile, Barton underscores the limitations inherent in that viewpoint (such as "essential characteristics" and disregard of regional aspirations). Barton considers MP's last book, *El Padre Las Casas* (1963), a disappointing attempt to justify Spain's conquest of the Americas and destroy a lingering *leyenda negra*. Barton repeats two convenient, but ambiguous, labels when he states "MP was above all a conservative nationalist who wore his heart on his sleeve" (104). What is actually meant by "conservative" and "nationalist"? Diego Catalán has characterized the conservative side of MP's ideology as a belief in "la ininterrumpida vigencia de las tradiciones que hundían sus raíces en la Edad Media" (1982: 56-57). Because he championed a unified Spain, MP may be called a "nationalist" if understanding, as Barton admits, that he was certainly not a *franquista*. All sources indicate that MP was a centrist, but enthusiastic, Republican in 1931, and during the Franco regime, became the target of attacks by real "conservatives" because of his ideological ties to the liberal principles of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Pérez Pascual 287-304, 318-31). One may agree with Barton when he concludes that most of MP's historiography has not aged well. However, *La*



España del Cid still offers a wealth of valuable source material, even if one does not agree with MP's exaltation of the "national hero". Closer to the present, the call for reconciliation between liberals and conservatives in the closing pages of *Los españoles en la historia*, written in the dark days of 1947, still carries a relevant message for contemporary Spanish politics.

Inés Fernández-Ordóñez, "MP and the Origins of Ibero-Romance Dialectology" (111-44), presents a detailed original re-evaluation of the rise of Castilian. MP had consistently downplayed the important role played by the neighboring dialects, Leonese and Aragonese. In this harbinger of her magisterial inaugural address to the Real Academia Española (2011), Fernández-Ordóñez demonstrates that MP had a pre-conceived belief in the superiority of Castilian, claiming that its ultimate "triumph" could be attributed to its possessing a more abundant literature than its competitors. However, except for *Mío Cid*, hardly any literary works prior to the mid-thirteenth century can be labeled Castilian; the fragment of *Roncesvalles* is Navarrese; *Elena y Maria*, Leonese; *Razón de Amor*, Aragonese; *Libro de Alexandre*, Castilian mixed with Leonese or Aragonese; the poems of Berceo, Riojan. Although MP recognizes this diversity, he ascribes "dialect" features in those works to "copyists". Indeed, the evidence seems really to show that it was Castilian literature that was "dialectal" in the early period. Fernández-Ordóñez notes that Leonese features are found in chancery documents well into the thirteenth century, and that Juan de Heredia wrote in Aragonese as late as the fourteenth. MP's conclusion in *Orígenes* that Castilian had become the unchallenged premier dialect by the end of the eleventh century is not justified by his own carefully sifted data. If MP had been able to consult the samples of spoken Spanish collected by Navarro Tomás and his team for the frustrated *ALPI*, he would have seen that lexical and morphological features of both Leonese and Aragonese were still found by field workers in the 1930s. By focusing on a handful of phonological features, to the exclusion of morphology and lexicon, MP was able to conclude that Spanish emerged almost exclusively from Castilian. His thesis about an unchallenged Castilian "hegemony" corresponds to the ideology of other members of the Generation of 1898. Drawing on a wealth of recent dialect studies, including many of her own, Fernández-Ordóñez has written a crucial re-interpretation of MP's methods, data, and conclusions. Avoiding a polemical tone, she recognizes MP's importance as a pioneer in Peninsular dialectology while calling for further examination of the "origins of Spanish" devoid of ideological hypotheses.

Roger Wright, “MP and the History of the Spanish Language” (145-62), reworks his revisionist thesis on the rise of the written Romance languages, as developed in a major book and several subsequent studies (1982, 1995). Although he disagrees with MP’s concept of “(Leonese) Vulgar Latin”, Wright does find lasting value in *Orígenes*. He also praises the now classic *Manual de gramática histórica española* (6th ed., 1941), noting that its emphasis on phonology and derivational morphology has been retained by more recent textbooks. On the other hand, Wright considers MP’s posthumous *Historia de la lengua española* (2005) to be sorely outdated, and he faults the author for not beginning the history of Spanish with Indo-European. As for the *Historia*, with its more than two thousand pages of texts and notes, the editor, Diego Catalán, deliberately did not update MP’s extant drafts, presenting instead a synthesis (“libro facticio”) of his grandfather’s studies drawn from both previous publications and his archives. The result is necessarily uneven, but several chapters, such as those on the literary language of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, have not been superseded. However, following Wright’s strictures, current studies in language history usually minimize the role of the literary language. Wright meanders into a discussion of Corominas’s etymological dictionary (*DCELC*), stating, “MP was fully aware that in the light of Corominas’s highly energetic work, he himself would not be able to become the pre-eminent figure in Hispanic etymology” (141). Yakov Malkiel (1986), evaluating MP’s contributions to that field, concludes that word histories were a relatively minor sideline for MP. We may add that there is no evidence that MP ever intended to compile an etymological dictionary. Even more puzzling is Wright’s statement that in the early 1940s, MP “was effectively under house arrest and hardly able to work on new projects at all” (141). True, he was forced to resign as Director of the Royal Academy; rejecting any participation in the nascent CSIC, he preferred to work at home in his own vast library. However, he was able to leave Madrid, and by official invitation travel to lecture in Valencia as early as 1940 and all the way to Lisbon in 1943 (Pérez Villanueva 395-96). Although living quite literally as an “independent scholar”, MP was clearly not under house arrest. On the positive side, Wright does see a good deal of contemporary relevance in MP’s work on historical linguistics, especially his account of the process of sound change, while simultaneously reiterating his own theory on the rise of the Romance vernaculars.

Most of these Oxford papers reflect the tenets of the “British School” of Hispanomedievalism. Except for the contribution by Fernández-Ordóñez,



they do not take into sufficient consideration the “Madrid School” research of the last forty years, especially several major books by Diego Catalán. Three of the six papers are largely negative in their appraisal of MP’s legacy, leaving the door open to a *pidalista* response. Although some of MP’s seminal studies were written more than a century ago, they remain largely viable, offering not only a wealth of data, but also a theory and method that continue to sustain a good deal of current scholarship.

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As interest increases in what works were available in translation in Hispania in the late Middle Ages, we continue to have important texts published, often in journals, and since these works do not appear in publishers' catalogues, they are slow to be noticed. Such is the case with Valvassori's edition of the first known translation of the *Decameron* into Castilian, conserved in the 186 folios of Escorial manuscript numbered J-II-2. Containing only fifty of the tales, as well as other material, and omitting many of the framing elements, the stories are arranged in an order whose logic is not immediately apparent to us.

This manuscript was in the collection of books of Isabel la Católica in Segovia, later incorporated into the new Escorial collection. Its history, I might add, is virtually the same as the *Corbacho* manuscript of the Archpriest of Talavera. Valvassori believes, based on its paleographic and linguistic characteristics, that this manuscript dates from the first half of the fifteenth century. The transcription applies the CHARTA norms as explained in Pedro Sánchez Prieto-Borjas' *La edición de textos españoles medievales y clásicos. Criterios de presentación gráfica*, published in 2011 by Cilengua in San Millán de la Cogolla. Because there are many anacolutha and archaisms the editor affirms that she has done her best to create a text that is readable, which I believe she has done. These are Valvassori's summaries of her aims:

Mi interés como editora es presentar la versión castellana antigua del *Decameron* de la manera más accesible para el lector actual, pero siempre