



Opera's dream (Sept 2006)  
composers in white

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# Post-Hispanism

*or the long goodbye of  
National Philology*

TWILIGHT REFLECTION

**The reason why there is so much talk about memory these days is that people no longer recall the object of this memory. We find ourselves in a melancholy spiral: we retain our intentional relation towards an object even though we can hardly remember its original function, to say nothing of its features. Religion retains a shadowy memory of a world inhabited by gods; ecology, the memory of a nature found today only in tourist ads or on the labels of organic products; politics preserves in its unconscious the memory of participatory communities on a human scale; urbanism, the memory of the city; culture, of the dignification of customs. Philology, for its part, retains the memory of the link between society and the words that bring it into being.**

Joan Maragall's *Elogi de la paraula* (In Praise of the Word, 1903) is a philological manifesto in the fullest sense of the term. The poet perceives the majesty of the sacred in the "living word", which is language so close to nature that it is just at the point of blending into the landscape or perhaps just emerging from it. For Maragall, poetry relies on the experience of the sublime without losing its familiarity with ordinary speech; it is common speech rediscovered in its primordial context. As an epiphany of the Logos and not the stuff of liturgy, the living word resonates in the vernacular. This

proximity to the pragmatic context demarcates the sphere of meaning and acts as a powerful sounding board for rich yet simple evocations. From so close, there is little or no conscious effort at interpretation, while on the other hand there is an enormous density of emotions. “A subtle movement of the air”, says Maragall, “places before you the immense variety of the world and arouses in you a strong sense of the infinite unknown” (48).

Every region of the planet and every language evokes and shapes a universal truth that can only be accessed by participating ontologically —lovingly, says Maragall— in the immediate surroundings. “Because every land endows the most substantial words of its people with subtle meaning that cannot be explained by any dictionary or taught by any grammar book” (53). Philology is this loving relationship with the word, or more exactly, with meaning captured *in status nascens*, in the very moment when sound breathes a “soul” into things (52). For Maragall it is the exact opposite of scientific activity. Therefore, philology of the living word concerns itself neither with classical languages nor with religious or commercial koines, but rather with the whole range of human speech in all its phonetic richness and geographic variation. It calls forth the world in its essential diversity and brings a premonition of things in anticipation of their meaning. Being a poet’s theory, the living word of Maragall relates to what Gumbrecht has called the “production of presence” (XIII-XV).

**Maragall has clearly adopted aspects of Herder’s philosophy of language.** Those same aspects inspired the foundation of modern philology as an integral discipline of the modern university. From Herder modern philology takes the idea that the spirit of a people lives in its language, and that the features of all nations can be studied in their linguistic monuments, collected together as “literature”. The university did not always fulfill the emancipatory force of this idea, which today is assailed on many fronts. But even then, Herder, associating language with the source of popular sovereignty, raised hopes about the end of political subordination of one people to another. Maragall took to heart the principle that for each language there is a corresponding nationality, pushing this idea to the extreme of defining territoriality in linguistic rather than political terms. “And what other boundaries are needed to direct the governing of nations than the very borders drawn on the earth by the varying sounds of human speech?” (54). “Nation” in its original sense, refers to the emergence of meaning from a place of origin. So too, for Maragall it does not refer to a provisional arrangement of human relations established by the will to power. Such deliberate action expropriates the natural rules of conduct and imposes by force a new interpretive code, which Maragall calls “learned languages”.

*Elogi de la paraula* was written when anxiety over the loss of the Spanish empire spurred the colonisation of the state’s periphery by transferring there the ghost of the Cuban insurrection and the associated repressive measures. In the previous year, the Royal Decree of November 21, 1902, had made Castilian the official language of the state, in a move distinctly intended to halt the revival of Catalan then underway.<sup>1</sup> Maragall’s

■ <sup>1</sup> On November 30, 1895, Angel Guimerà delivered the presidential address at Barcelona’s Ateneu in Catalan for the first time, with Maragall acting as secretary. The Spanish nationalist part of the audience reacted tumultuously. Attitudes against Catalan became gradually more abrasive as the language reemerged into public life.

response, as we have seen, was to invoke the cosmic resonance of every language, the subtle meaning that “the earth” imparts to words and which the arbitrary exercise of power sweeps away.

It is important to underline the convivial nature of cultures and languages in Maragall’s thought. His harmonisation of human geography with political geography is undoubtedly idealised. It presupposes not only a utopian overcoming

of cultural Darwinism somewhat reminiscent of Kant’s perpetual peace, but also an overly neat and equally ahistorical definition of linguistic borders. However, Maragall’s insistence on poetic revelation as “production of presence” dispels any suspicion of a metaphysical approach to communication. For Maragall, poetry is not about reconstructing the semantic drift of words away from their lost origins; nor does he seek to recreate tradition through an endless tracking of signs. He calmly accepts that the source of poetry is inaccessible to reason and relishes its “transubstantiated” presence in the existence of beings and languages: “Because it is not through same-sounding words that men must become brothers, but rather we are brothers because of the one shared spirit that makes our words sound different in the mysterious variety of the earth” (53-54). One spirit, perhaps; but Maragall is not seduced by the siren’s song of universality. His attitude to language compares with Nietzsche’s attitude to history; and this similarity cannot be entirely incidental, given the fact that Maragall was the first to write about the German philosopher in Spain.

Nietzsche opposes *wirkliche Historie* to traditional history. The term means “real” or perhaps “effective” history, as Foucault translates it, drawing on the *etymon* of the word, which also produces *Wirkung* (effect). This history rejects an absolute perspective on the past. The romantic sense that the earth breaks up into a diversity of geographic regions, each molding the human spirit differently, finds its Nietzschean equivalent in the historicity and discontinuity of the body. Certainly, Maragall does not take his reading of Nietzsche as far as Foucault, for whom radical historicity demands the rejection of any attitude that leads to the “consoling play of recognitions” (Foucault 153). For Maragall there is a moment of recognition, but it is affective rather than intellectual, and *philological* in the etymological sense of the term. In the realm of poetry, he says, “we understand each other only through the love of speech” (53). But although he clings to the consolation of understanding, he also concurs with Foucault that “knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting” (154). The scholastic, the learned, the analytical, in short any use of language driven by pragmatic urgencies or by power forces the subject into a game that is different from the one Maragall sees inscribed in the somatic depth of the voice: “understanding one another through superficial words learned at a distance from love amounts to understanding without truly understanding each other” (53).

Maragall pitted his essay “In praise of the word” against a philological tradition that suppressed the shimmer of language and erased human contingency

While Nietzsche challenged a historic tradition that dissolved particularities in an evolutionary continuum and packed facts into laws that were supposed to be unchanging and knowable, Maragall pitted his essay “In praise of the word” against a philological tradition that suppressed the shimmer of language and erased human contingency.

Poetic language, which Maragall calls true language in the same sense that Nietzsche calls embodied history “real history,” puts on hold the habituating effect of speech in its pragmatic and socialising function, calling attention to the imbalance between the

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medium’s restrictions and meaning’s unfathomable scope. “A subtle movement of air puts before you the immense variety of the world and awakens in you an inkling of the unknown infinite” (48). For this reason, he says, “we should speak as though enchanted and awe-struck” (48). Seen in this light, speaking means suspending the automatism of language and becoming aware of the inspiration that invariably accompanies

each act of speech. Speaking, even in the most banal circumstances, is not the conscious laying-out of a meaning contained in pre-articulated thought, but rather the *ad hoc* use of the rules that govern a particular language in a precise pragmatic context.

Real history, says Foucault, closes the distance that the metaphysical tradition puts between itself and the historical object. While traditional history favors great distances and heights, genuine history turns its gaze on the things closest at hand. Tradition is attracted to the noblest eras, the purest forms, golden ages, abstract ideas, and heroic individuals, which it contemplates from the perspective of frogs. By contrast, effective history takes into account what is most local and immediate: the body and its functions; and it is not afraid to look down at apparently minor things, to discover differences and diversity, respecting the inherent dimensions and intensity of things (155-156). Like Foucault’s version of effective history, Maragall’s poetic language is somatic, an emanation from the earth that rises through the body: “It seems as though the earth uses all its might to make man the highest expression of itself; and that man uses all the power of his being to produce language” (47). For Maragall, as for Saussure, the linguistic sign is two-faced, but its visible face, the signifier is not virtual and certainly not arbitrary; rather, it is somatic and rooted in the ontology of the speakers.

I have discussed Maragall’s brief poetic manifesto at some length because it contains at least two of the principles that govern the teaching of foreign languages and culture. I am thinking about the reduction of distances and the production of presence, two obviously related concepts. For a long time, one of the reasons for the study of foreign languages has been the reduction of distances between groups of people and the

facilitation of communication among them. This reduction of distance was procured less by teaching a grammar of culture than through the creation of an empathetic context: favoring instruction by native (or “near-native”) speakers; encouraging extracurricular activities that mimic everyday life in the target language; or through controlled immersion during a year of study abroad. In literary studies, the reduction of distance is achieved by renouncing the history of texts and randomly recombining them to suit the agenda of language teaching, which nevertheless threatens to migrate to other departments, in response to the need for professional specialisation. Put another way, the vocational uses of foreign languages encroach on the mother disciplines, which are once more called on to satisfy the professions’ selective need for vocabulary, or what Maragall calls “the words that fall dead on the surface of things” (50).

**These and other pragmatic approaches to the literary disciplines** bring us quite far from Maragall’s awed speech. And surely we have made little progress in assessing the modulations of human speech caused by accidents of geography (as Maragall would have it) or history (as our postmodern prejudice prefers). But even though today most would reject Maragall’s metaphysical naturalism, few would openly renounce his romantic esteem of diversity. Free from *our* prejudice, Maragall offers three instances of poetic word in which the speaker underlines speech with a gesture that allows meaning to emerge in relation to the body. In each of these vignettes, language arises as a constituent of a cosmic manifestation at which both speaker and addressee are co-present. “Aquella canal... Lis estelas... Mira...” (“That ravine... The stars... Look...”) (52), words heard at different times and places. Catalanian, Provençal, Castilian words. Their diversity, an effect of their being true to place, of remaining local through and through, is what makes them valid examples of “the living word”. Shortening distances means ineluctably entering into polyglotism; lengthening them in the name of the universality of an ever smaller set of languages means returning to metaphysics and expropriating meaning.

It is still too early to know whether the crisis of the state that led Maragall to renovate poetic language—in a Rousseauian return to “sincerity”— finds a parallel in the much-heralded “end of the era of nations”. But it cannot be denied that the symptoms of institutional crisis are already turning up in a wide range of fields, not least in literature. The causes of this crisis are diverse, so it would be presumptuous to blame it on any one in particular. But some facts cannot be ignored. So much energy has gone into destroying the mimetic illusion, into questioning representation, into pointing out the artifice of all experience and the paltriness of all values, that we should not be surprised if the teaching of literature attracts fewer and fewer students or if those it still attracts come for the wrong reasons. But if the priests have lost their faith, what right do they have to demand enthusiasm from the catechumen? Maragall is unequivocal “You found a word that could light up the world, but your little obsession over perfection and grandeur wrapped it in a confused swarm of words without life, which hid that divine light, burying it again in confusion and darkness” (50-51). His admonition to poets easily applies to those who profess to teach the love of poetic language “When will you stop listening to other music and stop speaking with language that is not the living word? Only then will you be listened to in the enchantment of the senses, and your mysterious words will create true life, and you will be phenomenal magicians” (50).

Maragall's vision of language went hand-in-hand with the rise of philology. Although his theory of the poetic word was decidedly mystical and had little sympathy for a positivistic methodology, it shared philology's celebration of the cultural riches of peoples and its desire to bridge the distances among them. Here, though, their ways parted. Maragall lived for the moment in which the word came alive in a sudden illumination, while philology cultivated the appreciation of the literary work through learned mediation. Both can be traced to Herder's belief in the linguistic dignity of all peoples. But in

## Philology as it was instituted in Spain by Menéndez Pidal and cultivated by his disciples, is immersed today in the crisis of the humanities

the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, philology embraced Fichte's radicalisation of Herder's idea of language. For Fichte, language was the stronghold of the national spirit, and the arena where that spirit demonstrated its vigor and intrinsic worth competing with others. In Spain this view was upheld by Ramón Menéndez Pidal who brought to philology a suprahistorical perspective based on distance and on what Foucault has called "an apocalyptic

objectivity" (152). This objectivity presupposes that consciousness maintains its identity over time. More metaphysical than historicist, such a model amounts to a secular version of the immortality of the soul. It inverts the relation between causes and effects, which are shifted to the origin, and also obscures the role of chance in creating a necessity that is nothing more than the vertical perspective of the historian or philologist.

Philology as a discipline evidently owes more to Pidal than to Maragall. It is interesting to note that the two men belonged to the same generation, though their longevity contrasted sharply, as did their life experiences. Maragall (1860-1911) grew up during the bourgeois revolution of 1868 and the federal republic of 1873, while Menéndez Pidal (1869-1968), who was born after the revolution and was too young to remember the republic, came of age in the politically regressive climate of the restoration. This simple contrast helps us to understand why the two men represent divergent reactions to the same crisis. It is easy to see that the role that fell to Menéndez Pidal in this crisis called for a rejection of Maragall's liberal conception of the social role of literature. Maragall's drama, and that of the entire *modernista* generation, was that a philology that enabled the free study of poetic truth and granted each person the possibility of experiencing "his own wonder", could not prevail over a discipline charged with creating a social identity to match the requirements of centralised institutions. Furthermore, consideration of the earth's linguistic cragginess and of the potential overlap between linguistic environments and political sovereignties fell outside the purview of a philology underwritten by the state, which since the 18<sup>th</sup> century had taken hold of the spaces available for the creation and transmission of culture, as José A. Valero has shown in a magnificent essay.





After the failure of absolutism, the state was not interested in literature as an instrument for controlling subjectivity or as an apology for a paternalistic government, which would have been a late correlate of Neo-Aristotelian doctrine (Nerlich 60). Rather, it was attracted to literature's ability to provide secular legitimation without sacrificing the halo of traditional sovereignty. The Middle Ages were especially interesting as a repository of remote but immanent causes whose myths nourished the modern state and furnished its axiological foundation. Menéndez Pidal states, "These ancient stories, however primitive, will always be of interest, above all because their heroes, leaders of peoples, carry inside them the mystery that surrounds the darkened origins of our civilisation, of our way of being" (*La Epopeya* 244). Philology in service to the state inverted the very terms of the positivism to which it subscribed, starting from the sacred and mysterious to contemplate the present as if it were eternal. An archaic outlook justifies "our way of being" by presenting it as a constant feature of history. "Our" way of being, which is unequivocally linked to what Menéndez Pidal calls "Castile's original character", owes much to the labors of philology: to its devoted tracking down of tradition but also to the normative ethos of the national community as identified by the philologist.

Here again, some dates shed light on the case. Menéndez Pidal intervened few times in public life, and almost always in moderation. So it stands out that in 1902 he weighed in in the polemic over making Castilian the official language of the state,<sup>2</sup> and that he did so in a belligerent article entitled "Cataluña Bilingüe" (Bilingual Catalonia), in which he established the guidelines of his future philological activities. His induction speech for the Royal Academy of the Language (on October 1 of the same year, at age 33) was a declaration of loyalty to a centralised state and an opening volley against Catalonia's pluralistic conception. This speech set the protocol for other distinguished academics, who at different times in the history of the institution have addressed the learned audience in similar terms. Committed to the imperial worldview, Menéndez Pidal rejects the notion that Catalonia can ever attain national status. Not only is it unthinkable to recognise Catalonia as a nation, but this political designation, he affirms, is too complex for the Catalan imaginary. The rise of Catalan nationalism is just so much noise, he says, made by "those who still have no understanding of the modern idea of the nation". Next, the new-fangled academic makes a statement that merits highlighting:

On the other hand, I feel too small to be part of the nation's highest literary Centre, which, as the nation's summit, represents the principle of unity and conservation of one of the most widely disseminated languages in the world, for the good of human progress. (6)

For its newest and youngest member, the Royal Academy was already the centre of the literary institution of the state and the nation's highest chamber. Literature, therefore, need not negotiate its influence in competition with other discourses. Removed from the civil sphere, where there are no centres, it draws authority from its position at the apex

■ <sup>2</sup> The royal Decree that made Castilian Spain's official language was not an empty formalism. It explicitly forbade teaching in Catalan, Euskera and Galician, even for religious education, and it threatened with the loss of teaching credentials any teacher that contravened this ban. The offender would "lose all the rights recognised by the law" (Real Decreto, *Gaceta de Madrid*, November 21, 1902; cit. García Isasti 326, no. 34).

of “the nation”, where it watches providentially over the “national” language, on which universal progress is now staked.

Not satisfied with securing the spread of Castilian and its rise to officialdom under the auspices of the Royal Spanish Academy, Menéndez Pidal threw himself into the battle for world hegemony starting in the academic sphere. In 1927 increasing numbers of North American students registered for the summer course for foreigners at the Pidal-led Centro de Estudios Históricos. Menéndez Pidal was no doubt aware that until 1914 German had been the second most commonly spoken language in United States, and that Spanish was benefiting from the animosity

toward German that resulted from the war in Europe. Even so, during the inauguration of the course he portrayed Spanish as the underdog by affirming that its growth in US schools had given rise to protests among teachers of other languages (*Curso...* 49). He did not attribute increased enrolment to the burgeoning relations between countries in the American hemisphere, but instead to a form of desemantisation which, for lack of a better term, I have

called, echoing Gumbrecht, production of presence. For Menéndez Pidal, though, this *presenting* is not about the “wonder” that all languages evoke by epiphanically encoding the subtlest aspects of a particular culture. Instead, it is about feeling “in the very atmosphere of Castile something of the *spirit* [...] that is brought to life in the language” (50, italics added), and which is therefore *embodied* in other places, much as Christianity emerged from the spirit of Galilee to spread over the length and breadth of the Roman Empire. For this reason, pilgrimage is made to Castile, to the source of a mystery “which is much greater than the mere practical knowledge of the language itself” (50).

**Menéndez Pidal does rejoice in the pragmatic reasons buoying Castilian** but subordinates them to a spiritual force. He does not so much ask for students as demand initiates. And thus his followers have often taken faith for necessity, a confusion that can be traced to the fatalism of Pidal’s doctrine. Time and again the demographic weight of Castilian is held out as an unassailable argument for cultural hegemony. All the same, this illiberal stance is not based on the dictates of the linguistic marketplace. Rather, it expresses an *enthusiasm* that manifests itself in mixture of triumphalism and dissatisfaction, spurring on an insatiable expansion. The numbers do not seem to matter. Menéndez Pidal spoke in Olympic terms of seventy million Spanish speakers; today, numbers as high as four hundred million are flaunted, but even that figure does not soothe the itch to proselytise and conquer. In reality, the marketplace is neither neutral nor objective. It brings into play ruthless competition, unscrupulous advertising, large subsidies and shameless dumping of linguistic products and teaching personnel in areas considered strategically important.

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**PHILOLOGY'S LONG GOOD-BYE**

Philology, as it was instituted in Spain by Menéndez Pidal and cultivated by his disciples, is immersed today in the crisis of the humanities. Even though the state confers an artificial longevity on its practices, the functionarial inertia of this kind of knowledge cannot hide the decline of a discipline that has lost its social function. One might still argue for the need to preserve certain textual techniques, but it is clear that, for different reasons, an entire branch of the university can no longer claim to be serving society. One reason is the law of diminishing returns. The majority of manuscripts of any value have already been edited, in some cases repeatedly; and while each new edition seeks to improve on the previous ones, economic as well as hermeneutic common sense impose limits on the ambition to restore a text to its original meaning. Thus, what is left of the founding spirit of Spanish Philology is the transmission of a few supposedly national values that are mainly expressed in literature. The presence of values tied to the language feeds the belief in a Hispanic identity whose transmission and empowerment falls to Hispanism. In the extreme tautology of this plan, “scientific activity” becomes an interminable taxonomy of authors and works, made the objects of “research”, merely by the one simple criterion of being written in Castilian —and being, therefore, bearers of what Menéndez Pidal calls “the atavistic inspiration of the race”.

After decades of glee at the decline of germane disciplines while Spanish kept on a rising statistical curve, it is now possible to detect a divorce between language and the spirit to which Menéndez Pidal attributed the very success of the Hispanic expansion. By a ruse of history, Hispanism has run into a potentially fatal crisis, as often happens, at the very moment of its triumph. The moment Castilian becomes an object of practical study almost everywhere, Hispanism loses its reason for being without having gained a firm standing as knowledge within the university. That Almodóvar should be the only global Spanish landmark to rival Cervantes in this area (with García Lorca a distant third) speaks volumes on the issue.

Spanish philologists and North American culturalists experience in very different ways the end of the hegemony of letters. The two groups certainly have different profiles. If the philologists are the institution most protected by its association with the state, the culturalists are the group most exposed to the ravages of competition in the global marketplace of knowledge. Their mutual accusations of incompetence recently filled the pages of the literary journal *Lateral* for several months. However, the tensions between them cannot hide the fact that both groups are subject to the same evolution of their field. Hispanism is living out the general crisis in the humanities through its traditional particularism. Having lost its original mission without even realising it, it suffers a melancholy longing for a goal it never had: a modern Hispanic theory. At the same time, it rejects the currently existing theory as if it were a foreign body, or else becomes its acritical servant. In either case, Hispanism registers its own failure. Like the protagonist of *Talk to Her*, Hispanism maintains an apparently normal relationship with a body of work, setting the texts, massaging them, dotting on them, and —*in extremis*— fertilising them in order to resuscitate them. What is *abnormal* is that all this activity serving a comatose discipline is aimed at producing an illusion of presence for the spirit that once animated the tasks of Spanish philology.

The parallels with the comatose body, which can be transplanted, cross-dressed, and miraculously purified —qualities that fascinate Almodóvar’s fans— are not gratuitous, and neither is the fact that the director has assumed iconic stature in Hispanic studies. A body that can be recycled, reformulated, reprogrammed, and retransmitted points, of course, to the problem of the eternity of the material —that is, of the *corpus*— and its capacity to transition from dead weight to new life. It is also the problem as philology’s tradition, whose “transnational”

sounding board (to use the catchphrase now in vogue) is the phonetic space of Castilian stretching seamlessly from Buenos Aires to Barcelona, and always passing through the old imperial centre of Madrid.

*Ubi lingua ibi Hispania.*

Since Nebrija, language and “management” has been the principle on which the essential universality of the Hispanic has been forged. By hewing the cultural law of the state to universal guidelines, Hispanism has naturalised the domination

of a culturally complex ecosystem by one successful subculture. To understand its religious resonance, it is useful to invoke Weber’s idea of the disenchantment of the world yielding the *depersonalisation* or bureaucratization of magical authority or *charisma*.

For a long time the constellation of knowledges organised around philology provided a cultural front to the secularisation of the state, but because culture displaced religion as the primary legitimating agency, religion lived on at the heart of culture’s functional or functionarial *raison d’être*. In the case of Spain, this bureaucratized religion is expressed, not coincidentally, in a language that for a long time was referred to as “Christian”, and which drew from the religious struggles the passion for unconditional hegemony that Weber calls the search for absolute ends.

## ELEPHANTS ALSO DIE

Hispanism is in crisis, as is its academic matrix, national philology. If its appearance marked the collapse of the empire and the culmination of the long transition from the religious legitimation of the state to its cultural legitimation,<sup>3</sup> Hispanism’s shift to a managerial discourse alerts us to another change of historic proportions.

Beyond Hispanism, beyond the belief in the superior value of dominant languages, there is a virtual academic space where the memory of humanity is affirmed through respect for all languages

■ <sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that in the texts of Menéndez Pidal, unlike those of Menéndez Pelayo, there are no manifestations of adherence to a religious creed, nor, for that matter, of the linguistic tolerance evidenced by the historian of Spanish heterodoxy.

In times of crisis, the possibilities of breaking with the principles that organise a discipline tend to multiply. At such times, the increasingly shaky consensus makes it easy to see that practices evolve historically. And it is in the perception of the contingency of practices that lie the roots of the crisis. Of course, it is always possible to change things so that the bottom line remains the same. What else is the “transatlantic” jargon that is currently in vogue but a recycled or merely rebaptised Hispanism? A true change in perspective implies a change of the phenomenon under study. In turn, the renewal of the object requires an updating of practical approaches and theoretical tools; in other words, a change in cognitive structures. Mere methodological revision is not an adequate response to a discipline’s crisis. It is also necessary to acknowledge the radical nature of the crisis and in our case, it is incumbent on us to face up to the possibility that Hispanism no longer has a future in the university.

The question “whither Hispanism?” cannot be answered in advance, but one thing is certain: the rhythm of the transformation cannot be the same everywhere, because institutional conditions and the systems of relevance vary enormously. While the motto in Spanish faculties seems to be “all quiet in the Alcázar”, within departments in the United States, inertia is synonymous with failure and leads quickly to institutional upheaval. In many of these departments, the old combination of practical teaching (language instruction) and reflexive teaching (of culture) has disappeared. In others, cultural instruction is unable to pull its own weight and is kept in tow by language instruction. This represents an inversion of the original relationship. Whereas language used to be studied as a way of gaining access to a literary culture of great historical and philological complexity, literature is now “studied” as a way to extend language learning. What this trend means for Hispanism’s aspirations to join the rank of world culture is not hard to forecast. And the solution to the quandary does not appear to lie in an intercontinental feedback system, whereby theory is injected into Spanish philology departments and positivism into North American cultural studies ones. For the near future, it is safe to bet that institutions will continue along divergent paths on either side of the Atlantic.

At present, the most pressing question highlighted by the crisis of Hispanism in the United States is the nagging ethical concern with the marginalisation of cultures and social groups, which emerge not only with the multicultural rage but also in the renewed interest in the historical memory and the appeals for intellectual reparations to all kinds of victimised communities, including those that have been excluded by the discipline. In Spain, the urgency comes from society itself, which insists on putting forward the stubborn reality of the plurality of nations existing under one political umbrella. Spanish philology, to the extent that it hopes to be Spanish—in the sense of bonding together the cultures that, for better or worse, coexist within the state—cannot remain the monopoly of an oversized particularism. And it is doubtful whether it can continue to be only or mainly “philology”. Forging a discipline that is sensitive to the plurality of cultures and languages in Spain and in the poorly-named Hispanic world will require familiarity with the complexity of the field and negotiating discrepancies, contrasting them with all available documents and scholarship without artificially reducing their scope in the name of a generality. This does not imply the appearance of specialists in all of the Iberian cultures and in all the indigenous cultures of Spanish-speaking America. It does imply an attitude of openness to these riches and a favorable approach to their empowerment,

correcting past injustices. It also implies, of course, making this approach concrete in our own practices and not in rhetorical expressions of good will. To pave the way for this new discipline, whatever it is called, there is still an unfinished task: making a reasoned examination of those who feel socially authorised to wield a stamp of approval regarding what is Hispanic —in other words, of Hispanists themselves.

Beyond Hispanism, beyond the belief in the superior value of dominant languages, there is a virtual academic space where the memory of humanity is affirmed through respect for all languages. A space where no language's status as "dominant" is disputed within its own social realm and all are recognised as bearers of knowledge no less necessary than that which is transmitted by languages with a more imperial calling. Today Maragall's persuasion can be validated and universality recognised as equilibrium in diversity. This sense of universality, far from what Dalí called "the immense cannibalisms of history" (55), raises prudent hopes for the preservation of the planet. To ensure this goal, though, a critical mass of people must become aware that survival, beyond a certain point, is not the privilege of predators, and that in the order of meaning, as indeed in nature, the complexity of situations guarantees life, while monoculture leads inexorably to barrenness. One need not look far to find examples. The history of Spanish culture offers, in this regard, a lesson worth studying ■

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