



Ramon Menendez Pidal: The Practice and Politics of Philology in Twentieth-Century Spain

Steven Hess

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This comprehensive study of one of the salient figures in modern Spanish intellectual history focuses on the content, method, and reception of the major scholarly works by Spain's foremost linguist and Medievalist, Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1869-1968). A succinct biography draws upon previously unavailable archival material, as well as personal interviews with family members. Menéndez Pidal is most often associated with the 11th century Castilian warrior lord, El Cid, the hero of an epic poem that he analyzed in a multivolume critical edition, before preparing a biography of nearly one thousand pages. The main lines of his research focus on the history of the Spanish language, the origins of Spanish epic and lyric poetry, Medieval chronicles, and the Hispanic ballad tradition, which he supplemented with essays on the Medieval and early Modern history of Spain. The austere scholarly production that spanned seven decades had a direct influence on several creative writers of his time, notably Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset. Many of Menéndez Pidal's essays reached the general public through widely read paperback editions. This book concludes with a survey of Menéndez Pidal's role as the founder of the modern Spanish School of philology, and his mentoring of three generations of scholars in Spain. Several linguists and literary critics are treated individually in biographical vignettes. Included is a discussion of his impact of his work on Hispanic studies abroad, which has ranged from enthusiastic acceptance to polemical refutation. As a scholar and public intellectual, Menéndez Pidal has exerted an unusually wide influence, one which still pervades Hispanic studies in the 21st century.

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