

JOANOT MARTORELL IN ENGLAND

In the course of investigating certain Anglo-Catalan contacts during the 15th century, I have had the good fortune to run across a couple of documents which fill a small gap in the early biography of Joan Martorell. These consist of two letters written on the same day, 14th February, 1439, by Henry VI of England and addressed to Enric, Infante of Aragon and Queen Maria of Catalonia-Aragon. They can be found in the Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton (Bishop of Bath and Wells), published in the Rolls Series, London 1872.

Martí de Riquer, in his masterly introduction to his edition of *Tirant lo Blanc*, has given us a detailed exposé of the events of Martorell's early life, which centre round the elaborate series of challenge and counter-challenge between the author of the chivaleresque novel and Joan de Montpalau. Sometime before March 1438, Martorell disappears to England, and from London, issues a «lletra de batalla a tota ultrança» to Joan de Montpalau, dated 22 March 1438, in which he claims that Henry VI of England had offered to act as judge. From subsequent data, it appears that the envoy carrying this letter to Catalonia was arrested by Maria of Catalonia-Aragon and his documents forwarded to Enric of Aragon and Montpalau. The reason for this action is not known. Subsequently Montpalau sends his own *procurador*, Perot Mercader, to London, who, on arriving, circulates rumours damaging to the reputation of Martorell. This provokes the latter to issue another challenge this time to Perot Mercader, dated 13 February 1439, at which Henry VI was also to act as judge.

How does all this end, asks Riquer, who found no other information of a later date. He supposes that the victor of the quarrel must have been Martorell, in default of his opponent Montpalau. Rubió i Balaguer,¹ however, produced a document from the Archives of the Crown of Aragon which shows that a settlement had been reached by 31 January 1445, by the

1. Ed. DÍAZ PLAJA, *Historia general de las literaturas hispánicas*, III, 860.

payment of an indemnity to the offended party, Martorell's sister. The document which I now publish as an appendix shows that the whole affair of the challenge was annulled a number of years before, by high authority and without reference to Martorell. In his letter to Enric of Aragon, Henry VI points out that he had been approached «iam dudum» by Martorell to undertake the role of arbiter in the proposed contest, and that he had given orders for letters on this subject to be issued. But a few days before writing the present communication, he received notification from Queen Maria and Enric through Perot Mercader that the quarrel had been amicably settled by the agents of the aforesaid parties even before he, the King, had taken a hand in the matter. He adds, rather testily it seems, that if this had been obvious from the beginning, it would not have been his wish to have proceeded as far as he had, and that Martorell was equally ignorant of these developments. Both are clearly taken aback at the manner in which a conclusion had been reached. It also appears from the letter that Enric had been somewhat disconcerted at the action of Martorell in going to England, for Henry points out that the latter had not acted improperly on any occasion and had only done what was becoming to a knight in such circumstances. There seems, therefore, to be some justification for Perot Mercader's assertion that Martorell had gone to England without Enric's permission, and it leaves one with the impression that he had caused difficulties for the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon.

Although by no means a student of the *Tirant*, I should like to take this opportunity of offering a very tentative suggestion as to how Martorell came to know of the legend of Guy of Warwick. If it is true, and both Riquer and Bohigas seem convinced of the fact, that Martorell is the youthful author of the Catalan *Guillem de Vâroic*, and this Catalan version is, according to the prologue, based on a book found in the library of Henry VI, how did Martorell gain entry to the court of England and become on intimate terms with the King? Is it not permissible to assume that there may have been an intermediary between the author and the English King? There is, in fact, at this time in the King's court, another Valencian whose forbears had been in the service of the royal family since the reign of Henry IV. He was Vicenç Climent, whose activities as a diplomat and a Papal Collector in England form the subject of an article shortly to be published by myself and A. Fernández Torregrosa.² The first concrete date we possess is that he was a student of theology in Oxford

2. *Vicens Climent, un valenciano en Inglaterra*, «Estudios de Historia Moderna», VI (1956-59), 113-168.

University in 1430. By 1433 he was a Master of Arts and his intention to begin a career in England is clear from the permission granted in October 1438 that Vicenç Climent born in the city of València is licensed to hold English benefices, provided he do homage to the King. He next appears in the service of Piero da Monte, Papal Collector to England and Scotland. Now this Italian was a close friend of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, who, as we know, was a devoted admirer of his ancestor Guy. He founded a chapel for two priests on the supposed site of his tomb and employed one of them to write a family history which linked his own generation with that of his mythical predecessor. In his own time, the Earl was an internationally known representative of the chivalric code, called by the Emperor Segismund «the father of courtesy» and he was also tutor to young Henry VI.

Now the intimacy of Climent and Henry VI is clear from 1440, in which year he acts as the King's procurator in Rome, successfully enough for Henry to request that the University of Oxford grant him a doctorate on his return in 1441. This is only the first of a series of missions undertaken by Climent on behalf of the King. His career also shows his interest in literary matters. He copied MSS in Italy for Piero da Monte. He was a friend of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the English equivalent of the Marqués de Santillana, of Bekynton, Bishop of Bath and Wells, to whom he sent the Latin poems of Pontanus. Uc d'Urries, translator of Valerius Maximus into Castilian, remarks that one of the fables he included in his version was told to him in England by Climent. This individual, therefore, has many claims to be considered as a link between Martorell and the English King. He had a knowledge of English and French and an acquaintance with the court. His superior was closely connected with the Earl of Warwick, and later on Climent himself had dealings with his successor, Richard Neville. He was a man of literary pretensions and was in the court while Martorell was in England. Finally he is also a Valencian. Is it possible that the two of them could have avoided meeting in the restricted aristocratic circles of London and Windsor?

APPENDIX

Henry VI of England to Enric, Infante of Aragon, dated 14 February 1439 at Easthampstead (a royal manor not far from Windsor).

Henricus, Dei gratia rex Angliae et Franciae, ac dominus Hiberniae : illustri ac magnifico principi Henrico, Infanti Arragoniae et Siciliae, magistroque ordinis ac militiae Sancti Jacobi de Spata, consanguineo et amico nostro carissimo ; salutes ex intimis et successus ad vota felices.

Illustris et magnifice Princeps, consanguinee et amice noster carissime : a mente nostra non excidit, qualiter jam dudum ad humiles quidem et exauditione dignas nobilis viri Johannis de Martorell, armigeri ex urbe Valencia oriundi, instantias et requestas, in et super duellari quodam inter jam dictum Johannem et nobilem virum Johannem de Monpalau ineundo certamine, multis revera justis et non faciliter abnuendis tunc moti de causis, iudicis in nos partes assumpsimus ; et nostras super hoc monitorias literas emitti, et praefato nobili viro Johanni de Monpalau notificari jussimus ; uti haec ipsa ex literarum hujusmodi serie et contextu intuenti cuique dilucide satis poterunt apparere. Post haec, paucis ab ante diebus, vestros per strenuum militem nuntiumque vestrum Petrum Mercader destinatos nobis apices laeto corde excepimus ; e quibus, una cum ceteris processibus ac instrumentis per eundem Petrum allatis et exhibitis, facile perpendimus super universis dissidiis inter dictas jam partes olim pendentibus, quae occasionem seu causam duello ejusmodi dare possent, etiam et super ipsomet duello, fuisse et esse in magnificentiam vestram, prius diu quam in messem hanc misimus falcem nostram, per procuratores dictarum partium concorditer compromissum ; eandemque magnificentiam vestram in vim compromissi hujusmodi, laudum quoddam seu arbitrium adidisse. De quibus haud dubie, si nobis ab initio liquide constitisset, non eo quo jam progressi sumus animo nobis fuisset et facile perrexisset. Sed neque is ipse J. Martorell, audacter affirmare possumus, ad impetrandum haec quae sic gessimus operam dedisset, si eo tunc dictorum compromissi et laudi, prout revera non erat, sciolus extitisset. Ut autem gesta haec probitatis vestrae in notitiam usque nostram deducta fuere, quamquam rationes non paucae nec parvi fortasse vigoris adversus laudum seu arbitrium praefatum, et de nullitate ipsius, coram consularibus viris nostris objectae fuerint, sicuti praedictus miles vester palam novit ; nos nihilominus id quod in manibus aliquando vestris positum esse, et in iisdem pendere visum sit, nullo ad nos pacto advocare volentes ; verum honori tanti principis, cujus splendorem carpendimus, atque non secus quam nostrum signanter servare ac posse tenuis tueri ardentem desideramus ; cum in omnibus tum in iis maxime, quae vel in serenissimi et potentissimi principis regis Arragonum, etc... fratris nostri carissimi, seu serenissimae reginae, aut vestrae magnanimitatem, honorem, seu

complacentiam cedere, vel ipsius incliti regni Arragoniae aut suppositorum ejusdem quietudinem seu pacificationem quaqua versum concernere queant; ultro et cupide, uti condecet, deferentes, ab ulteriori deinceps processu circa dictum duellare negotium, tam ob contemplationem literarum serenissimae sororis et consanguineae nostrae carissimae, quam vestrarum, interim duximus abstinendum; quoad de omni eo quod in ea parte juste per vos actitandum sit fuerimus clarissime informati. Postremo, clementissime ac inclitissime princeps, consanguineae et amice noster carissime, quod et vestrae sublimitati et cuius probò principi a natura inesse debet, quod vestri claritatem nominis famaeque splendorem ad astra feret, et quo nil magis Deo placere queat, nec quicquam vestram magnificentiam deceat, hoc jam desiderantur admodum petimus, hoc precamur; si quid displicentiae fortassis, quod non speramus, in praefatum nobilem et dilectum nobis virum Johannem de Martorell, cum nil demeruerit, hisce de causis animo conceperitis, id omne perpetuo positum et sepultum iri; sicque in omne post hoc saeculum abolitum fore, ut nulla impressionis signacula derelinquat: nil enim egisse nunc eum palam est nisi ad quod sanguinis necessitudine coactus et facti atrocitate provocatus est. Ast civilis urbanitas ignoscendum censuit, si provocatus petierit se ulcisci. Ipsum igitur, nostri contemplatione, velit vestra clementia suscipere recommissum: quam diu Rex Summus praeservit in terris, et tandem cum beatis coronet in coelis. Datum sub signeto nostro, in manerio nostro de Esthamstede, mensis Februarii die 14^a, anno a nativitate Domini secundum cursum et computationem ecclesiae Anglicanae 1438 [i. e. 1439], et regnorum nostrorum 17.^o

(Letter CXLIV from *The Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton* (London 1872), I, 198.)

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