

LITERATURE

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BIRTH OF SPANISH POETRY AND LITERATURE

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Abstract

The article reflects the birth of Spanish poetry and prose and their stages of development. The article is also about the works of the prominent representatives for the Spanish poetry and prose and Arab-Andalucian influence on the Spanish literature. The Spanish people created a rich and original literature during their centuries-old history. Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderon, etc. contributed enormously not only to the Spanish literature and also to the world literature. The Spanish literature was formed and developed under the harsh conditions, scrupulous control of Catholic Church and oppression of monarch. The Spanish literature was founded and developed with awakening of the Spanish language in the 12th century. This development comprises 4 stages:

1. Period of birth: The period when the writers tried in the language that was not fully developed;
2. Period of flourishing: The period when Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderon and Alarcon emerged in the literature;
3. Period of stagnation and imitation: The period that lasted 150 years and was not marked with noteworthy accomplishments;
4. Period of Renaissance: The new development age of Spanish literature and the second period of flourishing.

Keywords: Spanish Literature, poetry, prose, Castilian lyrics

In medieval Spain, the role of jugglers is undeniable in preserving of folk poetry and passing it from generation to generation. They wandered through the country entertaining the people with their songs and dances and performed pantomime and acrobatics. They predominantly sang heroic chants composed by them accompanied by harp. Due to this reason, the jugglers are

Science and Society #3 2016 V1

considered as the first representatives of the Spanish poetry [4]. The jugglers used to take the epic materials from their predecessors and adapted them to the requirements of their age. The jugglers who were writing and performing their works in a simple manner considered the requirements of their audience carefully and made their own contribution to the existing poems.

The jugglers were basically writing epic poems and reflecting stories that took place in Castalia engraved in the memories of the people. It is not a coincidence that the names of the jugglers who were the authors and performers of these poems is unknown in the history as they considered themselves being a part of the nation and expresser of their needs. The first poem written in the Spanish language that reached our age is "The Song of my Cid" (El cantar de Mio Sid). The hero of the poem is Rodrigo Dias who was a real person and fought against the Arabs. After defeating some Arabs in the battle, he earned the name "Cid" that meant "the Lord" in Arabic. As mentioned above, the author of the epic combined all traits in Cid that he wanted to see in the hero of the nation hereby creating an image of an ideal hero.

The second poem reached our age is "Capture of Rodrigo and Zamora" that were devoted to Cid and his heroisms. It should be noted that not only the feudals and the kings also in the medieval society did not belong to the educated layer of the society, they were illiterate. The educated people of those times were clergy who knew religious studies as well as Latin perfectly. Moreover, as the time passed, knowledge and education found its way into the top layers of society which made a great impact on emergency of the new thought leaders and literary men in the culture and literature. Until this period, the medieval society had to benefit from the moral-religious poetry (master de clerecia) only. These poems written in Latin initially started to be written in Spanish as the time passed. This genre of poetry being different from the poetry of jugglers contradicted it. The poetry of clergy is different from the poetry of jugglers with its plot. While the jugglers benefitted from the folk culture and traditions, the clergy was referring to the traditions of the literature and using antique and biblical motives, religious stories as a plot. Though they considered their poetry to be more supreme and perfect than that of jugglers, it was monotonous because of lack of dynamics that was part of jugglers' poetry. The first representative of the moral-religious literature (master de clericia) was the priest Gonzalo de Berceo. He was born in Rioja village and got his education in the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla that was the center of the medieval culture. He lived in this monastery from his birth until his death and served there as a priest.

Gonzalo de Berceo is the founder of the Spanish religious poetry. He named his poems as "prosa, decir, dictado". His most famous poem was "Miracles of our Lady" (Milagros de Nuestra Señora). His most noteworthy feature that distinguished him from other representatives of *Master de clericia* was simplicity of his poems. He wrote in Castilian that was close to the hearts

of the simple people unlike the other religious poets of his age who wrote mainly in Latin.

One of the samples of the religious poetry that reached our age "Book of Apollonia". The main importance of this book is that it was written in the Spanish language and in new genre, the novel genre. Another sample of the religious poetry is "Book of Alexander" (El libro de Alexandro) written by an unknown author. [4] The book was devoted to the life of Alexander the Great and consists of more than 10 000 poems.

One cannot but mention Castilian lyrics while speaking about the Spanish literature. Julian Ribera, the academic Castilian lyrics like Spanish epics were formed under the influence by Arab-Andalucian poetry. One of the main genres of the Arabic poetry is "muwashshah" founded by poet Muqaddam ib Mifafu. The last refrain of the muwashshah called *kharja* conveys the main idea.

Another genre of Arab poetry is the song called *villancico* which is the poetic and musical form of the Castilian lyrics comprising all aspects of folk life in medieval Spain. These genres are obvious manifestation of development of Castilian-Spanish poetry in close interconnection with Arab-Andalucian literature.

As in other European countries, development of prose began later than poetry in Spain. The first prose work in the Spanish language dates back to the beginning of the 13th century which is associated with the Castilian king Alfonso X.

King Alfonso X was ascended the throne after the death of his father King Fernando II and ruled Castilia from 1251 until 1284. Though he wanted to enter Africa and put an end to the Muslim rule, invade Portugal and announce himself as the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire after being a Holy Roman Emperor after succeeding to the throne, he was not successful in his attempts. Failing in the political life, Alfonso had plenty of accomplishments in the cultural sphere and was called by his contemporaries Alfonso the Wise (Alfonso el Sabio). After taking over the power, he announced the Castilian language as the state language. He ordered to translate all the laws and legislations into the Castilian language. Alfonso X preferred Castilian dialect over other prevailing dialects in the country and had a great influence in turning the Castilian dialect into the foundation of the Spanish language. [4]

Bible was translated into the Castilian language during his reign. Giving great importance to the knowledge and education Alfonso invited Arab and Jewish scholars into his court and patronized them until the end of his life. He opened new faculties in the University of Salamanca and raised the university with his constant support to the level of University Paris and University of Bologna [3]. Having a deep interest in logics, law and astronomy, 50 Arab, Jewish and Christian scholars prepared "Alfonsine tables" based on the observations of Arab scholars which was in turn used in Europe during 200

years. He also commissioned compilation of collection of laws called "Seven parts" (Las Siete Partidas) which gained great importance. The most famous lawyers of his time took part in its compilation. It is not a coincidence to mention "Seven parts", as it is considered to be a sample of Castilian literature which is driven from its compilation as a literary form in its form and structure. According to Alfonso, the cruel and merciless ruler is not the one to take over the power forcefully, but the ruler who oppresses his subjects and the reign of such a ruler should be considered as illegitimate.

Apart from the aforementioned, Alfonso is also an author of chronicles, *the Chronic general*, completed in 1264 [1]. Since the significant part of the work is devoted to the Spanish poems, it plays an important role in the Spanish literature. It should be noted that another important work written by Alfonso was "Chants" (*Cantigas*). The poem is divided into two sections: secular and religious one. In the secular section, satirical motives are reflected while the religious section is dedicated to Saint Mary.

The first school of translation in Spain is also linked to the reign of Alfonso. He was a key figure in commissioning the translation of the works written in Latin into the Castilian language that were spread throughout Europe.

The second prominent representative of the Spanish literature is Alfonso's nephew, Juan Manuel. He was the most profound writer of his age, as well as politician, commander and the richest feudal of Castilia. Although he was not as intellectual as Alfonso, he was more talented writer than his. He is the real founder of the Spanish prose, especially of the Spanish short stories. His most famous work is "Count Lucanor". As an influential politician of his time, he gives a great importance to moral in his works, despite being in constant confrontation against the legitimate king. [4]

One of the well-known poets of Medieval Spain is Juan Ruiz. The simplicity and lucidity of his works play an important role in the Spanish literature.

One of the most famous works of the Spanish literature of this time is the satirical and didactic work of "Palace Verse" or "Rhymes of the Court" (*Libro Rimado de Palacio*) written by Pedro Lopez de Ayala.

In general, though the Spanish literature contributed famous lyrical poets to the world literature, it has significant achievements drama and novel genres which in their turn influenced English, French and German novelists.

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