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SPANISH LITERATURE – Postclassical Period

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EPIC AND NARRATIVE POETRY

FECUNDITY, PERIODS OF COMPOSITION, AND SUBJECT MATTER OF THE EPIC

A. Fecundity

Whether Spanish literature began with epic or lyric poetry is a moot question. The *jarchas* of the eleventh century are the earliest examples of Spanish literature yet discovered. The *Cantar de Mio Cid*, an epic poem, dates from the middle of the twelfth century, but its relatively advanced style and language imply that it echoes earlier epics. Furthermore, the *jarchas* are but poetic fragments attached to Hebrew and Arabic poems, while the *Cantar de Mio Cid* is a complete literary work. In other nascent European literatures, epic songs preceded lyric poetry. The analogy may be meaningful.

The *Cantar de Mio Cid* is Spain's oldest preserved complete literary work. Portions of other epics have been found, such as the *Roncesvalles* fragment, one hundred lines dealing with the Charlemagne's defeat in the Pyrenees, and the *Rodrigo*, which recounts youthful exploits of the Cid.

It was natural that Spain's turbulent history, with nearly eight centuries of intermittent warfare against the Moors, should produce an abundant heroic literature. Despite the paucity of preserved epic poems, evidence of a rich epic literature is found in early histories. Lost poems have been reconstructed from allusions to them by writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, from the later recasting's of them in erudite verse forms, and from the ballads, detached fragments of epic poems.

B. Periods of Composition

Menendez Pidal divides the period of the composition of Spanish epic poetry as follows: from the beginnings up to 1140, the date of the *Cantar de Mio Cid*; from 1140 to the middle of the thirteenth century; and the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, when primitive epic poetry degenerated, broke into fragments, was recast by learned poets, and finally ceased to be cultivated.

C. Subject Matter

Epic poems were composed about many heroes in addition to the Cid, including Bernardo del Carpio, the only fictitious warrior in the Spanish epic; Rodrigo, *el ultimo godo*, who supposedly lost Spain to the Moors; Los Infantes de Lara, seven brothers treacherously betrayed by their uncle; Fernan Gonzalez, who gained the independence of Castile from Leon; and Rey don Sancho II, murdered by the infamous Bellido Dolfos. *El Infante don Garcia* tells of the count of Castile who was murdered en route to his wedding; *La condesa traidora y el conde Sancho Garcia* is the tale of a wife's infidelity; and *Gesta del abad Juan de Monte mayor* tells the story of a miraculous victory over the Moors.

ORIGIN

A. The Theory of French Influence

Gaston Paris holds that Spanish epic poetry descended from French poems, which, he contends, were composed earlier and were greater in number. Arguments supporting Paris' theory are based on the fact that *cantare de gesta* seems to have been derived from *chanson de gesta*; similarities of meter and versification; the presence of French troubadours and many other Frenchmen in Spain in the eleventh century, called there to aid in the Reconquest; and the influence of the Benedictine order of Cluny, which organized pilgrimages to Compostela and sent soldiers to Spain. In later periods French influence was no doubt vigorous, but scarcity of proof precludes the certainty of the French theory of origin or of any other.

B. The Theory of Germanic Imitation

Menendez Pidal maintains that the Spanish epic originated in imitation of the heroic songs of the Goths, a Germanic tribe that invaded Spain in the early fifth century. He also denies that the French epic was earlier and richer in material, shows why Spain's epic poetry was destroyed, and proves the existence of an abundant Spanish epic literature. He reconstructed the poem *Los siete infantes de Lara* from early histories and propounded the theory of irregular versification to disprove the similarity of French and Spanish epic meter. The appearance of Gothic law, names, and customs in Spanish poems adds strength to the Germanic theory of origin.

C. The Theory of Monasterial Origin

Joseph Bedier maintains that French and Spanish epic poetry was written by monks in religious establishments along pilgrimage routes to entertain pilgrims. This provided the monks with a source of income, for travelers were naturally attracted to institutions offering some type of entertainment. If true, this theory suggests that the dominant influence on epic poetry was clerical. Priestly poets, like Nerceo, only a step away from the popular *juglares*, injected epic clichés into their learned poetry.

D. The Theory of Andalusian Origin

Julian Ribera postulated the existence of an Andalusian epic, references to which were found in Arabic histories. The close relationship between the Oriental peoples and the Roman Empire, the intimate association between Spaniards and Moors, and Arabic allusions in the Spanish epic songs led Ribera to assume that an early Arabic poetry of heroic nature existed and influenced the origin of the Spanish poetry. Convincing proof, however, is lacking, and the case for an Arabic origin remains largely hypothetical.

E. Conclusions

Menendez Pidal's arguments for Germanic origin are the most widely accepted and are rarely challenged. Modern criticism has adopted a moderate attitude, acknowledging that no theory should be excluded *in toto*. Thus, the Spanish epic could have originated in imitation of the Goths and fallen under Arabic influence shortly thereafter. Later, it could have assimilated many elements from the French; and the monks, the only copyists of the time, could have influenced these poems slightly.

METER AND VERSIFICATION

Spanish epic poetry shows a chaotic irregularity of meter and contains verses of from ten to twenty syllables. Menendez Pidal asserts that the Spanish epic meter was a sixteen-syllable line of two hemistich's. This theory is widely credited and is supported by the fact that the meter of the ballads detached fragments of epic poems, is the same.

RECONSTRUCTION OF LOST EPICS

Early Spanish historians accepted epic poems as bona fide historical sources and sometimes incorporated all or parts of them in their histories, occasionally not mothering to change the poetry to prose. From these

sources complete epic poems have been reconstructed, the best known of which is Menendez Pidal's *Los siete infantes de Lara*. The wealth of epic material in the histories like *La primera cronica general* and *La cronica de 1344* is weighty evidence of a rich Spanish epic poetry.

HISTORICITY AND REALISM

Of all primitive epic poetry, the Spanish is the most realistic. Except for Bernardo del Carpio, Spanish epic heroes were living human beings, an assertion proved by historical documentation, and the tales of their adventures are based largely on historical fact. Geography, place-names, laws, and customs have been verified. The supernatural, marvelous, and fantastic are almost totally absent, and the poetry is objective, sober, and terse. The realism and historicity of the Spanish epic are found nowhere else in primitive heroic poetry.

THE HEROIC TRADITION IN SPANISH LITERATURE

The virility, sobriety, generosity, dignity, honor, adventure, romance, nobility, hospitality, independence, faith, and all the other qualities that together represent the genuine Spanish spirit are found in Spain's epic poetry in pure form. Spaniards are fascinated by the heroic legends of their past, and writers in all ages have repeatedly turned to the glorious stories for inspiration and subject matter. This process of return is most clearly visible however, in the Golden Age and the Romantic period.

THE CANTAR DE MIO CID

A. Date of Composition

Menendez Pidal has set the date of the composition of the *Cantar de Mio Cid* in 1140. The Cid died in 1099. The original author of the poem is unknown. The only remaining manuscript copied in 1307 by Per Abbat (Pedro Abad) from a much earlier original. The poem was first published in 1779 by Tomas Antonio Sanchez.

B. Construction

The preserved portion of the poem contains 3,735 lines of verse. Approximately fifty lines lost at the beginning have been reconstructed from the *Cronica de veinte reyes*. The poem has been into three natural divisions by modern scholars: *Cantar del destierro*, *Cantar de las bodas*, and *Cantar de Corpes*.

C. Plot

The poem traces the story of the Cid's life from the moment of his exile from Castille to his return to grace at the king's court. The principal episodes are the following: the exile; the Cid's campaigns against the Moors; the conquest of Valencia, which marks the peak of the Cid's power and fame; the marriage of the Cid's daughters to the Infantes de Carrion; the beating of the Cid's daughters, who are left to die in the Robledo de Corpes; and the revenge of the Cid and the punishment of his enemies.

D. Artistic Qualities

Stylistically the poem is dry and sober, yet it has a stark laconic quality that describes little but suggests much. The long descriptions of battle are exciting, but there are also naivetes and understatements. Patches of dialogue add genuine dramatic qualities. The noble, serious poetry, as well as the sobriety, virile energy, realism, accurate detail, and terseness, makes the poem classic in style, restrained and dignified.

A social consciousness pervades the poem. The Cid, a nobleman but not of royal connection, conquered first the adversities of circumstance and then his enemies, the higher nobility. He triumphed by his own ability and courage and emerged a hero, while the hereditary nobleman was made to appear

cowardly and ridiculous. An antifeudal, antiaristocratic spirit emanates from the poem, in keeping with the Spaniard's individualism and democracy, but national loyalties and love of king remain strong.

The poem is objective and realistic without the exaggerations of the French and German epics. The geography and the Cid's trips across Spain have been verified. A couple of incidents have a legendary ring to them, but the note of authenticity, the historical accuracy, and the directness of style give the poem a realistic air found in no other primitive epic poetry.

E. The Life Character and Personality of the Cid

The Cid Rodrigo Dia de Vivar, was a man of flesh and blood, endowed with great strength of character and all the virtues. He was born around 1043 in Vivar, near Burgos. He was descended from Lain Calvo, one of Castile's first judges after it gained its independence and from noble stock on his mother's side.

Rodrigo served King Sancho of Castile, who was treacherously murdered while attempting to conquer the city of Zamora, the stronghold of his sister, Urraca. Alfonso, Sancho's brother and king of Leon, was then declared king of Castile but with CID and others recognized him only after forcing him to swear three times that he had not conspired in Sancho's death a humiliating experience for Alfonso. A lingering desire for revenge may have influenced Alfonso's decision to exile Rodrigo.

After being exiled, Rodrigo served the king of Zaragoza. He fought against both Moors and Christians, and his prowess as a soldier and leader earned him the title of the Cid and Arabic word meaning "lord." No instance has been recorded of his failure in battle, and in the end, he established himself as a virtual king after conquering the city of Valencia, where he died in 1099.

The Cid Campeador has become the national hero of Spain. According to the *Cantar de Mio Cid* and the ballads, he was full bearded-a ark of virility and dignity-vigorous, brave, and a natural leader. Yet he was tender and wept unashamedly when moved. He was a faithful and loving husband and a devoted father. He was an ideal vassal and was always loyal to his king despite the latter's hostility. He continually sought to reconcile himself with Alfonso, sending him valuable booty and acceding to his wish that the Infantes de Carrion marry his daughters, a union the Cid thought unwise. He never sought revenge on the unjust king, though he had the power to conquer him.

The Cid of literature believed in justice fairness, and equality and always shared his booty with his men. He had an abiding religious faith and consistently commended himself to God before a battle and took time to thank Him after a victory. He was generous to his captives but unrelenting in battle.

In short, the mature Cid of the poem embodies the spirit of Castile and possesses those admirable and enduring qualities that have been Spain's in her greatest moments.

The *Cronica de 1344*, the *Rodrigo*, and some ballads portray the man as a rash, impudent, insolent, petulant young nobleman quite different from the Cid of the *Cantar*. In a duel, he kills the father of dona Jimena, who then demands his hand in marriage as compensation. This episode, together with the meeting with a leper and a few other youthful exploits, are called the *mocedades*. The historical Cid is the mature, grave, and noble national hero of Spain.

The story of the Cid inspired later literary works, among them Guillen de *Castro's Las mocedades del Cid*, Jose Zorilla's *Laleyenda del Cid*, Eduardo Marquina's *Las hijas del Cid*, and Corneille's *Le Cid*. The foreigners Southey Hugo, Herder, and Lecomte de Lisle also borrowed from the theme.

THE DEGENERATION OF THE EPIC

The primitive epic, written in an uncultured, unrefined age, reflected the attitudes and sentiments of the time. In the late Middle Ages primitive art forms fell into disfavor. Popular minstrels were supplanted by erudite poets, and epic poetry passed out of the realm of true folk art and into that of the artificial and refined. Unable to identify with the poetry of the preceding age the learned poets lost their spontaneity and folk flavor.

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries witnessed the degeneration and disappearance of true popular epic poetry. The old poems passed into the histories, were rewritten in learned form, and broke down into ballads.

MEDIEVAL NARRATIVE POETRY

Nonepic poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was not clearly narrative or lyric but a combination of the two. Poets generally used Galician for their lyrical efforts; but as themes came in from outside national tradition as moral intent grew, and as Castilian increased in prestige. Lyric patches in that tongue began to appear in narrative poetry.

Angel Valbuena classified this narrative-lyric poetry into poetry in short verses of seven to nine syllables and long verse poetry written chiefly in the fourteen-syllable line of the *cuaderna via*. Themes included lives of saints, Biblical tales lives of heroes and borrowed foreign themes. The authors thought of themselves as erudite poets who counted syllables, were conscious of their didactic responsibilities, and prided themselves on their artistry characteristics that continued throughout the Middle Ages. Yet they were but a step away from the folk minstrels whose popular spirit they imbibed, directing their art to the masses.

A. Short Verse Narrative-Lyric Poetry

Religious themes dominated this type of poetry and the debate or dispute was a popular device. Closely akin to the drama, the debate lent itself to satire and moralizing. The dominant foreign influence was French, and Gallicisms appear in the language. At a time when Galician was used for lyric expression these poems, along with those of Gonzalo de Berceo, represent the first stirrings of lyrical expression, these poems among with those of Gonzales de Berceo represent the first stirrings of lyrical expressions in Castilian. Important poems, all from the thirteenth century include the following:

1. *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient* deals with the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and the slaughter of the Innocents. It is anonymous.
2. *Vida de Santa Maria Egipcíaca*, author unknown, narrates in 1,4512 lines the life of one of history's most interesting saints.
3. *Disputa del alma y cuerpo* anonymous, is a thirty-seven-line fragment of a debate between the body and the soul of a deceased man.
4. *Denuestos del agua y el vino* is an anonymous poem in which water and wine debate their virtues. Joined to it is the first preserved lyric poem in Castilian. *Razon de amor*. Though probably composed separately the two poems are always mentioned together and are not entirely incompatible.
5. *Elena y Maria* anonymous is a forty-line fragment of a poem in which two girls debate the qualities of their lovers.

B. Narrative-Lyric Poetry in *Cuaderna Via*

Learned poets and clerics created a verse form called *mester de clerecia* based upon strict syllable count and arranged in quatrains of fourteen-syllable monorhymed verses. Used throughout the Middle Ages this fixed form was known as *cuaderna via*, a term first used in the *Libro de Aleixandre*.

The first Spanish poet whose name is known, Gonzalo de Berceo (1195? -1265) wrote narrative poems in *cuaderna via*, recounting principally the lives of saints and miracles of the Virgin. He is appreciated for the simple grace, humor, ingenuousness candor, naivete, sincerity, and occasional lyrical and dramatic qualities of his verse. The following are significant examples of medieval narrative poetry in *cuaderna via*: *Vida de Santo Domingo*, by Berceo; *Vida de Santa Oria* by Berceo; *Libro de Apolonio*, anonymous; *Poema de Fernan Gonzalez*, anonymous; *Libro de Aleixandre*, anonymous; and *Poema de Yusuf* anonymous.

C. Satiric ad Moral Poetry

Moralizing was incidental in some medieval poems but in others it was intentional as poets exalted some virtue or higher value conveyed some moral truth or attacked some abuse or vice.

Rabbi Sem Tob (1290? – 1369) was the first Jew to write in Spanish whose name has been recorded and also the first to write gnomic literature in Spanish. In his *Proverbios morales* he drew his maxims from the Bible, the Talmud, Oriental and Jewish sources and the wisdom of the ages. He wrote his 686 quatrains with great concision and often compressed a great moral lesson in a few lines. He influenced later poets, including the Marques de Santillana and Gomez Manrique.

The *Danza de la muerte* is the fifteenth-century Spanish treatment of a favorite medieval theme and is reputed to be the best extant specimen of its type. Death summons to his court all those who must pay him tribute, and thirty-three victims pass before him, ranging from an emperor and a pope down to representatives of the lowest classes. Each victim defends himself, but in the end the inevitable sentence is pronounced. All must die. *Coplas*, political satires appeared for the first time in the fifteenth century. The first was *Coplas de ¡Ay, panadera!* an anonymous poem that satirized cowardly nobles in the battle of Olmedo. In the vitriolic *Coplas del Provincial* the nobility is pummeled with the grossest invectives, and ladies and lords, represented as nuns and monks, have their names recited as they parade before the Superior (Provincial) of a convent to hear accusations against the and to be assigned penances. In *Coplas de Mingo Revulgo* a shepherd named Mingo complains that the head shepherd (Enrique IV) has deserted his responsibilities that the four dogs, symbolizing Justice, Fortitude Prudence and Temperance have abandoned the flock, and that the wolves (the nobility) are devouring the poor sheep (the people). Gil Arribato listens to Mingo, who symbolizes the Spanish people, and reminds him that despite his lament he is not without guilt and that part of his misery is caused by his own sins. These *Coplas* far surpass the *Provincial*. While not insolent they shoot pointed barbs of satire at the leading personalities of the day. The fact that all the *Coplas* are anonymous points up the danger of criticizing authority.

LYRIC POETRY

THE MIDDLE AGES

A. Origin

Considerable evidence indicates a flourishing primitive Castilian lyric, but very few examples of such poetry have been preserved. Contrariwise, much early lyric poetry in the Galician language has been preserved, and Galician was, indeed, the preferred language for lyric expression during the Middle Ages even for Castilian poets. Consequently, Galician poetry dominated the peninsula from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. It was not until the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century that the Castilians began to use their own language to compose lyric poetry. The *Cancionero de Baena* (1445) represents the work of the first genuine Castilian school of lyric poets. Therefore, Spanish replaced Galician as the preferred language for lyric expression.

It is sometimes difficult to classify medieval poetry as a narrative, epic, or lyric, for in some poems elements of each can be found. Rigid categorization is therefore frequently unsatisfactory. The general types of medieval poetry are Galician-Portuguese, narrative-lyric, primitive Castilian, Spanish-Arabic, and epic.

B. Galician-Portuguese Lyric Poetry

The courtly love poetry of France, brought to Spain by French troubadours, strongly influenced those writing in the Galician-Portuguese tongue. (Galician and Portuguese were the same in the Middle Ages.). Though it has been traditional to regard Provence in southern France as the place of origin of most of the lyric poetry of Europe, new light has been thrown on a possibly more distant origin through studies of Spanish-Arabic poetry. Nevertheless, if the Provençal poets did not invent this style of poetry, they at least refined it and disseminated it over Europe.

Provençal poetry was erudite, artificial, and highly refined. It showed a reversal of erotic values: the lover formerly adoring his lady now felt unworthy of her. The object of the lover's attention was a married woman, and the consummation of his love was viewed as altogether impossible, unsought, and undesirable. This agonizing situation led to a poetry of lament, melancholy, and complaint. It was brilliant and technically excellent, but also frequently tedious. The poet's sadness and frustration were not taken seriously, however, but were rather devices for exhibiting verbal virtuosity and technical skill. Love became a game, a kind of religion that was intended to have a chastening uplifting, civilizing effect. Provençal lyric ignored the sensual love one finds later in the Middle Ages in works of writers like Juan Ruiz.

As early as the twelfth century, Galician, Portuguese, and Catalan poets began to imitate the Provençal courtly lyric. In Galicia, however, where life was more primitive, it did not entirely supplant the native folk poetry. As a result, Galician poetry, strengthened by Provençal techniques and skills developed along two lines: the Provençal courtly love poetry and the native peasant poetry, represented by the *cassante* and the *danza prima*.

The Galicians preserved their poetry by means of *cancioneiros*. The principal ones are *Cancioneiro da Vaticana*, *Cancioneiro de Ajuda*, and *Cancioneiro Coloffi-Brancuti*. The principal types of poems written in the Galician tongue were *cantigas de escarnio*, satiric songs, frequently bawdy and obscene; *cantigas de amor*, amorous laments; and *cantigas de amigo*, love songs.

C. Primitive Castilian Lyric Poetry

The Castilian-speaking people composed lyric poems in the age when Galician poetry dominated the peninsula, but unfortunately, they did not collect and save the poems. Most have perished, as has almost all their epic poetry. Some early poems, such as the *serranillas*, the May songs, the watchman's songs, shepherd's songs, and songs for important occasions like Christmas, have been rescued from oblivion by later writers, such as Berceo, Juan Ruiz, the Marques de Santillana, and the playwrights of the Golden Age. The influence of these early lyrical efforts may also be found in the *coplas*, *villancicos*, and other folk poems that are composed by Spanish-speaking people today.

D. The *Jarchas*

When S.M. Stern was studying Hebrew *muwassahas* in a synagogue in Egypt, he found that a number of them ended with a few verses that were not in Hebrew but in *mozarabe*, a Romance dialect spoken in southern Spain as early as the tenth century and probably much earlier. Eventually Stern found some twenty of these charming little poems called *jarchas* (*jarchyas*, *kharjas*) and soon afterward discovered an Arabic *Muwassaha* with its *jarchas*. Following Stern's lead, Emilio Garcia Gomez discovered a similar number of *jarchas* attached to Arabic *muwassahas*. Later on, other students of primitive peninsular poetry increased the number, until today we have more than sixty of these poetic jewels. A number of other scholars have studied and are still studying the *jarchas*, which are fraught with problems owing to the fact, in part at least, that they are written in Hebrew and Arabic characters, without vowel signs, and the scribes often omitted diacritical marks that identified consonants. Some *jarchas* were written completely in Arabic or in Mozarabic, while in others Arabic words are mixed in with the Mozarabic or vice versa, making transcription even more difficult. Another problem is that the original copyists of these refrains were transcribing into Hebrew and Arabic characters a language that they did not know, and thus they were prone to make errors. Since Stern's original discovery, a number of scholars have worked at

correct readings of many *jarchas*, and as time goes by, they are getting closer to a satisfactory transcription of many of them into modern Spanish.

The discovery of this poetry created great excitement in the literary world and has been compared in importance with the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, or the invention of the telescope by Galileo. These may seem like exaggerations to all but philologists and students of the primitive Castilian lyric and the origins of European lyric poetry; but Menendez Pidal seems to put it into context when he states that the discovery of the *jarchas* is doubtlessly one of the most important in the twentieth century, since they antedate by a century or more any examples of Spanish literature previously found and precede the Provençal courtly lyric by many years, making them the oldest lyric texts of Europe. Damaso Alonso concurs that it is now known that the Spanish *jarchas* precede all other European poetic texts by a century. All this destroys the theory that Spanish lyric poetry was late in appearing and lagged behind epic poetry. Linda Fish Compton holds that "although the *jarchas* are the oldest known secular lyrics in any Romance language and occupy a significant position within the mainstream of Western lyrical poetry, the exact relationship of these lyrics to the poetry of Europe and the Middle East has not been clearly determined."

The *muwassaha* (*muwashshah*), a very popular and widely used verse form, was invented in the tenth century. It is not yet clear who created this poetic form, but credit is usually given to Muqaddam de Cabra, a Mozarabic poet living in southern Spain, though none of his poems have been preserved. It was to the *muwassaha* that the *jarchas* were appended. The earliest *muwassahas* and *jarchas* yet discovered date back to the eleventh century. Another verse form of Hebrew and Arabic origin is the *zejel*, used by Spanish poets through the centuries. Evidence points to the popular origin of the *muwassaha*, and it is theorized that the *jarcha* (the word means "exit") is the quintessential expression of the sentiment of the main body of the poem and was taken from the primitive Spanish popular poetry, forming the metrical and thematic basis upon which the *muwassaha* was constructed. In other words, the poet began with *jarcha* as a theme and built his *muwassaha* upon it, attaching the original *jarchas* as the final verses. Critics do not unanimously support this theory, however, and some feel that the *jarchas* (also called *markaz*) was a thematic appendage to a *muwassaha*.

The *jarchas* usually run from two to four lines (thirty-two syllables) of verse and are almost without exception amorous in nature, spoken by a young girl who candidly and often quite ardently laments the absence of her lover while her mother or sisters listen or advise. These devices were common to the *cantigas de amigo* of the Galician-Portuguese poetry. Speaking of her intense feelings of love, the girl occasionally mentions the admirable attributes of her lover. In short, the *jarcha* with its accompanying *muwassaha* may have marked the beginnings of European lyric poetry. The Arabs had cultivated this genre centuries before invading Spain, and professional poets were retained at court by Arabic kings. The concept of platonic love as found in Provençal poetry was known to the Arabs, and as Brennan points out, the notion of love as obedience and suffering is of Arabic origin. As evidence gathers, we may eventually learn that European lyric poetry originated in Moslem Spain and not in Provence after all. Even now the evidence for such a conclusion is strong.

The Spanish Arabs also collected their poems into books, the best known of which is that of the *Cordovan poet Abencuzman* (Aben Guzman), whose poetry recounts his own experiences and is audacious in nature, anticipating the amorous adventures of Juan Ruiz and resembling much of the goliardic poetry of the European Middle Ages.

Alfonso *el Sabio* used the *zejel*, as did Juan Ruiz, and examples of it are found in the Galician-Portuguese collections, the *Cancionero de Baena*, other fifteenth-century Spanish collections, and even in works as late as those of Lope de Vega. It is a verse type that may have affected all the poetry of Europe in one way or

another and thus may form a link in the chain of popular choral dance songs dating back into forgotten time.

E. Conclusions Concerning Origins of Lyric Poetry

Much conjecture remains about the origin of Castilian lyric poetry. In the light of present evidence, however, the following conclusions seem valid. The people of southern Spain who spoke a dialect that eventually emerged as Spanish produced a lyric folk poetry dealing with their everyday cares and occupations, but they did not record it. Learned men declined to use the vernacular for their lyrical efforts, turning instead to Galician. Provençal poetry, possibly borrowing its philosophy of love and its concept of the professional poet from the Spanish Arabs, dominated peninsular poetry for two centuries. Spanish-Arabic and Hebrew popular poetry in the form of the *muwassaha* with its *jarchas* and the *zejel* provide the earliest preserved examples of literary Spanish and influenced Spanish poets for centuries in both spirit and manner.

F. Lyric Poems and Poets

1. *Razon de amor*, also known as *Razon feita de amor* and *Aventura amorosa*, a charming little anonymous piece in the Provençal style, is the oldest preserved complete lyric poem in Spanish. Written early in the thirteenth century, it is probably a descendant of the Galician *cantigas* and contains gentle talk of love between a *doncella* and her poet-lover, who remains disconsolate when she departs. It is pleasant, delicate poem, but as important as its intrinsic merit is the fact that it clearly reveals a connection between the Galician-Portuguese school and Castilian poetry. After the love colloquy of the *Razon de amor*, the poet continues with a burlesque medieval debate between water and wine entitled *Denuestos del argua y del vino*. The two portions are not too skillfully joined but are not entirely incompatible with one another.
2. *Alfonso el Sabio* (1221 – 1284), whose school of scholars produced enormous historical and legal works, was also a poet who wrote the best Marian poetry of the Middle Ages in his *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. The 430 poems of this collection are mostly narrative in nature and recount miracles, tales, and poems of praise concerning the Virgin Mary. The entire book, except for one poem in Castilian, is written in the Galician-Portuguese dialect, despite the fact that Alfonso was a Castilian monarch.
3. *Gonzalo de Berceo* (1198? – 1274?) was the earliest poet to write in Spanish whose name has been recorded. Fortunately, he preserved among his songs a sample of the primitive lyric of Castile, the watchman's song *Eya, valar*. Though often a plodder, he wrote at times with a sweetness, naivete, simplicity, and genuine lyrical feeling that has elicited praise from twentieth-century poets.

Bereco wrote for the people and thought of himself as a *juglar* and not an erudite poet, though he used the *cuaderna via* extensively. He declared that he would write in *romance paladin*, the common language of the people, and, perhaps jokingly, discounted the merit of his poetry, which in his view was worth at least a glass of good wine. He sprinkled the clichés of the juglares liberally throughout his poems. He was a learned man with a large vocabulary, but he employed rustic humor and viewed life in an uncomplicated way. From his, some 13,000 lines of verse emerges an accurate portrayal of the sentiments of the people of his day.

Bereco did not invent; he merely imitated. His poems, almost exclusively religious in nature, recite the lives of saints and the miracles of the Virgin, and his uncomplicated religious faith, childlike simplicity, candor, and truly popular flavor have endeared him to many generations of Spaniards. His major works

are *Vida de Santo Domingo*; *Milagros de nuestro Senora*, containing his best poetry; and *Vida de Santa Oria*. Especially attractive in the *Milagros* are the genuine lyricism of the opening lines, Bereo's love of nature and sympathy for the poor, oppressed, and unfortunate, and the realistic details and speech patterns.

4. *Juan Ruiz, Arcipreste de Hita* (1283? – 1350?) rose in the first half of the fourteenth century as a major star in Spain's poetic constellation. His volume of poetry, named by modern critics *El libro de buen amor*, is ranked by everyone as one of the major works of Spanish literature.

We know very little of the life of this man. If we judge him by portions of his writings, we find that he was a pleasure-loving priest who personified the morals and spirit of an age not noted for its morality. Though he apparently yielded to the temptations of the flesh, his religious poems exhibit a sincerity and devotion that cannot be denied. For unknown reasons, he was imprisoned for thirteen years, possibly because of wayward behavior or failure to comply with orders from his superiors. It is supposed that he composed parts of his masterpiece during that long, tedious time.

If we are to believe what Ruiz says, *El libro de buen amor* does not represent his entire literary output. He wrote, he says, so many poems that they could not be contained in *diez pliegos* (about 240 pages), but unfortunately this poetry has disappeared. Among them, however, were poems of all kinds: dancing and street songs for Jewish and Moorish girls, songs of jest and mockery, songs for night-prowling students, for blind men, for beggars, and for many others.

El libro de buen amor is a miscellany of poems probably written at different periods of the archpriest's life, with a great variety of themes. The poet's personality, liberally injected into his poems, unifies the haphazard collection, which proceeds without transitions. The volume opens on a very serious note with a prayer to be delivered from prison. Then follows the author's explanation of the true intention of his book. There are two kinds of love, he says: *loco amor*, the sinful, worldly love of the flesh, and *buen amor*, the love of God, which is much to be preferred over the former. His book will teach the dangers in *loco amor*. Since most mortals are sinners, however, those who wish to practice *loco amor* will find some interesting ways of doing so in his pages. His other stated purpose is to instruct those who wish to write verse, and he exhibits an uncommon variety of meters.

After this introduction, he plunges into the prime matter of his book, love, and relates in a frank way his own love affair in which he is far more often a failure than a success. Interspersed are encounters with don Amor, who advises him concerning his love interests; animal fables that have didactic intent; disquisitions on the mortal sins; a lengthy description of the battle between Lady Lent and Sir Flesh; devout religious hymns, and miscellaneous poems on a variety of themes.

In addition to the unique figure of the archpriest himself, other eternal characters emerge to become prototypes of Spanish literature: Trotaconventos, the ancestress of all go-betweens, and her replacement, don Furon, the original *picaro*. These and many minor characters pass before the reader's eyes, contributing what very well may be the most interesting part of the book, the portrait of the life and society of the time.

In the fourteenth century, morals had relaxed, faith had weakened, and a pagan spirit filled the air. Opinion varies concerning whether Ruiz had a moral purpose in mind or was serious in stating his preference for *buen amor*. Some have understood Ruiz to be an austere moralist who objected to the moral laxity of his day, a sincere reformer who offered himself as a scapegoat for the sins of his fellow men. Others portray him as a pagan sensualist interested in glorifying only nature and passion. The truth probably lies somewhere in

between. He was not obsessed with moralizing and at times was very much on the side of *loco amor*. In the next moment, however, he might show himself to be a repentant and devout man of God.

A keen satirist but at the same time a kind, understanding human being, he could see, understand, and accept people's weaknesses. He sympathized with sinners; he was more amused than offended by their vices, some of which he shared, and could generously forgive them. His satire, therefore, lacks the indignation and wrath of the strict moralist and shows love rather than condemnation. And with a sudden shift from human concerns, he could write a hymn to the Virgin with extraordinary spiritual fervor or compose a sincere learned disquisition on the evils of sin.

Stylistically Ruiz's unorganized collection of poems represents a great advance over preceding poetry and the culmination of the lyric writing of the Middle Ages. Unfettered by rules, Ruiz improvised with loquaciousness, verbosity, spontaneity, naturalness, and humor. He added new words to the language showed good adjectivization, musical quality and keen feelings for nature. He loved women, describing their movements, sounds, voices, and even the state of their souls, something new in the Middle Ages. His language ran the gamut from street words and popular utterances to the holiest expressions. He used hyperbole, free verse, and supervising metaphor, employing more than sixteen different meters and all the metrical combinations known at the time. Yet he preferred the *cuaderna via*, which he infused with throbbing pulse of life. His sources range from Church devotional literature to *Ovid's Art of Love* and the drama, from Pamphilus de amore to folklore and Aesop's fables. In short, he drew from the entire tapestry of the life of his time.

Juan Ruiz, an archpriest and yet a man of the people, towers above other writers of the Middle Ages. He represents the culmination of medieval life and foreshadows the coming Renaissance. He fused all the poetic elements of his time interjected picaresque elements and made use of allegory. His *jose de vivre* has indulgent attitude toward human weaknesses, and especially his poetic genius makes him one of Spain's greatest literary figures. He foreshadows coming generations, for in him lay the seeds of *La Celestina* and the picaresque novel.

5. *Pero Lopez de Zuala* (1332 – 1407), the outstanding figure in poetry in the second half of the fourteenth century, has been called Spain's first Humanist, for the Renaissance had touched him. He lived through the reigns of five kings in a very troubled era, wrote their history as an eyewitness, and regarded his task not merely as the recording of events and names but as a judgment. Though he supposedly wrote his masterpiece, the *Rimado de Palacio*, while in military prison, he probably composed it at different times in his life. Like *El libro de nuen amor*, it is a compilation of poems on miscellaneous themes that range from disquisitions on religious topics to bitter social satire.

No reader has ever been confused concerning the intention of the *Rimado de Palacio*, for Lopez de Ayala saw the abuses, vices, crimes, and dishonesty of his day and set out to expose them, criticize them, and, if possible, reform them. Not all his work is social satire, however. He opens with poems of a religious nature but then plunges into criticisms of life on all levels as he attacks the Church, the pope, the schism of Avignon, kings, government, nobility, Jews, shopkeepers, feudal barons, warfare, injustice, and all the vices-hypocrisy, vanity, dishonesty, bribery, misery, and corruption. He inveighs bitterly against them all, thus becoming the model of satiric style of the Middle Ages.

His personality was dramatically opposed to that of Juan Ruiz. The latter was cheerful, joyous, pagan at times in spirit, lighthearted, humorous, gay, and loving. He saw man's weaknesses, vices, and sins but was not shocked. Rather he sympathized with and forgave his fellow men. Lopez de Ayala was

disillusioned, formal, embittered, moralistic, dismayed and even angered by the meanness of human conduct and the evil in men's hearts. He denounced them indignantly. He was correct, noble, dignified, melancholy, and of sincere religious conviction, a man of the palace who could not share the epicurean tastes of Ruiz or tolerate human weakness.

Lopez de Ayala, a proto-Quevedo, stood in the middle of a sorry era of civil war, treacherous politics, and lax morals. He was of a sensitive nature and was tragically grieved and disillusioned by the vice and corruption he saw all around him. Having felt the breath of the Renaissance, he stood on the threshold of modernity. Significantly, he was the last important author to use the *cuaderna via*.

6. *Cancionero de Baena* was compiled around 1445 by Juan Alfonso de Baena for Juan II. The late fourteenth century and most of the fifteenth was truly a transition period in which the Galician-Portuguese that had long dominated lyric poetry and the love game of the Provençal poets was supplanted once and for all by the Castilian language and the innovations of the Italianate school of Dante and Petrarch.

Baena's *Cancionero* contains poems from several generations of poets, from the reigns of Pedro I through Juan II. As a whole the poets are at best mediocre and with rare exceptions, their poetry is insipid and lacking in real poetic feeling. Nevertheless, the collection shows the evolution of poetry from the Galician to the Italianate schools. There are nearly six hundred poems by more than fifty authors in the *Cancionero*. Included is work of Enrique de Aragon (1384 – 1434), better known as the Marques de Villena, who was one of the initiators of the poetic movement in Castile and the author of an *Arte de trobar* (1433). Later, Juan del Encina added to the increasing accumulation of literary criticism with his *Preceptiva*. This critical activity indicates that the poets were conscious of their responsibility and were genuinely interested in improving their art.

The efforts of Baena's poets to refine the language and adapt new verse forms made possible the superior verse of two major poets of the fifteenth century, the Marques de Santillana and Juan de Mena. The best-known of Baena's poets still writing in the Galician manner was Alfonso Alvarex de Villasandino (1350 – 1428), also called de Toledo and de Illescas, who dominated the *Cancionero* by sheer weight if not by talent. Francisco Imperial reacted against the frivolity of the love verse of the *escuela travadoresca* and sought his models in Dante and Petrarch. Though there were some traces of allegory before Imperial, he popularized it and is credited with having introduced the Italian hendecasyllable to Spain. The *Cancionero de Baena* was the first collection of Spanish poetry, and a few poetic treasures have been found in it over the years.

THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

A. General Considerations

By the turn of the fifteenth century Castilian had replaced Galician as the language for lyric poetry. The nearly sterile formulas and traditions of the troubadouresque love game, which had never really captivated the Castilians, fell into disuse. This plus the importation of new ideas from Italy produced two major poets in the first half of the fifteenth century, the Marques de Santillana and Juan de Mena.

In the second half of the century political unrest was terminated by Ferdinand and Isabel. The queen patronized Latin studies, foreign Humanists came to Spain, and Elio Antonio de Nebrija (1441? – 1528) wrote the first grammar of a modern language. Lyric poetry continued to flourish. The allegorical school followed the lead of Juan de Mena, and a refined and metaphorical courtly poetry developed in a different direction. This period witnessed the rise of a third major poet, Jorge

Manrique, and the satiric *Coplas del Provincial* and the *Coplas de Mingo Revulgo* were written about this time. With the fifteenth-century poets, the Middle Ages ended, and Spain was prepared for Juan Boscan and Garcilaso de la Vega to usher in the Renaissance.

B. The Marques de Santillana (1398 – 1458)

Inigo Lopez de Mendoz, Marques de Santillana, the son of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, also a poet, represented the height of literary culture and Humanism during the reign of Juan II. The *Proemio e carta al condestable de Portugal* (1449), in prose, was the first attempt at literary criticism in Spain. In this essay he gives his opinions about poetry. He asserted that poetry should be useful as well as beautiful and that poetry falls into three categories: sublime, or the poetry of Greek and Latin writers; mediocre, that written in “vulgar”; and infamous, or the disorderly folk poetry of the lower classes. His other important prose work, *Refranes que dicen las viejas tras el fuego*, indicates that the Marques de Santillana had a lively interest in folk literature and did not believe “disorderly folk poetry” was so infamous after all.

The poetry of don Inigo falls into two groups; that written in the manner of the Galician-Portuguese school, and that in the manner of the allegorical Dantesque school. Of the two, the first is the most appealing, for there one finds the *canciones*, *decires*, *villancios*, and *serranillas* whose folk feeling is ingeniously combined with refined delicateness and grace. Santillana’s simplicity and freshness, gentleness, and even exquisiteness of expression reach their peak in the *serranillas*, the best known of which is *La vaquero de la Finojosa*. His *Comedieta de Ponza* imitates Dante as it recounts naval battles in allegorical style, the manner also used in his *Infierno de los enamorados*. Most important are his forty-two *Sonetos fehos al italic modo*, reputed to be the first sonnets written in Spanish.

C. Juan de Mena (1411 – 1456)

Juan de Mena’s entire life was devoted to letters, and thus he became Spain’s first professional writer and scholar. A native of Cordoba, he studied at Salamanca and later went to Rome, where he imbibed the Renaissance spirit at its fountainhead. Upon Mena’s return to Spain, Juan II named him secretary of Latin letters and royal historian, an appointment that allowed him ample time to pursue his studies and writing.

Mena’s poetry falls into two groups: the light, short, frequently amorous verse distinguished for its musicality and perfection of form, possibly the produce of his youth, and the verse written in *arte mayor* style in imitation of the allegorical-Dantesque manner with the added feature of Cordovan *cultismo*. In his shorter poems he is not particularly serious, but in the Italian manner he is grave, profound, religious, and patriotic.

The *Laberinto de Fortuna* (1444), his masterwork, is sometimes called *Las trescientas* since it contains approximately 300 (actually only 297) strophes of *arte mayor*. This verse form is an eight-line strophe of twelve-syllable lines containing four marked rhythmic accents and divided in half by a caesura. The *Laberinto* is aptly named, since it leads the reader through a maze of allegorical experiences that are often tedious; nevertheless, it contains a few passages that have endured the test of time. The poem’s true merit lies in its fluent versification, descriptive force, and patriotic fervor, as Mena glorifies Spanish heroes who died in defense of the *patria*.

Borrowing from Latin, Mena initiated a renovation of poetic vocabulary that would influence the seventeenth century *gongoristas*. Mena is the first of the *culto* poets for several reasons: about 80 percent of Gongora’s *cultismos* are found in his work; he favored the rotund, ornate style; he addressed a cultural minority and scorned the *vulgo*; he introduced Latinisms in both vocabulary and syntax; and he sometimes intentionally obscured his writing, often using mythological references. Whether these characteristics are considered shortcomings or not, we must acknowledge that the Spanish language and poetic style were enriched through Mena’s efforts.

D. Jorge Manrique (1440? – 1479)

Jorge Manrique, born into an illustrious family that included the Marques de Santillana and Gomez Manrique, a dramatist, was first and foremost a soldier. He died a hero's death at the age of thirty-nine fighting for the Catholic Sovereigns in an assault on the stronghold of Garci-Munoz.

Jorge Manrique's poetic output is slight, and he would be forgotten were it not for his *Coplas*, an elegy written at the death of his father. But these forty strophes of *pie quebrado* verse (two eight-syllable lines followed by a four-syllable line) are probably the best-known verses in Spanish poetry. It is curious that an unknown poet with no special preparation and whose thoughts had been commonplace since Biblical times should write an immortal poem. But it was Manrique's fate to be shocked by his father's death into crystallizing and condensing into one poem all the important sentiments of the Middle Ages. Under the stress of emotion, he was able to say what everyone else was saying, but better.

The complete title of his poem is *Coplas a la muerte del Maestro don Rodrigo, su padre*. Its themes are meditation on the transitory nature of worldly things and nostalgic longing for the past; the *whi sunt* motif; and a eulogy of Manrique's father and an account of his death.

Jorge Manrique was the last poet of the Spanish Middle Ages. He was unaffected by poetic schools and nearly obsessed with the idea of death. He was a restless man, yet tranquility and repose are the keystones of his poetry. His *Coplas* have been imitated, translated (into English by Longfellow), and set to music.

They are still found in every anthology, for their basic ideas are commonplace: death is the great leveler, you can't take it with you, worldly things are fragile, virtue conquers time for it is forever remembered. Manrique lamented the death of his father in his *Coplas*, but he also lamented the passing of an age.

E. The Cancioneros: The Minor Poets

The late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries teemed with poets. Their poetry, for the most part justly condemned to oblivion, has been preserved in anthologies called *cancioneiros*. In addition to the *Cancionero de Baena* (1445) are the *Cancionero de Stuniga*, compiled for Alfonso V of Naples, the *Cancionero general*, compiled by Hernando del Castillo in 1511, and the *Cancionero de burlas provocantes a risa*, which appeared in 1519.

Minor poets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are Pero Ferrus, the first to mention Amadis; Macias, called El Enamorado, whose tragic life story inspired works for Santillana, Lope, and Larra; Gomez Manrique, uncle of Jorge; Anton de Montoro, a Jew who wrote sharp, satiric verse; Pero Guillen de Segovia; Juan Alvarez Gato; Garci Sanchez de Badajoz; Rodrigo de Cota; Juan de Padilla; Fray Inigo de Mendoz, a favorite of Queen Isabel; and Fray Ambrosio Montesinos.

Part II : DRAMA

ORIGIN: THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

A. The Liturgical Drama

The drama in Spain, as elsewhere in Europe, probably sprang from the dramatic elements in the Church liturgy. These were gradually elaborated, and simple acting was introduced. The language used was Latin, and the themes were strictly religious, the first being the Christmas and Easter stories. Later those of Palm Sunday, the Epiphany, Good Friday, the Day of the Innocents, and the Corpus Christi festival were added. The first actors were clerics, and the first theaters were churches.

The shepherds in the Christmas story provided for an occasional comic element as well as the use of popular dialect. As secular element increased and laymen replaced clerics as actors, the plays grew unseemly and were banished from the churches to the courtyards and the marketplaces. Here the authors and actors could take liberties of which the Church did not approve. Spanish replaced Latin, the liturgical influence diminished, and the popular drama began to flourish independently. Though the secular was thus divorced from the sacred, religious themes dominated throughout the Middle Ages.

B. The Popular Drama

Another drama, possibly a continuation of the Latin theater, flourished alongside the liturgical. No examples of this *teatro profano* exist today and it is doubtful that any were ever written down. Proof of their existence is found however, in references to them in other writings of the time, such as the *Siete partidas* of Alfonso *el Sabio*, which condemned them and referred to them as *juegos de escarnio*. Popular with the people but frowned upon by the Church for their sacrilegious satire and parodying of sacred matters, as well as for their obscenities and immoralities, these little dramas, mostly improvised, mark the genesis of a type of short one-act drama that has continued to modern times under a variety of names such as *paso*, *entremes*, *sainete*, and *ginero chico*.

C. Cycles of the Liturgical Drama

Numerous plays were written on the great themes of the Church, Christmas and Easter, forming what are called "cycles." Other cycles evolved also, commemorating additional Church festivals. Many moving episodes from the Scriptures also had their dramatic versions.

D. *El Auto de los reyes magos*

This play is the sole remaining example of Spain's liturgical drama, and part of it has been lost. It belonged to the Epiphany cycle and tells the story of the Magi's search for the Savior and Herod's wrathful opposition. Probably an offshoot of the Benedictine liturgy it was based on a Latin play written in Orleans in the twelfth century. It surpasses its model, however, in its complicated versification, superior dramatic qualities, and inventiveness. It was probably composed about the middle of the twelfth century,

This, the second oldest work of Spanish literature, contains some elements of future Spanish drama; realism in depicting characters' tension in the doubts of the Magi and the reluctance of Herod's advisers to give him a straightforward answer, an attempt to suit the verse to the situation, the polymetric tendency, and the first soliloquy.

E. The Interlude

The liturgical drama flourished roughly from 900—to 1200. An interlude of three centuries followed from which no plays have been preserved, though they undoubtedly continued to be written, a fact attested to by Church documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The technical and artistic improvements of the first preserved plays of the fifteenth century over the *Auto de los reyes magos* afford additional evidence.

Part III : PROSE FICTION

ORIGIN

The narration of fictitious human events that appear to be related to reality is an art as old as human imagination. Yet the novel art form lagged behind other genres and in all literatures appeared after verse had established itself. The earliest prose works in Spain appeared as late as the thirteenth century, long after lyric and epic poetry had blossomed. These early prose attempts were mostly survivals of ancient literature and tales carried in from elsewhere.

In tracing influences on the development of the Spanish novel, mention must be made of Old Testament stories like that of Joseph and his brothers, Greek novels of adventure, pastoral novels, and the short, picaresque, sometimes erotic Milesian tales that preceded them. The latter were popular in ancient Rome and were forerunners of medieval collections. The Greek novel peaked in the second and third centuries B.C. One of them, Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* also called *Theagenes* and *Chariclea*, possibly inspired Cervantes' *Persiles y Sigismunda*. Most Greek tales of recount the separation of lovers, narrow escapes from a long series of dangerous situations, a final reunion and a happy ending. Roman novels, especially the *Satyricon*, which foreshadows the Spanish picaresque novel, and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* or *Golden Ass*, which may have influenced Cervantes, are important for their discussions of social problems. The *Golden Ass*, in which a boy is magically transformed into an ass, teaches that whoever abandons himself to vice and curiosity forsakes his human condition and can be redeemed only by religion and mercy. The

Oriental apologues, fables, and parables were also an important source of fictional motives. Originating mostly in India, these Oriental tales worked their way through Persia, then along the southern Mediterranean coast and were brought into Spain by the Arabs. From Spain, the chief link between the West and East in the early Middle Ages, these stories made the rounds of all literatures. The fall of Toledo, a storehouse of fictional wealth, to the Spanish in 1085 and the Great Crusades resulted in increased importation of Oriental fictional motives, many dating back thousands of years, traceable in some cases to Sanskrit originals. Often, they were joined together in a loose framework similar to that used by Juan Manuel in *El Conde Lucanor*. Oriental tales were mainly didactic and usually conveyed some moral lesson through humans in animal guise. Aesop's fables are an example of how this material was used by Westerners. Spanish authors used these Oriental apologues in their first attempts at narrative prose. Though they had no sustained plot, they contained the seed of the novel and were the single most important influence on the development of Spanish narrative prose of the Middle Ages.

THE MIDDLE AGES

A. The *Exempla*

Spanish collections of short stories and Oriental apologues are called *exempla*, forerunners of the novel. They were short stories with an oral point, written between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, mingling Christian and Oriental morality. The following are the important Spanish collections:

1. *Disciplina clericalis*, Spain's first collection of Oriental stories, was written in Arabic, translated into Latin by its author and into Spanish by Pedro Alfonso, a converted Aragonese Jew of the early twelfth century whose real name was Rabbi Moises Sefardi. The collection contains thirty-three apologues, each stating a moral principle or lesson in ethical conduct conveyed by bits of advice given by a father to his son. It was one of the most plagiarized books of the Middle Ages and was incorporated into the *Libro de los exemplos* in the fifteenth century by Clemente Sanchez de los exemplos in the fifteenth century by Clemente Sanchez de Vercial. It influenced Juan Manuel, Juan Ruiz, Timoneda, Boccaccio, and many others.
2. *Libro de Calila y Dimna*, the oldest fictional prose work in the Spanish language, was an anonymous translation from the Arabic ordered by Alfonso el Sabio in 1251. It relates how Dimna, a lynx envious of Senceba, an ox and favorite of the Lion, King of Beasts, turns the latter against Senceba, whom the king executes. Repenting of his action, the Lion brings Dimna to trial and sentences him to death by starvation. The interest lies not in the plot but in the anecdotes introduced as illustrations, as Calila and Dimna discuss, philosophically and satirically, human beings and their illogical behavior. The fables are from Latin, Greek and Hebrew sources, and especially from the *Sanskrit Panchatantra*. The apologues are alleged to have been authored by an Indian named Bildpai. Menendez y Pelayo points out that the *Libro de Calila y Dimna* is important not only for its position in the chronology of the novel but also because of its significance in the history of the language. One of the oldest monuments of Spanish literature, it represents literary Spanish in its earliest stages.
3. *Libro de los engannos e assayamientos de los mujeres* (Book of the Deceits and Wiles of Women) was also of Indian origin. Known also by the title *Sendebâr*, in 1253 it was ordered translated from Arabic into Spanish by the Infante don Fadrique, Alfonso *el Sabio's* brother. Translated into every European language, it is known in English as the *History of Seven Wise Masters*.

Its setting is a trial at which a queen falsely accuses her stepson of attempted seduction. His advisers counsel him to remain silent for seven days, and at his trial seven wise men speak in his defense, illustrating in twenty-six stories the perfidy and vices of women. The queen retaliates with tales about the abuses of false counselors. On the eighth day the prince speaks for himself and is exonerated. The queen is condemned to death by fire. The stories are licentious and humorous, without being gross, and reveal the misogynistic attitudes of the Middle Ages.

4. *Barlaam y Josaphat* has a loftier tone than its predecessors and is ascribed to San Juan Damasceno (St. John of Damascus), although probably another John, a seventh-century monk in a monastery near Jerusalem, actually wrote it. The ultimate source is supposedly the

Sanskrit *Lalita Vistara*, an account of Buddha's youth. Josaphat (Buddha), protected from all things that might cause sorrow, has allegorical encounters with old age, sickness, poverty, and death. Barlaam, his tutor, explains these things and converts him to the Christian faith. This Christianized form of the Buddha legend was most popular in the Middle Ages and influenced Juan Manuel *El Caballero Cifar*, and the theater of France, Italy, and Spain. Lope used in 1618 in his play *Barlaam y Josafa*.

Other collections of *exempla* are the *Libro de los gatos* (where *gatos* should probably read *cuENTOS*); Sanchez de Vercial's *Libro de los exemolos por a.b.c.*, containing some five hundred stories; and *Castigos y documentos*, attributed to both Juan Garcia de Castrojeriz and Sancho IV of Castile.

B. The Medieval Novel of Chivalry

Some critics believe that the first Spanish novels of chivalry were imported from France, where the novel had evolved out of French epic poetry in which bards transformed their old Celtic epic heroes into knights-errant. Spaniards either translated or imitated these French novels, some of which passed through Italy on their way to Spain. The great Spanish novels of chivalry, the *Amadis*, *Tirant lo Blanch* and the two *Palmerines*, which appeared in the Renaissance, were so thoroughly Hispanicized that their originators could scarcely have recognized them.

Spanish novels of chivalry of the Middle Ages fall into four categories: The Carolingian cycle contains stories of Charlemagne represented in Spain by *Maynete* and *Historia de Carlo Magno y de los doce pares*. The Arthurian cycle or Breton cycle deals with legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table in such works as *Demanda del Santo Grial* and the *Baladro del sabio Merlin*. The cycle of antiquity contains novels on Classical legends such as the *Historia troyana* which describes the siege and destruction of Troy as recorded by fourth-century chroniclers. The cycle of Crusades obviously deals with events real or imagined, of the Great Crusades. The first and most famous of this type, *La gran conquista de ultramar*, written at the end of the thirteenth century is the first example of the Spanish novel of chivalry.

C. *El Caballero Cifar*

El Caballero Cifar, a 1300, was the first original full-length novel in Spain and thus stands apart from all other chivalric novels of the Middle Ages. It contains adaptations of the life of Saint Eustace and resembles in part the Milesian tale, with its rambling plot and miscellaneous content and in part the Arthurian legends. Yet it is clearly Spanish in its moralizing realism, use of popular speech, and the creation of the popular type, el Ribaldo, forerunner of Sancho Panza.

It relates the adventures of Cifar, a knight persecuted by envious competitors. Exiled by his king, he and his family wander through foreign lands, and after many adventures, wars, separations, and the like, the family is reunited. Most of the rest of the book concerns the adventures of Roboan, one of Cifar's two sons. Part 3 of four parts is largely a collection of apologues.

El Caballero Cifar is the first novel to use superlatives, courteous phrases, popular language, dialogue, proverbs, and jokes, and probably the first to offer a prototype of Quijote's immortal squire. It is also the first novel of artistic prose and harmonious and elegant vocabulary. Cifar was also the first knight to adore his inaccessible lady fair.

D. *Amadis de Gaula*

This work circulated in the fourteenth century, but as its full impact lies in the Renaissance, it will be treated below.

E. Juan Manuel (1282 – 1347)

The first important name in Spanish prose fiction is that of Juan Manuel, grandson of Fernando III and nephew of Alfonso *el Sabio*. Many of his works have been lost, even though he deposited them for safekeeping in a Dominican monastery that he founded in Penafiel.

Juan Manuel's masterpiece is *Libro del Conde Lucanor*, formerly known as *El libro de Patronio* (1323 – 1335), the finest narrative prose fiction produced in fourteenth-century Spain. Although it was written in four parts, only the first part is famous. Fifty-one times Count Lucanor asks advice from patronio, an elderly sage, who gives him moral and ethical guidance in the form of stories. The Oriental influence is obvious in the use of stories dealing with various moral aspects of life, relationships among people, vanity, avarice, and other human shortcomings. Manuel's clear intention is didactic, and being intensely medieval, he shows little of the Renaissance enjoyment of life already felt in Spain. He is not without humor, however.

Manuel is considered the first Spaniard to possess a good personal and artistic prose style. He took his writing seriously and considered the pursuit of letters more befitting a gentleman than idle gaming. He polished his work, wrote in a grave, clear language, and was proud of his product. He chose words for their beautiful sound, always tried for clarity, sought multilevel meanings, and invented neologisms. He preceded both Chaucer and Boccaccio and was one of the most remarkable figures of the European Middle Ages. In his work is found the prototype of the *Taming of the Shrew* and foreshadowing's of Calderon's *La vida es sueno*, Alarcon's *La prueba de las promesas*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Faust*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and many other well-known titles. He did not intend to be original, but he adapted his sources so fully to the Spanish language and spirit that he gave his compatriots the best short stories they had for approximately three hundred years.

F. Alfonso Martinez de Toledo (1398 – 1470)

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Richard E. Chandler, PhD
Kessel Schwartz, PhD

Part IV : PROSE FICTION

ORIGIN

The narration of fictitious human events that appear to be related to reality is an art as old as human imagination. Yet the novel art form lagged behind other genres and in all literatures appeared after verse had established itself. The earliest prose works in Spain appeared as late as the thirteenth century, long after lyric and epic poetry had blossomed. These early prose attempts were mostly survivals of ancient literature and tales carried in from elsewhere.

In tracing influences on the development of the Spanish novel, mention must be made of Old Testament stories like that of Joseph and his brothers, Greek novels of adventure, pastoral novels, and the short, picaresque, sometimes erotic Milesian tales that preceded them. The latter were popular in ancient Rome and were forerunners of medieval collections. The Greek novel peaked in the second and third centuries B.C. One of them, Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* also called *Theagenes* and *Chariclea*, possibly inspired Cervantes' *Persiles y Sigismunda*. Most Greek tales of recount the separation of lovers narrow escapes

from a long series of dangerous situations a final reunion and a happy ending. Roman novels, especially the Satyricon, which foreshadows the Spanish picaresque novel, and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* or *Golden Ass*, which may have influenced Cervantes, are important for their discussions of social problems. The *Golden Ass*, in which a boy is magically transformed into an ass, teaches that whoever abandons himself to vice and curiosity forsakes his human condition and can be redeemed only by religion and mercy. The Oriental apologues, fables, and parables were also an important source of fictional motives. Originating mostly in India, these Oriental tales worked their way through Persia, then along the southern Mediterranean coast and were brought into Spain by the Arabs. From Spain, the chief link between the West and East in the early Middle Ages, these stories made the rounds of all literatures. The fall of Toledo, a storehouse of fictional wealth, to the Spanish in 1085 and the Great Crusades resulted in increased importation of Oriental fictional motives, many dating back thousands of years, traceable in some cases to Sanskrit originals. Often, they were joined together in a loose framework similar to that used by Juan Manuel in *El Conde Lucanor*. Oriental tales were mainly didactic and usually conveyed some moral lesson through humans in animal guise. Aesop's fables are an example of how this material was used by Westerners. Spanish authors used these Oriental apologues in their first attempts at narrative prose. Though they had no sustained plot, they contained the seed of the novel and were the single most important influence on the development of Spanish narrative prose of the Middle Ages.

THE MIDDLE AGES

G. The *Exempla*

Spanish collections of short stories and Oriental apologues are called *exempla*, forerunners of the novel. They were short stories with an oral point, written between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, mingling Christian and Oriental morality. The following are the important Spanish collections:

5. *Disciplina clericalis*, Spain's first collection of Oriental stories, was written in Arabic, translated into Latin by its author and into Spanish by Pedro Alfonso, a converted Aragonese Jew of the early twelfth century whose real name was Rabbi Moises Sefardi. The collection contains thirty-three apologues, each stating a moral principle or lesson in ethical conduct conveyed by bits of advice given by a father to his son. It was one of the most plagiarized books of the Middle Ages and was incorporated into the *Libro de los exemplos* in the fifteenth century by Clemente Sanchez de los exemplos in the fifteenth century by Clemente Sanchez de Vercial. It influenced Juan Manuel, Juan Ruiz, Timoneda, Boccaccio, and many others.
6. *Libro de Calila y Dimna*, the oldest fictional prose work in the Spanish language, was an anonymous translation from the Arabic ordered by Alfonso el Sabio in 1251. It relates how Dimna, a lynx envious of Senceba, an ox and favorite of the Lion, King of Beasts, turns the latter against Senceba, whom the king executes. Repenting of his action, the Lion brings Dimna to trial and sentences him to death by starvation. The interest lies not in the plot but in the anecdotes introduced as illustrations, as Calila and Dimna discuss, philosophically and satirically, human beings and their illogical behavior. The fables are from Latin, Greek and Hebrew sources, and especially from the *Sanskrit Panchatantra*. The apologues are alleged to have been authored by an Indian named Bildpai. Menendez y Pelayo points out that the *Libro de Calila y Dimna* is important not only for its position in the chronology of the novel but also because of its significance in the history of the language. One of the oldest monuments of Spanish literature, it represents literary Spanish in its earliest stages.
7. *Libro de los engannos e assayamientos de los mujeres* (Book of the Deceits and Wiles of Women) was also of Indian origin. Known also by the title *Sendebat*, in 1253 it was ordered translated from Arabic into Spanish by the Infante don Fadrique, Alfonso *el Sabio's* brother. Translated into every European language, it is known in English as the *History of Seven Wise Masters*.

Its setting is a trial at which a queen falsely accuses her stepson of attempted seduction. His advisers counsel him to remain silent for seven days, and at his trial seven wise men speak in his defense, illustrating in twenty-six stories the perfidy and vices of women. The queen retaliates with tales about the abuses of false counselors. On the eighth day the prince speaks for himself and is exonerated. The queen is condemned to death by fire. The stories are

licentious and humorous, without being gross, and reveal the misogynistic attitudes of the Middle Ages.

8. *Barlaam y Josaphat* has a loftier tone than its predecessors and is ascribed to San Juan Damasceno (St. John of Damascus), although probably another John, a seventh-century monk in a monastery near Jerusalem, actually wrote it. The ultimate source is supposedly the Sanskrit *Lalita Vistara*, an account of Buddha's youth. Josaphat (Buddha), protected from all things that might cause sorrow, has allegorical encounters with old age, sickness, poverty, and death. Barlaam, his tutor, explains these things and converts him to the Christian faith. This Christianized form of the Buddha legend was most popular in the Middle Ages and influenced Juan Manuel's *El Caballero Cifar*, and the theater of France, Italy, and Spain. Lope used it in 1618 in his play *Barlaam y Josafa*.

Other collections of *exempla* are the *Libro de los gatos* (where *gatos* should probably read *cuentos*); Sanchez de Vercial's *Libro de los exemolos por a.b.c.*, containing some five hundred stories; and *Castigos y documentos*, attributed to both Juan Garcia de Castrojeriz and Sancho IV of Castile.

H. The Medieval Novel of Chivalry

Some critics believe that the first Spanish novels of chivalry were imported from France, where the novel had evolved out of French epic poetry in which bards transformed their old Celtic epic heroes into knights-errant. Spaniards either translated or imitated these French novels, some of which passed through Italy on their way to Spain. The great Spanish novels of chivalry, the *Amadis*, *Tirant lo Blanch* and the two *Palmerines*, which appeared in the Renaissance, were so thoroughly Hispanicized that their originators could scarcely have recognized them.

Spanish novels of chivalry of the Middle Ages fall into four categories: The Carolingian cycle contains stories of Charlemagne represented in Spain by *Maynete* and *Historia de Carlo Magno y de los doce pares*. The Arthurian cycle or Breton cycle deals with legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table in such works as *Demanda del Santo Grial* and the *Baladro del sabio Merlin*. The cycle of antiquity contains novels on Classical legends such as the *Historia troyana* which describes the siege and destruction of Troy as recorded by fourth-century chroniclers. The cycle of Crusades obviously deals with events real or imagined, of the Great Crusades. The first and most famous of this type, *La gran conquista de ultramar*, written at the end of the thirteenth century is the first example of the Spanish novel of chivalry.

I. *El Caballero Cifar*

El Caballero Cifar, a 1300, was the first original full-length novel in Spain and thus stands apart from all other chivalric novels of the Middle Ages. It contains adaptations of the life of Saint Eustace and resembles in part the Milesian tale, with its rambling plot and miscellaneous content and in part the Arthurian legends. Yet it is clearly Spanish in its moralizing realism, use of popular speech, and the creation of the popular type, el Ribaldo, forerunner of Sancho Panza.

It relates the adventures of Cifar, a knight persecuted by envious competitors. Exiled by his king, he and his family wander through foreign lands, and after many adventures, wars, separations, and the like, the family is reunited. Most of the rest of the book concerns the adventures of Roboan, one of Cifar's two sons. Part 3 of four parts is largely a collection of apologues.

El Caballero Cifar is the first novel to use superlatives, courteous phrases, popular language, dialogue, proverbs, and jokes, and probably the first to offer a prototype of Quijote's immortal squire. It is also the first novel of artistic prose and harmonious and elegant vocabulary. Cifar was also the first knight to adore his inaccessible lady fair.

J. *Amadis de Gaula*

This work circulated in the fourteenth century, but as its full impact lies in the Renaissance, it will be treated below.

K. Juan Manuel (1282 – 1347)

The first important name in Spanish prose fiction is that of Juan Manuel, grandson of Fernando III and nephew of Alfonso *el Sabio*. Many of his works have been lost, even though he deposited them for safekeeping in a Dominican monastery that he founded in Penafiel.

Juan Manuel's masterpiece is *Libro del Conde Luanor*, formerly known as *El libro de Patronio* (1323 – 1335), the finest narrative prose fiction produced in fourteenth-century Spain. Although it was written in four parts, only the first part is famous. Fifty-one times Count Lucanor asks advice from patronio, an elderly sage, who gives him moral and ethical guidance in the form of stories. The Oriental influence is obvious in the use of stories dealing with various moral aspects of life, relationships among people, vanity, avarice, and other human shortcomings. Manuel's clear intention is didactic, and being intensely medieval, he shows little of the Renaissance enjoyment of life already felt in Spain. He is not without humor, however.

Manuel is considered the first Spaniard to possess a good personal and artistic prose style. He took his writing seriously and considered the pursuit of letters more befitting a gentleman than idle gaming. He polished his work, wrote in a grave, clear language, and was proud of his product. He chose words for their beautiful sound, always tried for clarity, sought multilevel meanings, and invented neologisms. He preceded both Chaucer and Boccaccio and was one of the most remarkable figures of the European Middle Ages. In his work is found the prototype of the *Taming of the Shrew* and foreshadowing of Calderon's *La vida es sueno*, Alarcon's *La prueba de las promesas*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Faust*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and many other well-known titles. He did not intend to be original, but he adapted his sources so fully to the Spanish language and spirit that he gave his compatriots the best short stories they had for approximately three hundred years.

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