

On the Historical Background and Creative Characteristics of the Birth of Spanish "Generation 98" Literature

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Abstract: *After Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American war in 1898, its national power plummeted. The glory of the past no longer exists, and this huge contrast is an unacceptable shame for intellectuals. With the purpose and ambition of saving the country, a group of young scholars gathered together to jointly create a precedent in the history of Spanish literary creation, which is known as the "generation of 98". Spanish "generation 98" literature occupies an important position in the history of Spanish literature and world literature. Through the study of the characteristics of this generation's literary creation, we can better understand the various social forms of Spain at that time and the new changes of Spanish literary creation under the influence of the latest European thoughts at that time.*

Keywords: *Spanish American war, generation 98, Spanish Literature*

1. Introduction

Spain's "generation 98" has traditionally gathered a group of Spanish novelists, poets and essayists. Spain was defeated in the Spanish American War and was forced to lose its possessions Puerto Rico, Guam and Cuba. In this context, Spanish Society was turbulent, and the failure of the war led to Spanish moral crisis, political crisis and social crisis. The writers of the "98 generation" were deeply affected by the social contradictions and various crises at that time, and had extremely distinctive characteristics of the times in their creative style.

Influenced by the trend of reconstructionism, these writers give readers an overall artistic perspective in literary creation, and closely combine classicism and modernism. Among the "98 generation" literati, the most representative writers are Pío Baroja and Jose Mart ínez Ruiz and Antonio Machado. Their works have a clear sense of crisis and express their dissatisfaction with the incompetence of the government and the numbness of the people.

2. The Literary Term "Generation 98"

The literary term "generation 98" was first proposed by the Spanish writer Jose Martinez Ruiz, the well-known Azor ín, who spread this concept in the critical essays of various newspapers and periodicals. At first, the term "generation 98" was temporarily used by the literati, but before long, it was regarded as an organized literary movement.

In the face of the failure of the Spanish American war, a large number of Spanish people strongly demanded the moral and cultural rejuvenation of their country. Disappointment with the present and hopelessness in the face of life have inspired many writers to spread new ideas and values. The literary elites of the "generation 98" are worried about Spain's material and cultural heritage. At the same time, they can't sleep at night because of the decline of Spain's status in the modern world. They stressed that they should keep a clear understanding of the development trend of foreign literature, so as to evaluate their value in the wave of world literature and awaken the national consciousness of the people.

"Generation 98" is characterized by the use of concise Castellano (commonly known as Spanish) (which is even barren for some writers), and it happens that this concise Castellano can be understood by people of all social classes.

"Generation 98" uses simple and popular language instead of boastful modification and obscure

narration. Through this concise and comprehensive statement, the authors describe all aspects of life and political life at that time. But this minimalist language did not make literary works lose their beautiful style and superb literary and artistic value.

The use of concise language did not hinder the transmission of positive revolutionary forces in that confused era. Under the influence of thinkers such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, writers of the "98 generation", such as Azorín and Unamuno, try to improve the knowledge level of all Spanish people by spreading the trend of European irrationalism philosophy¹.

Although the thought of modernism and the crisis in post-war Spain have influenced and inspired this generation of writers and writers, this influence is very short-lived, which can also be said to be a flash in the pan.

The common characteristics of the "98 generation" writers are:

Patriotism: the pride of the country and nation is revealed between the lines.

The creation of new literary expressions: for example, Impressionist novels.

Language is concise and easy to understand: the enrichment of content is above rhetorical aesthetics.

The political ideology of the left wing: anarchism and socialism.

Worry about the sense of life: promote the questioning of existentialism².

We can feel the characteristics of literary creation in this period from the three most representative writers of the "98 generation". The first is Pío Baroja, who is known as Hemingway of Spain. His works reveal pessimism and depict the color of individualism incisively and vividly. Baroja's novels are slightly political, although they are not easy to be noticed. He expressed sympathy for anarchists and dissatisfaction with the chaos of Spain's Second Republic. We can see the anti clerical thoughts in Baroja's novels.

Azorín's works can best reflect the creative style of the "98 generation". His writing style is very unique. His novels are characterized by the use of short sentences and concise syntax. Authentic dialects are interspersed in the text, making the work more original. Azorín often uses two or three adjectives together, separated by commas to modify a central noun.

Machado is regarded as a representative poet and dramatist in Spain. His works are full of reflection on Spanish history, care and worry about its current situation and future. He cares about people's destiny from beginning to end. However, his unique description of the natural scenery and ordinary people of Spain is unique among the "98 generation" writers. In addition, the evolution of his poetic style in his life is relatively obvious, which has experienced three stages: the passion of modernism, the realism of the "98 generation" and the speculation of philosophical poetry.

3. Conclusion

The creations of the members of the "98 generation" undoubtedly have their own personalities, but they also show some common characteristics:

- strongly dissatisfied with the reality, opposed backwardness and conservatism, and put forward a plan to revitalize the country.
- love the motherland and emphasize the sense of nationality and motherland.
- strong subjective emotion, especially in the landscape related to the motherland, blending feelings and scenes and full of poetry.
- sad tone.
- be concerned about religious issues and existing problems, especially the Spanish problem.

¹ Irrationalism philosophy refers to the emergence of Western irrationalism philosophy trend of thought which was highlighted only in the middle of the 19th century. It is not only a response and Reflection on the capitalist reality, but also a call and prediction for the new era. At the same time, it also changes the single development mode of Western Philosophy centered on rationality.

² Existentialism is human centered and respects human personality and freedom. Existentialism holds that man lives in a meaningless universe, and man's existence itself has no meaning, but man can shape and achieve himself on the basis of his original existence, live brilliantly, and thus have meaning.

- explore the essence of our nation and the reasons for its decline.
- language expression fits in the concise, simple and clear style of modernism, with content as the main and form as the auxiliary.
- pay attention to the appropriate use of words, and seldom use ancient words, local words or foreign words.
- idealism, skepticism and pessimism. Most members tend to be conservative in the later stage and place their hopes on religion.

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