

ANCIENT GREEK LITERATURE.

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ABSTRACT. This article about Ancient Greek literature and research which writers wrote their works in this period and what about are they. In addition, analyze Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods.

KEY WORDS: Greek literature, Archaic period, Classical period, Hellenistic period, historical works.

INTRODUCTION. Greek literature has influenced not only its Roman neighbors to the west but also countless generations across the European continent. Greek writers are responsible for the introduction of such genres as poetry, tragedy, comedy, and western philosophy to the world. These Greek authors were born not only on the soil of their native Greece but also in Asia Minor (Ionia), the islands of the Aegean, Sicily, and southern Italy.

Greek literature is not done in gray or with a low palette. It is all black and shining white or black and scarlet and gold. The Greeks were keenly aware, terribly aware, of life's uncertainty and the imminence of death. Over and over again they emphasize the brevity and the failure of all human endeavor, the swift passing of all that is beautiful and joyful[1]. Joy and sorrow, exultation and tragedy, stand hand in hand in Greek literature, but there is no contradiction involved thereby[2].

To fully understand and appreciate Greek literature one must separate it, divide the oral epics from the tragedies and comedies as well as the histories from the philosophies. Greek literature can also be divided into distinct periods: Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic. The literature of the Archaic era mostly centered on myth; part history and part folklore. Homer's epics of the Iliad and the Odyssey and Hesiod's Theogony are significant examples of this period. Literary Greece begins with Homer. Since writing had not yet arrived in Greece, much of what was created in this period was communicated orally, only to be put in written form years later[3].

The Classical era (4th and 5th centuries BCE) centered on the tragedies of such writers as Sophocles and his Oedipus Rex, Euripides's Hippolytus, and the comedies of Aristophanes. Lastly, the final period, the Hellenistic era, saw Greek poetry, prose, and culture expand across the Mediterranean influencing such Roman writers as Horace, Ovid, and Virgil. Unfortunately, with only a few exceptions, much of what was created during the Archaic and Classical period remains only in fragments[4].

During the Archaic period, the poets' works were spoken - an outcome of an oral tradition - delivered at festivals. A product of Greece's Dark Ages, Homer's epic the *Iliad* centered on the last days of the **Trojan War**, a war initiated by the love of a beautiful woman, **Helen**. It brought an array of heroes such as **Achilles**, Hector, and **Paris** to generations of Greek youth. It was a poem of contrasts: gods and mortals, divine and human, war and peace. **Alexander the Great** slept with a copy of the book under his pillow and even believed he was related to Achilles. Homer's second work, the *Odyssey*, revolved around the ten-year "odyssey" of the Trojan War hero **Odysseus** and his attempt to return home. While most classicists and historians accept that Homer actually lived, there are some who propose his epics are the result of more than one author. Whether his or not, Homer's works would one day greatly influence the Roman author Virgil and his **Aeneid**. After Homer, lyric poetry - poetry to be sung - came into its own. There were many others who "wrote" during this period, among them were **Aesop**, **Hesiod**, and **Sappho**. The noted storyteller Aesop may or may not be the great fabulist of the ancient world. Professor and classicist D. L. Ashilman in his introduction to the book *Aesop's Fables*, wrote, "Aesop may not be a historical figure but rather a name that refers to a group of ancient storytellers." Convention claims that he was born a slave around 620 BCE in Asia Minor[5]. After he received his freedom, he traveled throughout Greece collecting stories, including *The Mischievous Dog*, *The Lion and the Mouse*, and *The Monkey as King*. These stories often ended (not always happily) with a moral such as honesty is the best policy, look before you leap, heaven helps those who help themselves, and once bitten, twice shy. Written down years after his death, Aesop's fables were among the first printed works in vernacular English[6].

Called the Tenth Muse by Plato, Sappho was a prolific poet of ancient Greece. She innovated the form of poetry through her first-person narration (instead of writing from the vantage point of the gods) and by refining the lyric meter. Iato is alleged to have recognized the tenth Muse in Sappho, and composed a couplet in which he addresses Sappho as the "Tenth Muse" (Palatine Anthology 9.506). While the notion of a "circle" of young women remains undefined in Sappho's poems, the exploration of love, desire, and the pursuit of beauty remain the most prominent themes in Sappho's poetry and those for which she is most remembered. Historian and broadcaster Bettany Hughes soon reported in London's Sunday Times that Obbink discovered the papyrus after prising it from mummy cartonnage — the casing of an Egyptian burial similar to papier-mâché. She celebrates women's existence. It's for this reason that I think Sappho might be called the world's first feminist. In a world dominated by male voices, Sappho spoke and gave voice to a silent realm of women. Furthermore, she placed women in an admirable light. According to information,

In her personal life, Sappho was an outspoken devotee of Aphrodite who often wrote the goddess into her poetry. She wears a crown of laurels in her hair, a symbol of triumph. Perhaps it is suggesting her triumph over poetry and her reputation as “The Poetess.” Perhaps, instead, it represents her triumphs with love – with women, like the one sat next to her but , Sappho had thoughts about life, the universe, and everything, she was not a philosopher. She wrote at times of love, loss, family, religion, and her own fear of aging and mortality. Sappho was born on Lesbos to a noble family. She lived most of her life in the city of Mytilene, with the exception of her family's brief exile in Sicily shortly after 600 B.C.E. She married a wealthy man in Mytilene, and they had a daughter names Cleis. Daughters of Sappho is an anthology of twenty-five contemporary Greek women poets, represented by some of their best poems in new translations by Rae Dalven. Sappho 16 is a love poem – the genre for which Sappho was best known – which praises the beauty of the narrator's beloved, Anactoria, and expresses the speaker's desire for her now that she is absent[7].

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, some of the gods alleged to have been relatively late imports into Greece can in fact be shown to have origins. The ancient Greek pioneered, developed and fact, named many familiar genre of World literature: epic, lyric, and pastoral poetry, tragic, and comic drama, prose history, philosophy, and the novel all have deep roots in the literature of ancient Greece. So there were many writers and poets. All of them try to describe ancient Greek period.

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