

Love and Death in Spanish Medieval Literature

The living death of courtly love passion and the engagement with the imminence of death in both popular and *culto* works are prominent topics in Spanish Medieval literature. These themes will be examined in the early popular lyric, beginning with the *jarchas* embedded in Arabic poetry, the *romancero* or ballad tradition, and the *cancionero tradicional*. “La danza de la muerte,” performed under the threat of the bubonic plague, Jorge Manrique’s elegant “Coplas por la muerte de su padre” and the Arcipreste de Hita’s lament at the death of a bawd will be studied, as well as sample tales from *El conde Lucanor*. Selections from Sem Tob, Gonzalo de Berceo and other figures will also be examined, and all works will be studied in the context of the tensions between the Christian, Moorish and Jewish cultures of Spain. The course will culminate in a close reading of Fernando de Rojas’ masterpiece *Celestina*, in which the commonplaces of courtly love poetry are defamiliarized by the harsh realities of death in a strikingly modern work at the origins of the Spanish Renaissance. The course will include samples of Spanish early music and a creative writing component.