

Dominick Finello. *The Evolution of the Pastoral Novel in Early Modern Spain*.

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In *The Evolution of the Pastoral Novel in Early Modern Spain*, Dominick Finello examines Spanish pastoral romances from the perspective of the “public reception, artistic taste, innovative metrical forms, and the power of the writer in a hierarchical society” in order to discover a “bold sense of literary self-awareness” which affords us “a record of what people read, what they understood from it, and how it enriched their lives” (ix).

Chapter 1, “Modes and Modalities of the Spanish Pastoral Novel,” considers the origins, audience, themes and techniques, innovations and experiments, credibility, feminine presence, and justification of the Spanish pastoral mode. Although the author recognizes the heterogeneous nature of the Spanish *libros de pastores*, he nevertheless attempts to elaborate some generalizations applicable to all Spanish manifestations of the genre. His assertions, however, that “the uncertainty of the outcome of the pastoral novel springs from its versatility” (2) or that “the plot almost always conceals the amorous and political intrigues that weigh upon the novel’s resolution” (12) seem somewhat strained. Finello claims that Montemayor’s *Los siete libros de la Diana* (1559) marks the beginning of the “pastoral novel’s tortuous history” (3), although it might be argued that Sannazaro’s *Arcadia* (1504) is the work that gave shape to the genre and introduced many of its conventions. These quibbles aside, this chapter is a useful introduction to the peculiarities and salient features of Spanish pastoral romances.

In chapter 2, “Intimacy and Collective Behavior,” Finello posits that “the pastoral novelists of the Renaissance injected into their work . . . poems about friends or by friends and patrons to strengthen the collective voice that routinely speaks through the personages of the novel” (51) and that “the pastoral novel is defined by its adeptness at analyzing the behavior of persons within groups” (50). Finello presupposes that all Spanish pastoral romances are *roman à clef*. While a good deal of chapter 2 is dedicated to the theme of friendship and camaraderie in *La Galatea* by Cervantes, Finello’s assertion that “Cervantes gleefully takes advantage of pastoral license and latitude to adopt for his cast a combination of personal friends, poets of renown, and shepherds (disguised by necessity) who may have been mere acquaintances” (60), seems highly speculative. Much more persuasive is the argument in favor of the depiction of intimacy between author and the Alban courtiers in the section devoted to Lope de Vega’s *La Arcadia* (80–93).

Chapter 3, “Places and Environments,” studies the settings of the Spanish pastoral romances. Finello argues that “the spaces of the pastoral novels after Lope de Vega seem to contract because the shepherd-protagonist’s concentration has become directed towards goals of empowerment” (103) and he adds that experimentations with space in modern narrative may owe a debt of gratitude to the pastoral (104).

Finello's study of academic space, or the space of literary patronage (107–11) is quite compelling. The final section of this chapter takes up the important question of the relationship between the pastoral and literary academies (124–61).

Chapter 4, "Representations," studies pastoral's incorporation of dramatic episodes, eclogues, and masques, both as interpolated pieces that are integral to the development of the narrative, and as pieces that can stand on their own aesthetic merit. The book ends with an analysis of the role of festivals in the Spanish pastoral romances. Finello views their frequent utilization as evidence of "the novelist's ambition to effectuate an artificial world of the 'false' shepherds" (187).

The Evolution of the Pastoral Novel in Early Modern Spain is an important reminder of the privileged position enjoyed by pastoral literature throughout the entire early modern period in Spain. If it is not a literary mode that captures the fancy of the contemporary reader, it must nevertheless be read and understood for its undeniable importance in the history of Spanish literature. While Finello certainly adds to our knowledge of the books of shepherds that constitute the core of the canon, roughly a dozen, he makes no mention of those other manifestations of the genre that are typically exiled to the margins: works by Arze Solórzano, Botello, Covarrubias Herrera, Espinel Adorno, Pérez, Ponce, Gonzalo de Saavedra, Tejada, Bernardo de la Vega, etc. A full accounting of the evolution of the pastoral novel needs to take these into consideration.

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