

Jacopo Sannazaro. *Latin Poetry*.

The I Tatti Renaissance Library 38. Tr. Michael C. J. Putnam. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. index. append. bibl. \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-674-03406-8.

Michael Putnam aims to translate Sannazaro's Latin works by giving them a modern twist without distorting their authentic literary dimension. Many problems hang over these texts, which are necessary steps in understanding the complexity of the masterpiece *Arcadia*: among these problems, we should mention, at least, the incompleteness of *Egloghe Piscatorie* and the overlapping of different publications that hamper the comprehension of the author's last will.

The first merit of Putnam's edition is to divide the subject of his study clearly: the works presented in their English translation are *The Virgin Birth*, *Lamentation on the Death of Christ*, *Piscatory Eclogues*, *Fragment of an Eclogue*, *The Willows*, *Elegies*, and *Epigrams*; for each work, Putnam gives details of the early modern or modern publication that was his point of reference during the long and difficult process of the translation; furthermore, in the notes at the end of the book, he adds a bibliography of studies used in completing his work. The reader can thus enter directly into the practical laboratory of the translation.

After a long introduction, in which Putnam analyzes Sannazaro's life in a constant and perceptive comparison with his literary works, the reader can concentrate on the poetry, which is able to speak alone, without oppressive and redundant explanations (all the notes are put at the end of the texts and, until that point, the reader is caught up in a magic relationship between the original Latin and its new English rendition). Putnam chooses to transfer poetry to prose, arguing that it is not possible to reproduce the original Latin verse in a parallel English version: otherwise his translation and approach is fairly conservative, without the risk of distorting Sannazaro's model. In fact, if we compare the most difficult part of Sannazaro's work for a contemporary translation, the *Piscatory Eclogues*, we can see that Putnam has chosen many Latinized English words.

Putnam's work is an authoritative point of reference for experts in Renaissance studies, and because the translation is really enjoyable and easy to read it will satisfy curious readers interested in the culture of Neapolitan humanism; the typography and elegance of the edition add pleasure to this important reading. In the introduction to his work, Putnam emphasizes the originality and breadth of Sannazaro's work: "Sannazaro's brevity does only summary justice to the rich variety of subjects and of their presentation in these more than five score poems. We have compositions on poet's kings and patrons, on friends and enemies, on places and dates. We move easily between hymn and invective, between love poetry and satire, eulogy and condemnation, and in such a way that juxtaposition often serves to elicit any poem's special essence" (xviii). In brief, Sannazaro's works offer a window on a whole world and, if we use an English key to open this universe, it is not something to be regretted, that does violence to the Latin dimension. On the

contrary this admirable volume will prove really useful for young generations of students and researchers.

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