

Iacopo Sannazaro. *Arcadia*.

Ed. Carlo Vecce. *Classici* 26. Rome: Carocci editore, 2013. 392 pp. €26. ISBN: 978-88-430-6623-0.

The great pastoral romance of Sannazaro had many lives: the various stages in the composition of the work, the numerous vicissitudes of its publication history — including the pirate edition published in Venice by Bernardino Vercellese in 1522 — the extraordinary success registered in sixty-six editions in the sixteenth century (sixty in Venice alone), and its long afterlife in the imitations of Lope de Vega in Spain, Jorge de Montemayor in Portugal, Sir Philip Sidney in England, and many others. The first phase of its evolution goes back to the 1480s when in his early twenties Sannazaro composed a group of isolated eclogues (*egloghe estravaganti*) in the pastoral genre, contained in a single Venetian manuscript. In these he was inspired particularly by the *Bucoliche elegantissime*, published in 1482 in Florence, which quickly made its way to Naples. In fact, four eclogues of one of the authors in this collection, Jacopo Fiorino de' Boninsegni, were dedicated to Alfonso of Aragon, Duke of Calabria. It is apparent that the poet used some of these early poems in eclogues 1, 3, and 6 of the *Arcadia*.

Vecce provides us with a very clear and detailed exposition of the history of the text from the early redaction, first given a Latin title and then the vernacular title of

*Libro pastorale nominato Arcadio*, to the second version with the definitive title of *Arcadia*. The first book consisted of ten proses and ten eclogues, while in the second Sannazaro added two proses, two eclogues, and an envoi, *A la sampogna* (to his pipe). The second version first appeared from the press of Sigismondo Mayr in Naples in March 1504, edited by Sannazaro's good friend, the humanist Pietro Summonte. In the dedication to Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona, Summonte states that it was copied from an autograph manuscript of Sannazaro, who at the time was still in France with the exiled king, Frederick III of Aragon. As Vecce argues, although Summonte claims that he edited the work on his own, it is not plausible that Sannazaro did not implicitly authorize it. On the other hand, it is very possible that Summonte and the poet, Benet Gareth Cariteo, made considerable linguistic changes in the text. On his return from France in 1505 another edition was printed, this time surely with the collaboration of the author and without variants. Vecce sensibly uses this as the basis of his edition, save that he makes a few orthographic changes for the convenience of the modern reader, but without betraying the linguistic quality of the original. In the later editions Sannazaro changed the language substantially from the original Neapolitan coloring to the new Tuscanizing literary language, based on Boccaccio and Petrarch, in anticipation of Bembo's precepts in the *Prose della volgar lingua*.

The notes and commentary to the text draw on previous editions, with due acknowledgement, beginning with that of Michele Scherillo (1888), which was especially good in the citation of the classical sources, and the more recent ones of Enrico Carrara, Alfredo Mauro, and Francesco Erspamer; but Vecce adds many original insights of his own, some published in previous books and articles, with others new to this edition. He is very sensitive to the sophisticated prose rhythms, corresponding to the *cursus* of medieval Latin prose, which he explains in detail, commenting on the marvelous opening of the prologue. Likewise, he elucidates the polyphonic rhythms and metrical schemes of the eclogues. At the end of each prose and poetic segment he writes a succinct synopsis of the plot and a critical appreciation, with a recapitulation of the chief sources of the various episodes. At times he also gives an excursus on artistic representations that may have influenced the poet in certain *ekphraseis*, as in the depiction of the doors of the temple of the shepherd goddess, Pales, in prose 3. In this case he may well have recalled the great cycle of paintings at the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, which he must have visited.

The reader could hardly ask for a better edition of this literary masterpiece of the Quattrocento. Sadly, as the author nostalgically points out at the end of his introduction, the mythic and spiritual places evoked in the *Arcadia* have been irreparably destroyed in the barbaric degradation of the modern city of Naples.

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