



Javier Irigoyen-García. *The Spanish Arcadia: Sheep Herding, Pastoral Discourse, and Ethnicity in Early Modern Spain*

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by Javier Irigoyen-García

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Toronto Iberic 11. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. x + 344 pp. \$70. ISBN: 978-1-4426-4727-5.

With this book, Javier Irigoyen-García performs a clever reflection on the concept of Spanishness — its relation to the role of the shepherd and its opposition

to the Jewish and the Moorish legacies — in the construction of cultural, racial, and religious identities in early modern Spain. The shepherd would serve the *cristianos viejos* (Old Christians) to represent themselves as an idealized community, exclusive of everything ethnically unrelated to the blood purity that became a national obsession in the sixteenth century.

The sociological analysis in the introduction and the first of the two parts of the book leads the reader into the reasons for the rise and fall of the pastoral genre, and to the understanding of the social determinants that led to the decline of the genre. The first part is divided in three chapters. Chapter 1 explores how the imagery and the vocabulary related to livestock during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance were progressively used as a weapon of racial exclusion against conversos (converts) and Moriscos (Moorish): especially interesting are reflections on the words *raza*, *ralea*, *roña*, *hilaza*, and *almagra* in the context of ethnic cleansing and religious persecution.

Chapter 2 examines how Old Christians ended up identifying themselves with the figure of the shepherd as a segregationist symbol of Spanishness and as an expression of cultural and ethnic differences. The reflections about the attire of shepherds and the ideological implications of their representation deserve special mention (especially in the context of the birth of the Spanish drama), as does its evolution in local hagiographies.

Chapter 3 focuses on how the pastoral romances seek the creation of a culturally and ethnically pure, ahistorical Spanish Arcadia connected with the remote protoinhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. In addition, the author analyzes how modern historiography could have played a key role in providing the sense of community in which Old Christians sought to deny their past as an oppressed land and to create a vision of an ethnocentric Spain in which shepherds became representatives of an essential anachronistic identity, with cultural and genealogical continuity, in the early Spanish Renaissance.

The second part is divided in two chapters. Chapter 4 discusses how the debates on the self-representation of Spanishness that were already present in Montemayor's *La Diana* were extended to the limits of the genre with Cervantes. This chapter discusses the degree of participation of the pastoral romances in the ethnocentric reconfiguration of Spain, and the debate about the Moorish legacy in the construction of its image.

Chapter 5 explores how the expulsion of the Moriscos from 1609 to 1614 transformed the suppression of the Moorish legacy into nostalgia toward that legacy, in the works of Lope de Vega, Espinel Adorno, and Barrionuevo y Moya, which marked the end of the pastoral genre. Finally, the conclusion explores the evolution of the idea of race and cultural identity from the seventeenth century to the present day, by highlighting the persistence of the pastoral as a still-valid cultural remainder fully active both in the spoken language, in politics, and in the arts (film, music, and literature).

What is interesting are the future developments the author suggests at the end of the book, such as an analysis of the historical evolution of the figure of the shepherd between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, the “pastoral habitus”

from blood purity to whiteness in contemporary Spain, or the counterappropriation of the figure of the shepherd by Moriscos and Sephardic Jews. These proposals are enormously laudable, since they promote and stimulate the continuity of a humanistic debate around a subject of great interest for the better understanding of the Spanish culture as a whole.

One of the merits of this book, and what makes it a great academic achievement, is that it plays a big part in finding a meaningful global interpretation of the heterogeneous pastoral manifestations in early modern Spain, an academic need that was first pointed out by López Estrada in 1974.

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