

**Jacopo Sannazaro's *Piscatory Eclogues* and the Question of Genre**

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**ABSTRACT**

Jacopo Sannazaro's *Piscatory Eclogues*, published in 1526, probe the boundaries of the pastoral genre by substituting fishermen and the seashore for shepherds and the countryside. Sannazaro's experiment scandalized some later readers and at least one recent critic maintains that the poems are something other than pastoral. In this article, I argue that the poems should be regarded as pastoral, examining the relationship between work and leisure in Sannazaro's poems and in classical pastoral, some non-pastoral intertexts in the *Piscatory Eclogues*, and several metapoetic moments in the poems where Sannazaro seems to consider his own literary achievement. I suggest that recognition of this generic identity deepens our appreciation of Sannazaro's sophisticated intertextuality with his pastoral forebears and his creative reworking of classical literature of the sea: Sannazaro imitates Vergil on a close, line-by-line basis, and also establishes complex structural parallels between his collection of five eclogues and Vergil's ten, while also taking advantage of a literary tradition analogizing land and sea. Moreover, Sannazaro's reception of Vergil, Theocritus, and other ancient pastoral poets and the subsequent reception of Sannazaro's own work form a suggestive case study for the continuation of a generic tradition. Sannazaro illustrates the importance of authorial innovation in keeping a tradition alive, while the critical reception of his work reveals the fundamental role of the reader in constructing genre.