

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Cranston, Jodi. Green Worlds of Renaissance Venice.

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Volume 43, numéro 4, automne 2020

Spaces of Power of the Spanish Nobility (1480–1715)  
Les espaces de pouvoir de la noblesse espagnole (1480–1715)

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1076857ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36414>

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Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Henry, C. (2020). Compte rendu de [Cranston, Jodi. Green Worlds of Renaissance Venice.] *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 43(4), 299–301. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36414>

Each of the essays in this volume offers new understandings of the men and women who shaped England's religious politics in the sixteenth century. The volume as a whole is a timely reminder of the historical significance of "the power of individual agency" (47).

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<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36413>

**Cranston, Jodi.**

***Green Worlds of Renaissance Venice.***

University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2019. Pp. 228 + 80 ill. ISBN 978-0-271-08202-8 (hardcover) US\$89.95.

Jodi Cranston's *Green Worlds of Renaissance Venice* situates pastoral art of the early sixteenth century—primarily painting, drawing, engraving, and small-scale sculpture—within the broader "greening" of Venice between around 1500 and 1550. Cranston sees this phase of intense attention to the pastoral mode in the visual arts in parallel to the establishment of urban and suburban pleasure gardens on lagoon islands, the depiction of Venice in religious and political painting as a floating Arcadia, and the ephemeral transformation of the densely built city into a fantasy green world through festivity and theatrical spectacle. The book synthesizes the production of actual and imaginary green places into an ambitious new conceptualization of the Venetian pastoral mode, which in turn informed the development of the pastoral arts elsewhere in Italy and Europe by the later sixteenth century. Cranston approaches the pastoral art of Venice, and indeed the unique *Mundus alter* status of the city itself, through the powerful conceptual framework of the green world as a second world or heterotopia, building on the scholarship of Northrop Frye, Harry Berger Jr., and Michel Foucault.

Because the undertaking of this study is to define the pastoral in relation to the unique geographical identity of Venice and its mythologized "ideology of place" (97), it leaves largely aside the cultural, ecological, economic, and political interdependencies between the island capital and its *terraferma* possessions, apart from some attention to Padua. This is a major departure from previous

scholarship on Venetian pastoral art, literature, music, and theatre, which views the relationship of Venice to mainland Italy, rooted in an imagined Golden Age of antiquity, as essential.

The first chapter, “The Greening of Venice,” uses Jacopo de’ Barbari’s monumental *View of Venice* (1500) to trace the development of pleasure gardens and suburban retreats on the inner-lagoon islands of Murano and Giudecca, a phenomenon that can be traced back to the early fifteenth-century through the poetry of Leonardo Giustinian. It explores the unique conditions of the “littoral pastoral” extolled by Giustinian, Jacopo Sannazaro, and Andrea Calmo, and uses Petrarch and Aretino to focus on palace and villa gardens as sites of humanist study and literary gatherings. The chapter concludes with the ephemeral greening of Venetian courtyards, *campi*, and canals through performances of pastoral musical theatre. This section also addresses Sebastiano Serlio’s stagecraft, including the distinction drawn between the pastoral and satiric modes, the latter being epitomized by Ruzante’s early rural comedies.

Chapter 2 turns to Venetian pastoral painting and the graphic arts between 1500 and 1520. Focus falls on independent artworks by major artists long identified with the rise of Venetian landscapes and the pastoral mode: Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, Giulio and Domenico Campagnola, and Titian. Largely absent from consideration are furniture painting, illustrated printed books (beyond the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*), and illuminated manuscripts, areas in which a number of pastoral subjects and themes were introduced into Venetian visual culture ca. 1500. The chapter characterizes the poetics, structures, and activities of the pastoral realm, although without recourse to close visual analysis of individual artworks. It begins with pastoral landscapes in religious painting and proceeds to address the self-reflexive quality of pastoral poetry (Virgil, Petrarch) and paintings in which landscapes are ideal second worlds at the hinge of reality and fiction. Unlike scholars such as David Rosand and Stephen Campbell, Cranston does not explore the philosophical conceptualization of nature current at the time, the technological innovations used to depict nature, or the animation and transformation of nature through the agency of music, magic, or pagan deities and spirits. The result is a meditation on the “ontological openness” (73) of the pastoral mode rather than a characterization of its major themes and subjects, or a representation of the range of artists and imagery that determined its broad cultural impact.

The third chapter looks at distant lagoon views of Venice in political and religious painting and the depiction of coastlines in mythological painting in relation to the idea of the island as a second world and to the symbolic role of bodies of water in dividing sacred or mythical space. Whether views of Venetian urban architecture and island coasts should be considered “pastoral,” as Cranston terms them, is a question that could be explored across other media, such as Giulio Campagnola’s juxtapositions in several engravings of bucolic *terraferma* landscapes with distant lagoon views. This chapter also rehearses the fascinating topic of the imagined “greening” of Venice in epic poetry and in Alvise Cornaro’s unrealized urban development projects, pointing to promising directions for future study in the field of cultural ecology.

Cranston’s fourth chapter on pastoral sculpture, which centres on the Paduan sculptor Andrea Briosco (Il Riccio), marks an important contribution to the field as no survey of these small bronze objects and their place in Venetian *studioli* currently exists. Her argument about the intimate appreciation of self-contained bronze figurines is compelling; however, it overlooks the collection of ancient sculptures and modern medals and relief plaquettes with pastoral subjects, which have crucial connections to the graphic arts. Cranston considers other small bronzes—inkwells and oil lamps—in relation to the sensory reception of art and the animation of nature in pastoral literature. This inspired discussion touches on intersections between metallurgy, natural history, alchemy, and astrology, pointing to important directions for future study.

The final chapter addresses transformations to Venetian pastoral painting after 1520 by charting the rise of Ovidian subject matter and the pagan deities in cycles Titian made for courts outside Venice. Complementing the broad conceptual and chronological sweep of the book are eighty high-quality illustrations of pastoral landscapes, gardens, islands, city views, and the figures who inhabit them, most of them in colour. In summary, this wide-ranging book, which is Cranston’s third, combines art history, literary theory, and cultural geography to provide a fresh take on the importance of green spaces and the pastoral mode in Renaissance Venice.

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<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36414>