



Rewriting the Italian Novella in Counter-Reformation Spain (Monografías A)

Carmen R. Rabell

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As they reshaped the Italian novella under the inquisitorial atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation, Spanish narrators labelled their texts as exemplary. However, critics have usually agreed that there is a contradiction between the morals preached in the narrative frames, prologues and sententiae of Spanish novellas and the content of the plots. Rabell sees this ambiguity as a result of the use of the rhetoric of the fictitious case: Spanish novellas rewrite the Italian genre with the specific purpose of either challenging or validating the rules regarding marriage introduced by the Council of Trent. Since civil, canonical and family hierarchies were based on the same metaphor that conceives power as one body in which, by analogy, the husband is the head of his family, as the monarch is the head of the state and the Pope is the head of the church, Spanish novellas explore the contradictions between civil and canon laws regarding the private context of marriage in order to suggest further contradictions within the public sphere of state and church. The fictitious case provides a rhetoric to test the validity of the legal grounds of Counter-Reformation Spain. CARMEN R. RABELL is associate professor, department of comparative literature, University of Puerto Rico - Rio Piedras.

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