In the final section of Arcadia, “A la sampogna” [To the Pan-Pipe], the Neapolitan poet Jacopo Sannazaro takes his leave of the reader with these melancholy words:

Le nostre Muse sono extinte, secchi sono i nostri lauri, ruinato è il nostro Parnaso, le selle son tutte mutole, le valli e i monti per doglia son divenuti sordi. Non si trovano più ninfe o satiri per li boschi, i pastori han perduto il cantare, i greggi e gli armenti appena pascono per li prati…. Le fiere similmente abandonano le usate caverne, gli ucelli fuggono dai dolci nidi, i duri et insensati alberi inanzi a la debita maturezza gettano i lor frutti per terra, e i teneri fiori per le meste campagne tutti communemente ammarciscono…. Ogni cosa si perde, ogni speranza è mancata, ogni consolazione è morta.¹

Sannazaro was not the only one to feel that all was lost. At the time that Arcadia was published (1504), “the cry of pain with which the Arcadia closed was becoming a daily lament.”² Naples was still recovering from Charles VIII’s invasion ten years earlier, which even more than the physical devastation that it had brought, had profoundly shaken humanistic faith in ethical virtue and the power of reason, producing a sense of disorientation, insecurity, and crisis.³ By 1504 the Aragonese dynasty that had ruled the city for the previous half century had been definitively replaced by viceregal Spanish rule.

Sannazaro bade farewell to an era in which Naples had been one of the richest cultural centers in Italy. The Humanist activity that flourished in

¹ Sannazaro, Arcadia, 240: “Our muses are extinct, our laurels desiccated; our Parnassus is in ruins, our woods are mute, and our valleys and mountains have gone deaf from sorrow. Nymphs and satyrs no longer populate the forests, the shepherds have lost their song, flocks and herds barely graze the pastures…. In the same way, wild beasts abandon their habitual caves, birds flee their sweet nests, the hard and insensate trees cast their fruits to the ground before they are properly ripe, and the tender flowers commonly rot away in the countryside…. Everything is lost, every hope failed, every consolation dead.” (All translations are my own.)
² Putignano, “Dagli angioini,” 104.
³ Mario Santoro, as cited in Putignano, “Dagli angioini,” 103.
and around the Aragonese court reflected the role that Naples had had for centuries: a catalyst of artistic creativity, shaped by its preternaturally beautiful setting and tangible links to classical antiquity, and a melting pot for writers, thinkers, and artists from southern Italy and beyond. Besides the towering example of Sannazaro, Quattrocento Naples produced literary works of lasting influence by authors such as Antonio Beccadelli, or il Panormita (1394–1471), known for his Latin priapic poem *Hermaphroditus* [Hermaphrodite]; Benedetto Gareth, or il Cariteo (1450–1514), a transplanted Catalan whose major work, *Endimione* [Endymion], was a collection of love poetry; Tristano Caracciolo (c.1437–1522), who grappled with one of the most popular topics of the time in his *De varietate fortunae* [On the Variety of Fortune]; and Tommaso Guardati, or Masuccio Salernitano (c.1410–75), whose story collection, *Novellino*, influenced by the Boccaccian model, became a classic in its own right.

The two absolute protagonists of the Quattrocento Neapolitan literary scene were Giovanni Pontano (1429–1503) and Jacopo Sannazaro (1456–1530). Pontano, originally from Umbria, was a major presence at the royal court in Naples, serving as secretary, tutor, and diplomat, and at the Humanist Accademia Napolitana, which in 1471 became the Accademia Pontaniana. His literary production included poetry, dialogues, and philosophical, political, and moral treatises, all in Latin, such as the dialogues *Charon, Asinus*, and *Urania*, the eclogue *Lepidina*, and the lyric collection *De amore coniugali* [On Conjugal Love], the last of which describes the various facets of family life (and includes twelve charming lullabies for his son, the *Naeniae* [Lullabies]). Sannazaro, an ever-present point of reference for later generations of Neapolitan writers, also wrote in multiple genres: lyric poetry, court farces, piscatorial eclogues (the *Piscatoriae*), religious pastoral-epic (*De partu virginis* [On the Virgin Birth]), and even dialect pieces (the *gliommeri*). His masterpiece, the allegorical pastoral romance *Arcadia*, was the first of its genre in Europe and a 16th-century blockbuster. Written in a format that combines verse with prose narrative, *Arcadia* describes the melancholic (and autobiographical) peregrinations of the lover Sincero, who leaves his beloved lady and Naples for Arcadia and its shepherds; when he finally returns home, his lady has died.

The works of this period presented a number of characteristics that would reappear throughout the early modern period. Common themes include love and sensuality; memory, nostalgia, and elegy; and mortality and the passage of time. Mythological projections in which the people and places of contemporary Naples are transposed into a fantastic and metaphorical Arcadia abound but so also do domestic, intimate themes