

Pícaro and Cortesano: Identity and the Forms of Capital in Early Modern Spanish Picaresque Narrative and Courtesy Literature

Felipe E. Ruan

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In this book on the relationship between picaro and cortesano, Felipe E. Ruan argues that these two cultural figures are linked by a shared form of deportment centered on prudent self-accommodation. This behavior is generated and governed by a courtly ethos or habitus that emerges as the result of the growth and influence of the court in Madrid. Ruan posits that both picaro and cortesano, and their respective books, conduct manual and picaresque narrative, tacitly engage questions of identity and individualism by highlighting the valued resources or forms of capital that come to fashion and sustain self-identity. He places the books of the picaro and cortesano within the larger polemic of early modern identity and individualism, and offers an account of the individual as agent whose actions are grounded on objective social relations, without those actions being simply the result of mechanistic adherence to the social order.



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