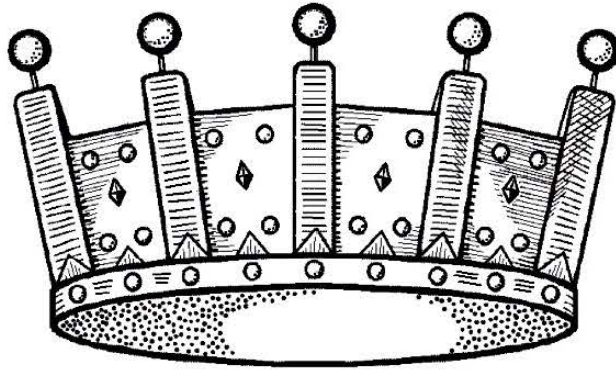


SICILIAN MEDIEVAL STUDIES

Queens of Sicily

1067-1266



The Queens Consort, Regent and Regnant
of the
Norman-Swabian Era
of the
Kingdom of Sicily

Jacqueline Alió

Appendix 5 THE CONTRASTO

Little is known of Cielo (Ciullo) of Alcamo, whose given name may be a form of *Michele* (Michael); in medieval Sicily *Celi* was often the shortened form of *Miceli*. Perhaps instead *Cielo* was short for *Marcello*, but what little evidence exists suggests that the poet was Sicilian and that he probably came from the town of Alcamo on the western side of the island.

The oldest surviving manuscript of his poem, the lengthiest of the Sicilian School, was copied in a “tuscanized” tongue and script late in the thirteenth century. Photos of that copy, preserved at the Vatican Library in *Codex Vaticanus Latinus 3793*, appear at the end of this appendix following the notes.

Intended to be literal and clear, this translation was effected without reference to any other. Previous English translations, such as those of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1861) and Lorna Lancaster de’Lucchi (1922), rendered flowery, rhyming poetry which, though eloquent and appealing to the Victorian mind, was not very true to the original. That of Frede Jensen (1986) was a significant improvement.

As mentioned in this volume’s introduction, Dante Alighieri and others knew of Cielo’s work, which was part of an early nexus that inspired the literary, and not merely spoken, use of an Italian vernacular even though it did not influence Tuscan directly.

THE CONTRASTO

*tutt'a meve dicessoro 'accorri 'sto malnato!
Non mi degnara porgere la mano,
per quant'ave lu Papa et lu Soldano.*

Even if you were to feel so much pain
that you fell down in agony, and people would come
to you from left and right telling me,
“Help this poor man!” I wouldn't even hold out a hand to help you
for all the wealth of the pope and the sultan.

Knight:

*Deu lo volesse, vitama, ca fossi morto in casa
l'arma n'andèra cònsola ca di notte fantasia,
la iente ti chiamarano 'oi periura, malvasa
c'ha' morto l'omo in càsata traìta,
sanz'ogni colpo levimi la vita!*

If only God would allow that I were to die in your home,
oh love of my life! My soul that is in a delirium
both day and night will leave comforted. People would call you:
Oh evil liar! You killed a man in your own home,
traitor! Alas, you kill me without even stabbing me.

Damsel:

*Si tu no' levi e vaitine co' la maladizione,
li frati miei ti trovano dentro chissa magione,
bell'omi so s'eu soffero, perdici le persone,
ca meve se' venuto a sormonare.
Parente oy amico non t'ave a itare.*

If you don't get up and leave, then you shall be cursed;
my brothers will find you in this house, and I would gladly accept
that they kill you because you came here to bother me.
Neither a kinsman nor a friend can come and save you.

Knight:

*A meve non à tano amichi né parenti
stranio mi sono, carama, enfra 'sta bona ienti.
Ora fa 'n'anno, vitama, ch'entrata mi se'n menti,
dicènnoti: 'Vististi lu'ntaiuto?'
Bella, da quello jorno so' feruto.*

My friends and relatives cannot help me.
I am a foreigner, my dear, amongst these good people.
It's been a year, oh my life's love, since you've entered my thoughts.
Ever since you wore that dark dress of mourning.¹¹
Since that day, my beauty, have I been wounded.¹²