Giacomo da Lentini. *The Complete Poetry*. Trans. and ed. Richard Lansing. Intro. Akash Kumar. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. Pp. 186. ISBN 9781487522865.

Giacomo da Lentini, widely credited as inventor of the sonnet, was for too long best known as part of the trinity of early vernacular poets identified by Dante in *Purgatorio* XXIV—together with Guittone d'Arezzo and Bonagiunta d'Orbiccianni—whose “knot” kept them from achieving the heights for which Dante and his collaborators were destined. Modern criticism has been kinder to the 13th-century Sicilian poet, whose work has attracted renewed attention with the publication of partial editions of his oeuvre by Contini and by Panvini in the 1960s, and finally a comprehensive edition by Antonelli in 2008. In the present volume, Richard Lansing grants a wider reading public new access to the oeuvre of the Sicilian School's undisputed leader by rendering in English each of the works edited in Antonelli's inaugural tome of the three-volume *Poeti della Scuola Siciliana*.

The Notary's poetry, much like that of other vernacular poets of the Italian *origini*, remains scarcely known to the English-speaking world. The 19th-century English poet Gabriel Dante Rossetti was the first to introduce Giacomo's work to Anglophone readers. In classic “pre-scientific” style, as Akash Kumar's introduction to Lansing's translations discusses, Rossetti played the role of both translator and “redeemer and purifier of language”: according to the Pre-Raphaelite, his translations were not prone to such “want of grammatical purity,” and did not suffer from other “offences of dialect,” as one might find in the original (15). In 1915, Ernest Langley published a critical edition of integral and fragmentary works attributed to Giacomo with varying authenticity, the critical component of which was produced in English, but with no accompanying translation of the texts. In his 1986 *The Poetry of the Sicilian School*, Frede Jensen offered modern readers ten of Giacomo's pieces translated into English. Lansing's volume, entirely dedicated to the Notary, provides translations of all 38 works of firm attribution, and three more of “dubious authorship.”

Kumar's introduction concisely contextualizes the innovations of Giacomo and the Sicilian School, noting Giacomo's privileged position at the beginning of

the Canzoniere Vaticano 3793 and his dominance in terms of sheer volume within the Sicilian School. He further notes that the manuscripts that transmit the poetry developed under the aegis of Frederick II do so in a highly Tuscanized form: there is scarcely any trace anywhere of the original *Sicilian* language employed by the School. As agents of translation, the Tuscan scribes who preserved the Sicilians' lyrics, form part of a larger trajectory: Kumar expands on "translation" as a central figure in Giacomo's oeuvre, tracing the roots of his formal framework first and most significantly to the Occitan poets, but also to the Arthurian romance tradition; and of his conceptual framework beyond his Gaulish predecessors, to Avicenna, Andreas Capellanus, and Ovid. The debt owed by Giacomo to the troubadours is well studied, though Kumar focusses on some of the inter-Romance aspects that facilitated the Sicilians' appropriation of their matter, and indeed on the Notary's acknowledgement of such, manifest in some of his direct intertextual references. As an example, Giacomo's translation of the first two stanzas of Folquet de Marselha's *A vos, midontç, voill retrair' en cantan* inside of his own *Madonna, dir vo voglio* acts as an overt nod to the troubadour, yet signals the Sicilian's intent to develop a new poetic consciousness in Sicilian from Occitan themes. Kumar views recent publications devoted to Guittone and Bonagiunta, and the fact that the third volume of *Poeti della Scuola Siciliana* is entirely dedicated to the Siculo-Tuscans, as signs of renewed interest in pre-*stilnovisti* vernacular authors. One could also argue that they reflect a modern consciousness not only of the literary-historical arch that leads from the Occitans to the Tuscans via Sicily, but precisely of that "larger trajectory" of translation at the centre of which Giacomo sits both temporally and in the conceptual transformation of the Romance lyric tradition.

One cannot help but to compare this work with another recent publication from the University of Toronto Press's Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library series for which Lansing provided lyrical translations, namely Teodolinda Barolini's 2014 *Dante's Lyrical Poetry*. Both Barolini, in her introduction to the reworked, English version of her *Rime giovanili e la "Vita nuova,"* and Kumar here characterize Lansing's newest Dante translations as "sprightly"; and indeed, Lansing's agile skill is on full display with Giacomo's works as well. Barolini, however, prefaces each translated composition with substantial critical commentary, whereas the present volume relegates most of the individual commentary to brief notes displaced to the end of the translations section. Needless to say, the objectives of a work devoted to Giacomo will necessarily differ from those of one devoted to Dante. The scope and scale of Lansing's effort actually resemble more closely those

of another recent publication from the University of Toronto Press, Antonello Borra's *Selected Poems and Prose* of Guittone d'Arezzo: each extends to a largely untapped readership comparisons of Italian editions of 13th-century authors' works and new English renditions with limited critical annotation. The utility of each will likely be greatest to those readers with some degree of knowledge of Italian but for whom accessing these Medieval texts in their "original" language might prove daunting without recourse to parallel translations. At the editorial level, whereas Barolini provides criticism in each work's introductory essay with metrical notes that follow, and Borra relays metrical information together with whatever brief commentary he shares in footnotes on the relevant pages, the present edition could have made the critical element of the individual pieces more readily accessible: most of Giacomo's poems occupy a sliver of the pages on which they are printed, which easily could have accommodated the critical aspect that has been removed to the end of the volume.

Kumar's attention to Giacomo's role as inventor of the sonnet underscores the poet's importance, not only in transporting Occitan love poetry to Sicilian and Italian shores, but also in transforming it technically and even spiritually, notwithstanding Dante's collocation of Giacomo "di qua dal dolce stil novo." The Notary's mastery "of rhetorical devices and modes of emotional expressivity" can scarcely be comprehensively transmitted through any translation, though Lansing's efforts succeed in balancing, as the essayist suggests, the seemingly irreconcilable interests of the texts' "poetic musicality" and their "conceptual expressions" (14). It is lamentable that the reader is deprived of any significant commentary on the translator's approach, which is a common feature of the other Medieval verse translations in this series (see, however, Michael Papio's extensive remarks on his translation of Boccaccio's *prose* in *Boccaccio's Expositions on Dante's Comedy* [U of Toronto P, 2009]). Lansing's talent for, as Barolini has remarked, "making old Italian lyrics sound like English poetry" (27) helps to liberate the English renditions from their sources in ways that similar Old Italian-to-Modern English translations do not. In this regard, the present volume is of immense importance in spreading awareness of, and allowing a fuller engagement with the principle exponent of the poetic school that indisputably laid the groundwork for each successive wave of vernacular literature in Italy.

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