



# Sicilian Epic and the Marionette Theater

*Michael Buonanno*

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## **Sicilian Epic and the Marionette Theater** Michael Buonanno

This study analyzes the folkloric genres that comprise the repertoire of the marionette theater in Sicily. Here, epic, farce, saints' lives, bandits' lives, fairytales, Christian myth, and city legend offer the vehicles by which puppeteers comment upon, critique--perhaps even negotiate--the relationships among the major classes of Sicilian society: the aristocracy, the people, the clergy and the Mafia. The lynchpin of the repertoire is the Carolingian Cycle and, in particular, a contemporary version of The Song of Roland known in Sicily as The Death of the Paladins, a text which illustrates the means by which the Carolingian heroes--Charlemagne, Roland, Renaud, Ganelon, and Angelica--augment saints, bandits, Biblical figures and Sicilian folk heroes to provide the marionette theater its rhetorical function: the articulation and dissemination of the tools of Sicilian identity.

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