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THE FRENCH INVASION OF MALTA: AN UNPUBLISHED ACCOUNT

Grazio V. Ellul

In June 1798, the Order of St. John surrendered Malta to Napoleon Bonaparte. Hitherto students of French Malta have mostly made use of two contemporary accounts — by Felice Cutajar¹ and Bosredon Ransijat². Another contemporary unpublished version is that of the Syracusan man of letters, the Rev. Giuseppe Maria Capodieci. He was among the first, if not the very first, to write the history of those turbulent days. According to Serafino Privitera, the writer of the *Storia di Siracusa Antica e Moderna*, Capodieci had dedicated his life to learning, collecting all relevant information from old manuscripts and books in private and public archives to write the history of his town. Capodieci died in 1828³.

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1. Curmi, G., "Breve istoria della venuta delli Francesi nell'Isola di Malta e loro modo di governarla (manoscritto inedito)", *Malta Letteraria*, 1932, pp. 57-75-125-147-182-213-250-271-304-329.
 2. Bosredon Ransijat, *Giornale dell'Assedio e Blocco di Malta*, Malta 1843. Among the best published works on Malta in 1798 are: Azopardi, Barone, *Giornale della Presa di Malta e Gozo, dalla Repubblica Francese, e della susseguente Rivoluzione della Campagna*, Malta 1833. Barone Azopardi's *Giornale...* is not a first hand account. He made it clear in the "Avviso" to the reader that "lo scrittore niente ha riportato di sua scienza propria, e che tutto il contenuto dell'opera è ricavato da libri, e documenti già publicati, e da memorie e notamenti scritti da individui contemporanei che per lo più ebbero parte negli avvenimenti accaduti". Scicluna, H.P., "Documents relating to the French Occupation of Malta in 1798 — 1800", *Archivium Melitense*, V, 1-3, pp. 1-303. Hardman, W., *A History of Malta during the French and British Occupations 1798-1815*, London 1909. Denaro, V. F. *The French in Malta*, Malta, Progress Press 1963 (offprint from *Scientia*, XXIX).
 3. Privitera, Serafino, *Storia di Siracusa Antica e Moderna*, Forni Editore, Bologna. In his list of well known 18th century Syracusans, Privitera has this to say about Giuseppe Maria Capodieci: "Coataneo del Locateta e degli illustri mentovati cittadini fu il celebre antiquario sacerdote Giuseppe Capodieci, che tutta la vita consacrò a raccogliere, a riunire, a conservare quanti documenti, quante vecchie scritture, quante minute notizie con ferrea volontà ed invitta perseveranza poté attingere da libri, da codici, da lapidi, da pubblici e privati archivij per apprestare i materiali ed illustrare la lunga serie de secoli, che comprendono la storia dell'antica e della moderna Siracusa. Ciò che aveva fatto per l'Italia l'immenso Muratori, lo fece per Siracusa l'infaticabile Capodieci. Molte opere ei pubblicò per le stampe; e le sue "Antichità di Siracusa" furono apprezzatissime, e fecero il giro di Europa. Ma

The account which is being published in the original form, is Ms. Qq. F. 231 preserved in the Biblioteca Comunale of Palermo. It was written in Syracuse on the 24th July 1798 and addressed to Don Giovanni D'Angelo. In the covering letter to D'Angelo, Capodiecì wrote about the care and attention he devoted to this account. It was written with the sincerity and objectivity that it merited though perhaps not in the style that it deserved. He begs D'Angelo that "should you decide to publish it" he (D'Angelo) should improve upon its style. Capodiecì had, as his source for this account, a number of Syracusan knights of the Order and others who have passed through Syracuse after their expulsion from Malta. They were all eyewitnesses and had a role to play in the events described. "These used to meet me (Capodiecì) every day, recalling all the facts in detail, calculating the hours and days, and without any disagreement among themselves." He hoped that the President of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and other ministers would like to read such a faithful and detailed account. He found merit in the work precisely because it is an account of a number of knights who served at different places in Malta ⁴.

The author and the knights who gave him the information were politically minded. They were conscious of all that was going on behind the scenes. They were people in the know. They themselves had played a role in the events narrated. They were not interested solely in mere facts. The wood is not missed for the trees. The account may contain some inaccuracies but the salient points that make up the history of those days, namely, the part played by the Maltese Jacobins, the Maltese Church, the people's loyalty to the Order, the imbalance of Boisgelin's "*dreadful change*" between the government of the Order and that of the French and finally the intimations of the gathering storm which was to burst on Sunday, 2nd September 1798 and to make that day Malta's finest hour, are all there. The analysis and comments passed by Capodiecì are the more remarkable because he could discern "the condition in which Malta finds itself to-day."

This introduction is not meant as a scientific study of the text itself but rather as a running commentary on Capodiecì's analysis. The overall picture, I feel, should not be sacrificed for the isolated details.

The account starts with a very brief outline of the origins and peregrinations of the Order of St. John. It goes on to deal with "the catastrophe which befell Malta in the current year, 1798." It clearly states one of the reasons why the French captured Malta without any difficulty: the presence on the island of a number of Jacobins or French sympathisers. Very little is known about the number and role of the Maltese Jacobins in the events of June 1798. They greatly impressed the knights and the Maltese who

copiosi sono i suoi manoscritti, cerchi e consultati tuttodì nei preziosi documenti e le rare notizie che contengono. Pure incredibile come un sol uomo abbia potuto scrivere, copiare, e diligentemente riunire in grossi e numerosi volumi tante carezze, che quanto più vetuste si fanno, tanto più preziose divengono. Ei stesso vivente, in distante scansia serbandole nella pubblica biblioteca, donelle alla patria, di cui l'amore in esso era delirio. Morì nel 1828".

4. Bibliotec Comunale di Palermo, MS. QI. F. 231.

remained faithful to the Order. It seems, however, that their number was about 5-7000 at the most. They included members of the Maltese nobility, the bourgeoisie and the upper clergy. In the main, they were the people of Valletta and the three cities. Thus the account repeatedly refers to "continual internal plots and revolutions." One of these was the birth of "a strong plot, fomented by some knights, merchants, and barons..... who held secret meetings with the French to establish Democracy." No sooner was one nipped in the bud than a worse evil appeared.

There was much preoccupation with secret meetings, jacobins, and "democracy" especially with the arrival of noted French sympathisers. The Order of St. John and the King of the Two Sicilies were aware of the revolutionary undercurrents in the island. Already in 1784, Bali Pignatelli wrote to John Acton, in Naples, about "some seditious principles" current against the government of Malta. He warned that "the condition of the island is henceforth to be regarded as the object of vultures, that are ready to devour it". He also noticed signs of a "cancerous germ" which could bring about the immediate collapse of the government. "Wandering gangs" were already sowing discord. Pignatelli noted the harmful effect of the presence of some foreign nationals on the Maltese⁵.

Such foreigners had become suspect with the outbreak of the French Revolution. A small number arrived from Syracuse. In May 1794 the "French watchmaker", Francis Coste, a man of great malignity, arrived in Malta. He had been expelled from Catania. No sooner had he landed in Malta than Grimaldi, the Sicilian king's representative in Malta, had him arrested and then sent to Tunis. In 1794 Caroline Ondoven came to perform at the Manoel Theatre. She was accompanied by her husband and mother. The three of them were ordered to leave the island because of their "seditious talk."⁶

A small number of Maltese became also suspect. In 1794 two Dominicans, Alexander Grech and Francis Vassallo, were ordered to leave Malta within two hours. In the summer of 1797 the Order of St. John made arrangements for the removal of nine rebels whose leader was "a certain Vassallo" and who was serving a life sentence. The President of the kingdom of the two Sicilies was warned lest these arrived in Sicily and spread "a germ so pernicious and contagious."

When the storm broke out in June 1798, the work and betrayals of the jacobins were uppermost in people's minds, according to Capodiecì. They were blamed for Malta's surrender. The behaviour of the Maltese jacobins, inebriated by the French victory, disgusted many honest citizens. "They were the first to violate, strip and sack the churches. They billeted French officials in Private houses, without caring about the consequences for honour of honest families. In one word, more harm was done by the jacobins than by the French themselves⁷."

Capodiecì's account also touches upon another important feature that

5. Archivio di Stato di Napoli, 6948.

6. See the author's forthcoming study on "Relations between Malta and Sicily".

7. The author is working on an edition of an anonymous diary of June 1798 — February 1799.

made 1798 so significant for the Maltese Church⁸. Contemporary manuscripts indicate that the bishop and the canons were very partial towards the French authorities and that the French did their utmost to gain the support and blessing of the Maltese Church. Capodieci simply says that Bishop Labini was "well received" by Bonaparte⁹."

When Labini paid a visit to the French General, Bonaparte accompanied him "to the end of his room." The bishop made no remonstrances against the new government. On June 13 he duly "called the canons, those of the cathedral and of the other collegiate churches, as well as all the parish priests and the heads of religious orders, and he led them to Bonaparte in order to make them recognise the French Directory as their sovereign and to take the civic oath." The French general immediately reciprocated this gesture. In fact, "to make a show of his generosity, he returned to the bishop and to the canons all the churches which had been earlier stripped of their gold, silver and gems....."¹⁰

Later on the bishop issued a most accomodating Pastoral Letter. There was no word of condemnation against what the rest of Europe had labelled an anti clerical and sacriligious government. Labini rather condemned the "unreasonable enthusiasm" on the part of the Maltese and advised them to be "good citizens by respecting the authority set up by the Lord"¹¹."

Napoleon's partiality towards the Church authorities is noteworthy. On reaching Valetta he "ernestly sought Canon Caruana, and after a long talk he nominated him member of the French government." He also briefed him on the election of the other members of the same government¹². No opportunity was missed to stress the cordial relations between Church and State especially during festivities such as those of SS Peter and Paul, St. Lawrence in Vittoriosa, St. Mary, and that of the 14th July. Contemporaries state that on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, "the French generals were invited and well received at lunch by the bishop." That same day, "The Rector of St Paul's Grotto, the Abbot Savuar, invited all the Republicans to dinner." After the traditional horse races, Savuar "led to his house, and warmly received,

8. The role played by the Maltese Church in 1798 is only mentioned in passing in this running commentary. According to the writer, the Maltese Church played a most decisive role in the defeat of the Order in the June days of 1798 and the rising of the Maltese in September of that same year.

9. Azopardi, Barone, *op.cit.*, p.18, says that "Buonaparte... era molto compiacuto delle saggie prese disposizioni del vescovo di Malta monsignor Labini, nell'occasione della capitolazione della Città gli spedì in quel frattempo una lettera, con cui lo informava del piacere provato di sua buona condotta....."

10. For the full text of this Pastoral Letter see Azopardi, Barone, *op. cit.* pp. 37 - 39.

11. See note 7 above.

12. *Ibid.* This courting of the Maltese Church by the French government was in evidence before and after 2nd September 1798. Bosredon Ransijat, *op. cit.*, p. 26 says that "the Commission of Government, "allorchè si celebrano le feste principali, assiste alle funzioni che si fanno nella Cattedrale".

the French generals, officials and republicans." The evening was concluded with a republican ball¹³.

Capodiecì's account illustrates clearly the feeling of the Maltese towards their new masters. By Maltese he obviously means the overwhelming, silent majority: what the manuscripts refer to as "the people", "the low people", "the country people." The Maltese were practical and down to earth, and like their Sicilian neighbours, they were sceptical of any foreign doctrine¹⁴. A paternal form of government suited them best.

In the main, they were either staunch supporters of the Order or disinterested spectators of the political scene. The overwhelming majority remained faithful to the Order. This is clearly brought out in Capodiecì's account. The Maltese people's loyalty and courage are praised. Even after the Capitulation, the Maltese refused to surrender their forts to the French. The Italian knights told Capodiecì that after the Capitulation, the two fortresses of Ricasoli and St. Angelo "did not want to surrender by any means, but kept firing continuously." Only when important persons and "some priests" used "their influence", did the Maltese leave their posts.

The account of the Maltese reaction to French rule is accurate. The French revolutionary doctrine did not go down well with them. Reading through the account one concludes that sooner or later there had to be a 2nd September. Capodiecì comments that while "the conspirators showed themselves happy about the new democratic government" yet "the greater part of the inhabitants were unhappy." Towards the beginning of July the Maltese were showing their resentment to the new regime. They "did not accept" the new laws and proclamations and "the greater part (of the new legislation) was not adhered to."

The French were conscious of Maltese resistance. Many French and Maltese jacobins felt it necessary to retire to Valetta for safety's sake. Capodiecì notes the attempted rising of Saturday, 21st. July. That day, "some inhabitants of Malta rose against the French....." This resistance is corroborated by other authorities. According to contemporaries "the whole nation was against such a capitulation" namely that of 12th June. They also knew that some insurrection or revolution against the new masters was unavoidable. When the Maltese had heard of a possible capitulation, they demonstrated in Valetta and were only calmed down by the "specious hopes" put forward by the clergy and Dr. Torregiani: "The nation and the faithful people gathered there, seeing such persons (Napoleon's secretary and Dolumion) and the imminent capitulation, all met in the Palace Square, to stage a rising.

14. The sceptical, anti-doctrinaire attitude of the Maltese in late 18th century is very similar to that of their Sicilian neighbours. Both the Maltese and the Sicilians were for reform — not revolution. For this reason England appealed more to them than France. On the subject of Sicilian reforms, see Tomeucci Luigi, *Genesi del Conflitto tra la Sicilia ed i Borboni*, (1734 - 1816), Casa Editrice Prof. Riccardo Patron, Bologna.

This was quickly nipped in the bud by some religious people and ecclesiastics, and by the persuasive words of Dr. Torregiani. The latter promised the rebellious crowd that the Order would remain in Malta together with the Grandmaster, subject to the laws of the French Directory and to many other laws of great benefit to the nation. With such tempting hopes he calmed and quietened the people ¹⁵."

That the French met with stiff Maltese opposition from the outset is shown by the following incident. After the signing of the capitulation and the stationing of a number of French soldiers in Valetta, some Maltese jacobins prepared a demonstration to welcome Napoleon from the *Orient*. "On Bonaparte's setting foot ashore, [the Maltese jacobins] started shouting and applauding Bonaparte, calling him the Idol of Freedom of the peoples and nations....." But on that very day of French victory, some other Maltese staged a counter protest and tried to assassinate Napoleon. While the jacobins were welcoming the French General, "some faithful Maltese, however, tried to surprise him and assassinate the *Eroe Liberatore*, and all his co-generals, as they entered the Marine Gate to Valletta. Thus they would belie the many boasts of the traitors. [The faithful Maltese] got hold of some pieces of artillery which were placed on the gate from where Bonaparte was due to pass. Unfortunately, this operation was discovered by the jacobins, and the [faithful Maltese] were arrested and led to the prisons. They just escaped with their lives thanks to their good luck ¹⁶."

As the new French regime showed its true colours and doctrinaire attitude, the Maltese realized more the imbalance between their former masters and the new one. The brazen effrontery they had to suffer at the hands of Maltese jacobins and the new French demands were too much. The French continued to meet with opposition. Some French "still maintained themselves in the country, afflicting the poor peasants, but these brave'y opposed them even at the expence of their own lives." The people who felt "the dreadful change" most were the poor who under the paternal government of the Order were used to more humane treatment. By the beginning of July, Capodiecici noticed that "The rooms in the houses of the Foundry were left to ruin. The house of the poor, in the place called Floriana, and kept at the expence of the Grandmaster, was closed down due to lack of support. The sick of the Great Hospital were left abandoned and thrown on the floor in the corners of the city. The French destroyed the Archives belonging to the several Langues of the Order. Churches were desacrated; spinsters, and even some women over 60, were violated; houses were sacked and all the treasure carried away....."

It was universally held that the French were going beyond the articles of the capitulation and their lording it over the poor country people was alienating the quiet and conservative character of the Maltese. This earned the universal hatred of the Maltese towards their new governors. As another eyewitness expressed it: "In obtaining Malta, the French had no other aim except that of depriving all the inhabitants and churches of all their belong-

15. See note 7 above.

16. *Ibid.*

ings. They did not observe the capitulation and hence they were expelled. The universal hatred of the Maltese nation, especially of the country people, who were always against their outrageous behaviour, was apparent. Besides all this, the French mismanagement had made the Maltese nation conscious of the change between the French government and the order. The former aimed only at depriving the Maltese of their belongings, the latter kept, maintained and helped the nation. Thus the nation was driven to a Revolution, as happened on 2nd September, 1798."

Throughout the summer months of 1798, Maltese hostility towards French rule never ceased. "In all the countryside not one French cockade was seen, and though the order that everyone should wear the national cockade was renewed under harsh penalty, yet this was openly disregarded."

The ground was fertile then for a party or group of people to stage a concerted rising against the regime. Thus "a great party was formed in Zebbug and in other villages" which in the particular circumstances of late August 1798, staged the Revolution of 2nd September 1798¹⁷.

17. *Ibid.*

THE DOCUMENT

RELAZIONE

Della Resa di Malta ai Francesi

Seguita a 12 Giugno 1798.

Scritta da Prete Giuseppe Ma. Capodieci

e diretta al Sigr. D. Giovanni d'Angelo a 24 Luglio 1798.

L'Istituto del Sacro Militar Ordine di S. Giovanni Battista di Gerusalemme, detto perciò Gerosolimitano, indi chiamato di Rodi, ed oggi di Malta, intorno alla sua residenza ha sofferto sempre funeste vicende.

Non s'ignora, che nacque nello stesso anno 1099, in cui fu conquistata dalle Armi famose de' Croce segnati la Città Santa ad imitazione del quale se ne istituirono molti altri.

Il Beato Gerardo, che s'ebbe per Fondatore, fu quegli, che adottossi lo Spedale per ricetta degl'infermi, e de' peregrini, eretto sin dall'anno 1048 da certi Mercatanti della costa di Amalfi nel Regno di Napoli, obbligando poi i Frati ad adempiere alcuni voti.

Era una tal sacra Milizia il più formidabile presidio de' Cristiani di Siria, e più volte il Re di Gerusalemme, come Baliuino II nel 1118, e 1126, e quelli di Damasco Baldekwin nel 1122, li chiamarono per aiutarli nelle guerre, che aveano cogl'Infedeli.

Caduta però Gerusalemme in potere del feroce Saladino Califo di Egitto nel 1187, fu costretta stabilirsi la divisata Religione nella Fortezza di Margati in Fenicia; ma dovette poi lasciarla a costo di molto sangue il di' 27 Maggio 1285.

Passo' indi in Tolemaide, o sia S. Giovanni d'Acrida nella Palestina, e venne cacciata ancora a 18 Maggio del 1291 dal Soldano di Egitto Melec Seraph, per cui il Gran Maestro Wil-

lers; e i di lui Cavalieri, si ricoverarono nell'Isola di Cipro, e dal Re Errico di Lusignano ebbero concessa la città di Limisso, o Amatunta, dove dimorarono circa 18. anni fin tanto che ebbero a 15 Agosto 1309 Rodi con altre isole convicine.

Quando credeano i Cavalieri di Rodi stabile per sempre il loro soggiorno in quell'Isola, vennero astretti cedere a 24 Dicembre dell'anno 1522 Rodi a Solimano II, Decimo Imperadore de' Turchi, dopo una sanguinosa guerra, e dopo che l'aveano per anni 213 posseduta.

Si partirono il Primo di Gennaio del 1523, essen stato permesso da quei Barbari al detto Gran Maestro Willers di L'Isleadamo, e a' Cavalieri tutti di portarsi a loro agio non meno la roba, gli attrezzi militari, che gli ori, argenti, e tutto quanto possedeano la Religione, le Chiese, e gl'individui, sino agli Archivj, alle Campane, e Lapidarie Iscrizioni.

Peregrinarono intanto in Candia, Lacedemonia, Paxiis, e nell'antica Cricusa; poscia in Messina, da dove passarono a Roma, e Clemente VII a 19 di Novembre 1523 li alloggiò in Viterbo.

Dimorarono ivi sino al 1529, e per fine si ridussero con dodici galee, vestite a lutto in Siracusa, ove s'attentarono, fin tanto Carlo V nel 1530 diede loro con alcune condizioni l'Isola di Malta, del Gozzo. e l'altre di Comino, Cominotto, e Limosa cogli Stati di Gazza, e Tripoli, che poi nel 1551 ritolte vennero alla Religione Gerosolimitana dagl'infedeli.

Si tenne in detta Città di Siracusa a 25 di Aprile del citato anno il Capitolo Generale, e tutti i Cavalieri Conventuali approvarono il Trattato conchiuso dal loro Gran Maestro, e a 25 di Ottobre sene partirono, e la mattina del Dimani giunsero in Malta.

Questa mentre che veniva munita di fortificazioni dal suo novo Padrone, fu assalita nel 1551 da Sinan. Bassà con l'Armata di Solimano, al quale riuscì di prendere, e distruggere il Castello del Gozzo.

Nel 1565 ebbe pure a respingere i tentativi dell'Armata Ottomana sotto Mustafà Bassà, e din tale incontro i Cavalieri fecero prodigj di valore, e particolarmente segnaronsi i Siciliani.

Non hanno mancato poi di conturbar la Città di Malta le interne continue congiure, e rivoluzioni, soffocate al primo loro nascere, e fra le famose contasi quell'a scoperta in Luglio dell'anno 1749, ordita dagli Schiavi, e dal Bassà di Rodi.

Se ne sono suscitate più volte delle altre, ma il Gran Maestro col Consiglio hanno saputo sempre prestare i ripari opportuni.

Non ebbe però l'esito stesso la Catastrofe, accaduta nel corrente anno 1798, che fissa un'altra Epoca di eterna memoria nella Storia del Secolo XVIII.

Dopo la elezione del Gran Maestro Hompesch Tedesco credeva il suo Ordine, e l'Isola di Malta godere pace, e tranquillità in mezzo le turbolenze dell'Europa. Era egli molto caro al popolo; ma non ostante però macchinavasi una forte congiura, fomentata d'alcuni Cavalieri, Mercatanti, e Baroni di quell'Iso'a che cominciarono ad avere delle occulte aderenze co'Francesi, ad oggetti di stabilirvi la Democrazia.

Erano scorsi circa due mesi prima di Giugno del corrente anno 1798. quando comparve la prima volta innanzi l'Isola di Malta una Squadra Francese di 14 navi. N'entrava di queste a vicenda qualcheduna nel porto sotto varj pretesti, e dopo alcuni giorni fecero vela per la parte

di mezzogiorno, e quantunque la Città fosse incerta del disegno, pur non meno entrò in qualche rio sospetto, e perciò si pose sulla difesa.

Nel giorno 2 del detto mese di Giugno comparvero di belnuovo alcuni legni in faccia Malta, i quali di giorno in giorno si accresceano in gran numero entrando di questi or uno, or un altro nel porto per prendere provvisioni, ed attendere ai movimenti che aspettavano da' Congiurati dentro la Città.

Ai 7 Giorno della Festa del Corpo del Signore trovandosi nel Canale di Malta un Vascello, ed una Fregata della Religione, per inseguire i Barbari, furono scoperte da lontano 24 vele, che si riconobbero essere di trasporto, e cariche di truppa, ed a momenti se ne vedeano sopraggiungere delle altre, che venivano dal Ponente, dirette per l'Isola di Malta. Verso le ore 20 e mezzo se ne numerarono 72. comprese tre Fregate, una delle quali avvicinatasi bordeggiò sopra i legni Maltesi, posti su la difesa. Alzate le bandiere rispettive, si riconobbe esser quella Francese, e senza venire a parlamento, passarono li detti legni Maltesi lunghezzo la Fregata, e verso l'ora una della notte si ritirarono nel porto.

Alli 8 si osservò, che accrescevasi il numero de' Vascelli, e de' Legni di trasporto. La mattina entrò una Galeotta, che fu riconosciuta essere stata quella stessa costrutta in Malta in servizio del Papa, e col pretesto di acconciarsi vi si trattenne sino al tramontar del sole: suonava intanto l'equipaggio nemico, e cantava una canzone, detta la Carmagnola. Non omise il riferito legno di salutar la fortezza, da cui venne corrisposta; ed essendosi provveduta di viveri, se ne partì.

La sera medesima al tramontar del sole si diede il segno dall'Isola del

Gozzo d'essersi veduti numero 38 Bastimenti oltre de' primi, calcolandosi tutto l'armamento circa a 300 vele, consistenti in numero 27 legni da guerra tra Vascelli e Fregate, ed un Vascello di 120 pezzi di Cannoni, nominato l'Oriente, in cui eravi il General Buonaparte, e lo resto Bastimenti di convoglio di diverse Nazioni, cioè Brich, Barche Cannoniere, Bombardiere, e di disbarce. Insospettitosi molto quel Governo, mostrò di volersi porre in istato di difesa, ma senza alcun regolamento.

Sabato 9 dello stesso allo spuntar dell'aurora si replicò dal Gozzo lo stesso segno, d'esser le vele con parse di un gran numero, le quali sempre più si avvicinavano all'Isola. Verso le ore 18 riunitasi tutta la Flotta, ed il convoglio, fu spedita una lancia con un ufficiale Francese, il quale nella Barriera conseguì un plico al di lui Console, assicurando a quella gente, occorsa nella Quarantena, che aspettavasi lo resto della Squadra, e del convoglio, per indi far passaggio in Egitto.

Il Console suddetto portò subito una lettera aperta al Gran Maestro a nome del suo Generale in Capite Buonaparte, ricercando porto, pratica, e viveri per tutta la Squadra.

A tale richiesta rispose il Gran Maestro, ch'era necessario avanzare per iscritto la dimanda per risolverla con il Consiglio. Il Console ripigliò, che non gli era permesso di aspettare, perchè dovea subito portarsi a bordo dal suo Generale, come esegui all'istante con la suddetta lancia, accompagnata da una barca della Sanità.

Convocatosi intante il Consiglio fu verso le ore 22 con unanimi suffragi determinato, che qualora fosse in iscritto la detta dimanda presentata, risponder si dovrebbe ben anche in iscritto, ovvero che poteva solamente

accordarsi l'ingresso nel porto a quattro Bastimenti da guerra, e che usciti i primi si permettea entrarne altri non più dello stesso numero, e così successivamente; di negarsi affatto la pratica, come legni da guerra, giusta le leggi di Sanità, e di neutralità, e per fine somministrarsi quelle provisioni, che poteano, per non far mancare il necessario sostentamento alla Città. Si ordinò frattanto di armarsi le batterie, e raddoppiarsi le guardie delle Torri, mandando tutta la notte nelle dette fortezze carrettoni di pane, biscotto, cacio, e vino, e di star pronti a prender le armi i Reggimenti di Campagna. Tutti gli ufficiali furon destinati ai loro posti, e fecero subito accendere i fornelli per le palle infocate.

Ritornò in questo tempo il divisato console, portando scritta la dimanda, ed ebbe in iscritto immediatamente la risposta del Consiglio, com'erasi allora conchiuso, che portò al suo Generale, scortato sempre dalla Barca dell'a Sanità, nè ritornò mai più, trattendosi anche la barca suddetta, il che ragionevolmente accrebbe i motivi di sospetto.

Dalle ore due di notte sino al far del giorno s'intesero molte cannonate de' Francesi con mandare in aria fulgori, e palle luminose, che poi si rilevò essere stati soliti segni di ciò che dovevano fra di loro eseguire.

Il Comandante della Squadra di Malta ebbe subito la cura di far serrare la bocca del porto con una catena di grosse gomene, ed ancora per impedir l'ingresso all'Armata nemica.

Alli 10 della Domenica verso la mattina si videro più di 200 lance che portavano molta truppa per fare lo sbarco in terra dalla parte di S. Giuliano, di S. Giorgio, e de' luoghi convicini.

Fu spedita altresì dal Generale una

seconda Divisione con barche cannoniere, per fare un altro sbarco alla punta opposta dell'Isola, detta Marsascirocco, la quale venne respinta ben due volte dal Castello, con grave danno del nemico, ma fu poi obbligato di cessare a far fuoco per mancanza di munizione, e così seguì senza verun ostacolo lo sbarco de' francesi, che per allora si calcolarono circa a 20 mila.

S'impadronirono indi dopo non poca resistenza di quelle altre piccole Torri, abbandonate da' Maltesi per mancanza ancora di munizione da guerra.

Frattanto venuta una lancia nel porto, annunciò, che la neutralità era già rotta, e che il Console volea la sua famiglia a cui gli fu negata.

A tale avviso furon tirati due colpi di cannone dal forte, detto de' Cavalieri, segno di darsi principio al combattimento.

Il Gran Maestro fece all'istante uscire due lance Cannoniere con due altre Galeotte per impedir l'alteri due di sbarcare, ordinando ancora di mettersi alla bocca del porto due Galee.

Portate le lance sino all'a Torre di S. Giuliano, dov'era maggior lo sbarco, incominciarono a far fuoco quasi per lo spazio di ore sei non lasciando mai le lance nemiche di proteggere il loro sbarco: quelle de' Maltesi venivano tuttavia garentite dal Forte Tigni, che per ore 24 non tralasciò di far vivo fuoco con la morte di non pochi Francesi.

Verso le ore 18 e mezzo si sospese il tragetto dell'e lance nemiche, e sopraggiungendo una dirotta pioggia dalla parte di mezzogiorno, ritornarono in porto le due Galeotte con le barche cannoniere.

Accrebbe l'amarezza e la confusione quando nel tempo stesso si scoprì non solo di essersi tagliate le mine dalla

parte di terra, ma scoperta ancora una congiura tra pochi Francesi, residenti in Malta, e diversi Greci, venuti a scaricar grano. Il che sapietosi dal Gran Maestro spedì subito 80 soldati sotto il comando di alcuni Cavalieri Siciliani per impedirne il disordine. Due Greci, che furon i primi ad essere incontrati, restarono da' Maltesi uccisi con colpi di sciabla, shioppi, e remi, ed appresso altri cinque. Fu assalito ed ucciso un negoziante Francese autore di detta congiura, nominato Monsieur Egnau, per essersi ritrovate nelle case vicino la Barriera, ove egli dimorava, quantità di coccarde della Repubblica Francese, ed alcuni Greci occultati con armi. Gli equipaggi degli altri Bastimenti Greci, ch'erano vicini la spiaggia del porto, vedendo attaccati i loro nazionali, passarono i cannoni ne' lati opposti al punto dell'attacco. Prevedendosi certamente qualche macello, sopraggiungunsero altri Cavalieri con rinforzo di gente armata, e due barche cannoniere; a far fronte ai Greci, i quali i gati furon condotti alla prigione degli Schiavi. Si disarmarono i loro Bastimenti ch'erano provvisti di 800 tromboni carichi, di sacchi di lana pieni nel mezzo di polvere, e cartocce a metraglio, e di gran copia di pietre focase. Così ebbe fine questo inconveniente.

Si accendea però l'altro maggiormente, onde furon costretti di uscir fuori del porto le barche cannoniere in unione delle due Galee, per occorrere al bisogno. Tutti li forti della Piazza non mancarono a proseguire lo sparo, da che n'ebbero il segno mentre i Francesi velocemente si avvicinavan con le fascine per innalzare le trincee. La campagna intera era già dominata da' nemici, e posti a soquadro i Borghi, le più belle Ville, e Casine, uccisa buona parte

della Bestiame grossa, e minuta, e assassinati i poveri Abitanti. La flotta nemica però si tenea sempre fuori il tiro del cannone, continuamente bordeggiando.

Dopo Vespro dello stesso dì nel Forte Ricasoli, dove i Vascelli Francesi cercavano avvicinarsi, si ritrovarono i cartocci pieni di carbone pesto con poca polvere, ed alcuni con mezzo tiro di polvere senza sonde, e micciere. Riparossi un tale sconcerto con mandar tutto a prendere dal bordo del Vascello della Religione, detto San Zeccheria, e mettere ai ferri il Capomaestro, che ne avea cura, sostituendo un altro a tale ufficio. In altri Castelli si rinvennero molte palle di cannoni di diverso calibro, per accrescere i Congiurati la confusione; e rendere inutili i colpi; come ancora li cartocci dimezzati, e li barrili della polvere bagnati, e fu duopo per quest'altra macchinazione trasportar la polvere, ch'era destinata all'uso de' Vascelli, e delle Fregate.

E' degno poi di menzione un altro occorso. Dopo di avere alcuni Cavalieri di diverse Nazioni fedelmente consegnato, a chi doveano, 15 mila cartocci di fucili, per dividerli ai soldati, ed alle Milizie del Borgo, e dell'Isola; scorsi pochi momenti, vennero ricercati dalle stesse truppe cartocci, stante de' primi esserne stati dispensati pochissimi, e questi stessi dimentati, e con le palle non proporzionate, ed atte ad entrare nelle cannoni de' schioopi.

Si penso inoltre dal Governo di Malta spedire per le vicine campagne de' Cavalieri con truppa, a fine d'introdurre in città tutto quello bestiame d'ogni sorte, che incontravano. Non si lasciava la notte il fuoco di tutti i Castelli, e principalmente dal Forte Ricasole, e dalle batterie a fior d'acqua con palle infocate. Tentarono

i Francesi più volte l'assalto nel nuovo Forte Tigni con numerosissime scale, furon però per tre volte respinti, e battuti dalle cannonate a metraglia con gran perdita di Soldati Francesi.

Ma ecco un altro funestissimo avviso avutosi, d'essersi scoperta una congiura di cinque, e più migliaja d' uomini, i quali alla seconda bomba da lanciarsi dall'Armata nemica, doveano sollevarsi, e passare a fil di spada tutti gl'individui dell'Ordine. I congiurati aveano fatto credere al basso popolo, ch'era egli tradito da' Cavalieri, e che questi avessero chiamato la flotta francese, e disarmato i Castelli; per qual motivo adirati i Maltesi uccisero un Cavaliere, e ferirono fortemente un Cavalier Francese, e lo condussero al Gran Maestro, e si negavano poi di ubbidire agli altri, che correvano lo stesso pericolo, perchè creduti traditori, eccettuando però i Cavalieri delle altre Nazioni, i quali adempivano il loro dovere.

A vista di tutto ciò due ore dopo mezza notte unitisi i Baroni Maltesi con il Magistrato della Castellania; e con i Giurati dell'Università, si sottoscrissero in un foglio, e fattosi avanti il Gran Maestro il Fiscale della detta Castellania, impose a nome del Pubblico di doversi Capitolare, e nel caso diverso si protestava di una rivoluzione contro gl'individui della Religione.

Sorpreso il Gran Maestro, convocò subito Consiglio di Stato, in cui comparve vestito di spada, e cappello, non come Gran Maestro, ma come Principe di Malta, e radunatisi tutti i venerabili Bali Capitolari, l'Eminentissimo Hompesch manifestò allo stesso la trista circostanza, in cui ritrovavasi, e consideratosi dal Consiglio, che l'opporsi alla dimanda de' Magistrati, e de' Baroni sarebbe stato lo stesso ch'espone al popolar furore

interamente l'inclito Ordine, perciò si risolse di capitolare.

Nel giorno undici del Lunedì al nascer del so'e per risoluzione del Consiglio della Religione si alzarono in tutti i Castelli i Padiglioni bianchi in segno di Armistizio. Furono spediti dalla parte di terra il Bali Susa Spaguolo, ed il Console Formosa di Olanda, portando una bandiera bianca, ed una trombetta in segno di parlamentare col General Francese, che comandava il campo in Bilbikara, acciò sospendesse l'attacco. Si erano contemporaneamente indirizzati li Commissarj a bordo del General in Capite Buonaparte, per trattare li Capitoli della Convenzione, ed un altro Cavaliere per portare lo stesso ordine al Comandante del Gozzo, a fine di sospendere le ostilità, il quale nel cammino venne con tutta la Speronara arrestato da una lancia Francese, e presentato a Buonaparte, da cui per ore sei fu trattenuto prigioniero, ed indi la sera rimesso in libertà e scortato da una lancia finchè passa la linea della Squadra, per far ritorno alla città. Lo stesso giorno fu inviato dal General Buonaparte un suo Primo Ajutante di Campo per trattare con il Gran Maestro gli Articoli dell'a Convenzione.

Dopo il congresso furono accordate 24 ore di tregua, cioè dalle ore 22 del Lunedì, sino all'ora stessa del dimani, e si mandarono dalla Religione insieme col detto Ajutante a bordo del General Buonaparte le persone che doveano conchiudere, e sottoscrivere gli Articoli. Ritornati questi in Città il Martedì mattina del giorno 12, unissi di nuovo il Consiglio, innanzi a cui furon lette le Convenzioni trattate la sera precedente, e si concedette ai Commissarj ogni autorità per fermarli. Così avvenne ecco tradotte fedelmente dal foglio francese, impresso a

Bordo del Vascello Oriente del General Buonaparte. =

Convenzione stabilita fra la Repubblica Francese, rappresentata da una parte dal Cittadino Generale in Capite Buonaparte, e dall'altra da' Cavalieri di S. Giovanni di Gerusalemme li Signori Balì Torino Frisari, il Comendatore Bosredon Ransijat, il Barone Mario Testaferrata, il Dottor Nicola Muscat, l'Avvocato Benedetto Schembri, e il Consigliere Bonanno sotto la mediazione di Sua Maestà Cattolica Re di Spagna, rappresentata dal Signor Cavaliere Filippo Amato suo incaricato a Malta.

Articolo I. I Cavalieri dell'Ordine di S. Giovanni di Gerusalemme rimetteranno all'Armata Francese la Città, e le Fortezze di Malta, e rinunciano in favore della Repubblica Francese i dritti di Sovranità, e di proprietà, ch'eglino hanno sopra quest'Isola, come sopra le Isole di Malta, di Gozzo, e di Comino.

Articolo II. La Repubblica Francese impiegherà la sua influenza al Congresso di Rastad, per fare ad avere al Gran Maestro sua vita durante un Principato equivalente a quel che perde, e frattanto la detta Repubblica Francese s'impegna di fargli avere una pensione annuale di trecento mila Franchi, che gli sarà data oltre il valore di due annualità libere dell'a detta pensione a titolo d'indennità per il suo mobile. Egli conserverà nel tempo che resterà in Malta gli stessi onori militari delli quali godeva.

Articolo III. I Cavalieri dell'Ordine se darà una pensione di settecento sono Francesi attualmente a Malta, lo stato delli quali sarà arrestato dal Generale in capite, potranno rientrare nella loro Patria e la loro residenza in Malta sarà contata come se risdessero in Francia.

Articolo IV. La Repubblica France-

se darà una pensione di settecento Franchi ai Cavalieri Francesi, che sono attualmente a Malta vita durante. Questa pensione sarà di mille Franchi per li Cavalieri che sono di sopra ad anni 60 di età. La Repubblica Francese impiegherà i suoi ufficj presso la Repubblica Cisalpina, Liguria, Romana, ed Elvetica, affinchè accordassero la stessa pensione alli Cavalieri della loro Nazione.

Articolo V. La Repubblica Francese impiegherà questi buoni ufficj presso le Potenze dell'Europa, per conservare ai Cavalieri delle loro Nazioni l'esercizio de' loro dritti sopra li beni dell'ordine di Malta, situati ne' loro Stati.

Articolo VI. I Cavalieri conserveranno le proprietà che posseggono nell'Isola di Malta, e Gozzo a titolo di proprietà particolari.

Articolo VII. Gli Abitanti dell'Isola di Malta, e Gozzo continueranno a godere, come per lo passato del libero esercizio della Religione Cattolica Apostolica Romana, conserveranno le proprietà, e privilegi, che posseggono, non si metterà alcuna contribuzione straordinaria.

Articolo VIII. Tutti gli Atti Civili, passati sotto il Governo dell'Ordine, saranno valevoli, ed avranno le loro esecuzioni.

Fatta al Bordo del Vascello L'Oriente davanti Malta li 24 Prairial, anno VI. della Repubblica Francese; 12 di Giugno 1798 Vecchio Stile.

Luogo del Sigillo.

Firme.

Buonaparte.

Il Commre. Bosredont Ransijat.

Il Barone Mario Testaferrata.

Il Dr. Niccolò Muscat.

Il Dr. Benedetto Schembri.

Il Conse. F. T. Bonanno.

Il Balì di Torino Frisani salvo il dritto d'alto Dominio, che

appartiene al mio Sovrano,
come Re delle Due Sicilie.

El Gabbalero Felipe de Amat.

In esecuzione degli Articoli conchiusi li 24 Prairial fra la Repubblica Francese, e l'Ordine di Malta, sono state date le disposizioni seguenti:

Articolo I. Oggi 24 Prairial il Forte Manuel, il Forte Tignì, il Castello S. Angelo, le Opere di Bormola, della Cottoniera, e della Città Vittoriosa, saranno rimesse a mezzogiorno alla truppa Francese.

Articolo II. Domani 25 il Forte Ricasoli, il Castello S. Elmo, le Fortificazioni della Valletta, quelli della Floriana, e tutti gli altri saranno rimesse alle Truppe Francesi.

Articolo III. Gli Officiali Francesi si porteranno a dieci ore della mattina presso il Gran Maestro, per predere gli Ordini per li Governadori, che comandano negli differenti porti, che debbono essere consegnati ai Francesi, e questi saranno accompagnati da un Ufficiale Maltese per ciascun Forte.

Articolo IV. Si daranno le stesse disposizioni per le Fortificazioni, che per domani 25 debbono essere rimesse ai Francesi.

Articolo V. Nello stesso tempo, che si consegneranno le fortificazioni, si consegnerà l'artiglieria, li magazzini, e le carte appartenenti al corpo del genio.

Articolo VI. Le truppe dell'Ordine di Malta potranno restare nelle Caserme, che occupano, sino a che si provvederà diversamente.

Articolo VII. L-Ammiraglio Francese nominerà oggi un Ufficiale, per prendere possesso de' Vascelli, Galee, Bastimenti, magazzini, ed altri effetti di marina, appartenenti all'Ordine di Malta.

Fatta al Bordo del Vascello l' Oriente davanti Malta li 24 Prairial

anno VI. della Repubblica Francese; 12 di Giugno 1798., Vecchio Stile.

Loco del Sigillo.

Firme

Buonaparte

Il Commr. Bosredont Ransijat.

Il Barone Mario Testaferrata.

Il Dr. Niccolò Muscat.

Il Dr. Benedetto Schembri.

Il Consigliere F. T. Banno

Il Bali di Torino Frisani, salvo il dritto d'altro Dominio, che appartiene al mio Sovrano, come Re delle Due Sicilie.

El Gabbalero de Amat.

Alli 12 intanto del detto mese di Giugno entrarono per la porta de terra due Reggimenti di Fanteria Francese, e molti soldati di Cavalleria avendo lasciato questi i Cavalli fuori le mure, per impadronirsi de' posti, e de' Castelli della Città, giusta il seguito stabilimento.

Alle ore 19 s'intese una grande scossa, cagionata dalla Torre, detta di S. Giuliano, la quale andò tutta per aria con cinquanta Francesi che l'aveano assalito, per aver preso fuoco la conserva della polvere.

Verso le ore 21 s'inalberò la Bandiera Francese nel Castello Ricasoli, e di S. Elmo, e di poi in tutti gli altri castelli.

Le due Fortezze nominate Ricasoli, e S. Angelo non volevano ominamente arrendersi, facendo incessante fuoco, onde furono allora spedite dal Gran Maestro il Magistrato, il Gran Visconte, ed alcuni Preti, e con le loro persuasione fecero lasciare i forti, in seguito della conchiusa Capitolazione.

Fu spedita alle ore 22 per incontrare il Generale Buonaparte una Galea, da lui richiesta. Il Gran Maestro destinò a tal uopo il Commendatore, Miari, e il Commendator Sanprì a prestare i loro ufficj; ma incontrati nel cammino, il detto Generale sopra

una lancia col seguito d'altre sei lo salutarono con la batteria della Galea, ed abbassarono in una lancia alcuni Cavalieri, per offrirsi a servirlo con la galea, come avea ordinato, ma ringraziandoli il Buonaparte, incaricò loro di seguirlo.

Nell'entrare prima in Città si fermò per lo spazio di un'ora nel Castello Ricasoli, ed ivi lasciò la guarnigione, che seco portava sopra diverse lance. Indi venne in città preceduto da una lancia con dentro la Banda militare, quattro altre con le guardie del corpo, e l'ultima la sua in unione de' Tenenti Generali di Campo, e Generali.

Sceso in terra, si trovarono pronte tutte le carrozze del Gran Maestro; una delle quale a sei cavalli. Due Battaglioni Francesi fecero cordone alli detti cocchi, e 400 guardie pedoni precedevano con la banda Militare, e le cornette.

Giunto al Gigante, luogo così detto, discese dalla carrozza, ed entrò in Città, preceduto, e seguito nella stessa guisa come sopra sino alla Casa del Senato da' Generali, ed Ufficiali Francesi, e da' Cavalieri dell'Ordine, dove formò la Municipalità, e finalmente si portò in Casa del Barone Parisi destinata per la sua abitazione. Tutti gli Ufficiali francesi furon divisi per le Case de' Baroni, e Mercatanti Maltesi, come ancora de' Balli, e Cavalieri. I Battaglioni Francesi si ritirarono ne' quartieri, ma non lasciarono di saccheggiare i magazzini, e le botteghe di vino, e di tabacco.

Fu nel giorno stesso intimato a partire fra il termine di ore tre il Ministro immediato di Moscovia Antonio Ovara, il quale il mercoledì la sera del seguente giorno verso le ore due, e mezza della notte capitò nel porto di Siracusa sopra una speronara ed egli fu il primo che diede la certa e funesta notizia della Resa di Malta

ai Francesi, e dopo la dimora di pochi minuti, prese nella quarantena alcune provisioni, e si pose in cammino per Napoli.

La mattina de' 13 Giugno entrarono per la porta di terra moltissimi Soldati, e così praticavano di giorno in giorno, commettendo sempre delle irruenze, e senza aver riguardo alle chiese stesse. Parte di essi si fissarono nel Castello di S. Elmo, e parte altrove. Erano frattanto frequenti le segrete conferenze tra il General Buonaparte e i suoi ufficiali.

Alli 14 seguitarono ed entrare per la porta di terra i soldati pedoni, e compirono il numero di circa a sei mila, divisi in più Reggimenti. Alcuni di essi si fissarono nel Castello di S. Elmo, e parte in altri luoghi, altre di altri circa a 30 mila soldati, ch'erano sopra tutta la Squadra.

Attendea il Gran Maestro la visita del General Buonaparte, ed erasi preparato a riceverlo pomposamente; ma il detto Generale pensò altrimenti per opera de' Cospiratori. Venne intanto obbligato l'Eminentissimo Hompesch di portarsi verso le ore 23 dal General Buonaparte, vestito d'abito nero, senza spada, e bastone, ma con la Gran Croce nel petto. Ebbe dalle milizie, che guardavano il portone, l'onore delle armi a spal'a, e tamburo battente lo ricevettero nell'entrare due ufficiali Francesi; altri due a mezza Scala, altri due nella porta della Sala, altri nella camera, ed anticamera, finchè giunse col seguito de' Ba'i, e Cavalieri dell'Ordine, e tutti senza spada dentro, la camera di Buonaparte, che trovò alzato, e poscia sedendo insieme con il Gran Maestro, dopo circa sette minuti si congedarono con lo stesso cerimoniale. Il Buonaparte lasciò il Gran Maestro innanzi la porta della Sala, e fingendo di andarsene, ritornò, e lo accompagnò

sino all' metà della Scala, facendo ala a dritta, e sinistra le guardie del Corpo. Il Buonaparte restituì poi la visita al Gran Maestro, ricevendolo innanzi la porta della Sala, e tutti i Cavalieri schierati nel portone, e nelle Scale restituirono al Buonaparte gli stessi onori fatti al loro detto Gran Maestro.

Lo stesso Giorno il Vescovo, ch'era stato fatto prigioniero di Guerra in Città Vecchia, temendo di condursi nella Valletta per le insolenze grandissime de' Soldati, fu accompagnato in Carozza dal Generale Vaubois, a cui cedette l'onore del luogo.

Ordinosi a tutti i Cavalieri dell' Ordine a partire nel termine di giorni tre, eccettuati i sessagenarij. I Portuesi però fra due giorni.

Il Vescovo verso le ore tredici fece la visita a Buonaparte col seguito di alcuni Preti, e fu dal detto Generale bene accolto, ed accompagnato sino ai limiti della sua camera, proibendogli di portar la Gran Croce.

Si comandò poi di serrarsi tutte le chiese della Religione, e di prontuarsi la nota degli ori, ed argenti. Indi furono consegnate dal Generale le chiavi di quella di S. Giovanni per servirsene di chiesa Cattedrale, ordinando al Vescovo suddetto a non far più ufficiare, e a non aver parte alcuna i Preti Conventuali, ed a predicare con l'ultima semplicità il Vangelo; così parlò ancora il Buonaparte ai Monaci Cappuccini.

Tutto il Clero Secolare, e Regolare fu obbligato a portar la coccarda della Repubblica Francese, e quelli che non usavano cappello appeso al petto. Le donne pubbliche portavano la coccarda. Le zitelle però furon nascoste da' loro parenti, ed alcune non ostante ciò vennero da' Francesi violate. I Cavalieri Nazionali fecero sentire al Generale di voler portare la coccarda

de' rispettivi loro Sovrani amici; il Buonaparte si oppose, e si protestò a non voler esser responsabile, ne soffrivano qualche insulto da' soldati vedendoli senza coccarda; onde alcuni si posero quella della rispettive nazione, ed altri la Francese. Il Vescovo in sulle prime non volle far uso della coccarda, per cui si portò dal General Vaubois; Comandante della Piazza, pregandolo di essentarlo di un tal distintivo. Il Generale suddetto lo persuase a portarla, per non essere ad un Vescovo disonorevole e per non comparir nemico delle leggi Nazionali.

Le stanze esistenti nelle case della Fonderia vennero rovinate. La casa de' Poveri, situata nel luogo detto la Florian, e mantenuta dal Gran Maestro, si serrò per non esservi più chi la sostenesse. I poveri ammalati del grande Spedale lasciati in abbandono, e gettati a terra ne' cantoni della Città. Distrussero i Francesi gli Archivj appartenenti alle diverse Lingue della Religione. Profanate si videro le chiese; violate le zitelle, ed anche alcune donne d'anno 60, poste a sacco le case, portato via tutto il Tesoro, e l'Armeria, e l'argento ancora delle chiese, dello Spedale, e della Religione.

Alli 14 a buon ora furono invitati i magistrati della Città, e dell'Isola a portarsi nella sala dell'Albergo di Francia, ed ivi fecero il solenne giuramento per tre volte di ubbidire alla Costituzione Francese, e formossi poscia la Municipalità di nove Soggetti.

Innanzitutto le chiese della Religione, già serrate, si posero le sentinelle per ispogiarle di tutto quanto di buono, e prezioso ivi racchiudeasi. Nella sola chiesa di S. Giovanni, oggi Cattedrale, lasciarono a preghiera del Vescovo dodici Calici, due Pissidi, una Sfera, incenziere, navetta, la cancellana di

argento nella cappella del SSme. Sagramento, un lampiere, e sei candellieri per ogni altare; *Ma tutto ciò dopo pochi giorno fu anche tolto da' Francesi.*

Nel giorno 15 si pubblicò dalla Municipalità un Editto; affissato in tutti i Cantoni della Città di non far più uso delle libree, e che non si dassero titoli ad alcuno. Spezzarono tutte le armi della Religione, e de' particolari, ch'erano ne' palazzi, nelle chiese, ed altrove, eccettuate quelle delle potenze amiche, e perchè nella confusione fu tolto il Regio Stemma di Napoli: il Console se ne risentì, e subito si ordinò di rimettersi. Si volevano ridurre in pezzi tutte le lapidi sepolcrali de' Cavalieri della Religione dentro S. Giovanni, ma per non perdersi tutto il pavimento, a consiglio del Vescovo, si determinò di vuotarsi tutte sossopra. Alcuni soldati Francesi per le insolenze, aggravi, e scelleratezze che commettevano, erano castigati con pena di morte, e ciò per comando del General Buonaparte: non ostante però gli altri si rendeano sempre più arroganti e contumaci.

Alli 16 ordinò Buonaparte con un pubblico Editto in istampa, sottoscritto non meno da lui che d'Alessandro Berthier Generale di Divisione. Cano dello Stato Maggiore, e del Vaubois Generale della Divisione. Comandante in capite delle Isole di Malta: e Gozzo per cui si fece sapere Che gli Abitanti di Malta saranno ormai eguali ne' dritti, e il loro merito, il loro patriottismo ed il loro affetto alla Repubblica Francese stabiliranno soltanto la di loro differenza Abolita la schiavitù, e rimessi in libertà tutti gli schiavi, conosciuti sotto il nome di Buonavoglia e nullo il contratto che fecero disonorevole all'umanità. Tutti gli schiavi poi d'alcuni particolari saranno posti nelle mani del General Co-

mandante, per essere trattati come Prigionieri di guerra; ed atteso l'armistizio, ch'esiste tra la porta Ottomana, e la Repubblica Francese, saranno rimandati, quando il Generali in Capite l'ordinerà, e quando avrà cognizione che i Bej acconsentiranno a rimandare in Malta tutti gli schiavi Francesi, o Maltesi, ch'essi hanno in lor potere. Tutti gli Abitanti dell'Isola di Malta, e Gozzo, che portassero la coccarda a tre colori. Nessuno abitante potrà portare l'abito Nazionale Francese, se non ne avrà ottenuto il permesso speciale dal General in Capite, e se ne abbia reso meritevole. Si proibì inoltre di portar delle armi tanto nell'interno, che nell'esterno delle case, di sigillare le lettere con le armi, o di adoprare titoli feudali, di Bali, di Commendatore, e Cavaliere, e far uso dell'antico uniforme dell'Ordine di Malta. In ogni chiesa s'innalzino invece delle armi del Gran Maestro quelle della Repubblica. Resa cessata la missione di diversi Ministri Plenipotenziarj. I Consoli Stranieri debbano sospendere le loro funzioni, e levar le armi sopra le loro porte, fin tanto che non avranno le lettere credenziali del loro Governo. Tutti gli stranieri, abitanti nell'Isola di Malta di qualsivisia grade si uniformino alle accennate Costituzioni. Finalmente si prescrisse, che tutti li Controventori degli Articoli precedenti saranno condannati per la prima volta ad una multa del terzo delle loro rendite, per la seconda a tre mesi di carcere, per la terza ad un anno di carcere, per la quarta all'esilio dell'Isola di Malta, ed alla Confiscazione della metà de' loro beni.

Nel giorno 17 delo stesso Giugno il Gran Maestro convocò Consiglio, congedandosi con le lagrime agli occhi co' Bali, e Cavaliere tutti dell'Ordine, e sempre piangendo fece loro

sperare di dover avere l'Ordine di S. Giovanni di Gerusalemme miglior situazione di quella di Malta. Verso le ore 22 dal General Buonaparte fu augurato al detto Gran Maestro il buon viaggio, e ricevuto venne nel Palazzo Magistrale, come si pratica nel restituirgli la visita. Indi alle ore 5 della notte s'imbarcò sopra un Bastimento Imperiale mercantile, portando seco 22 persone, e fra queste Monsieur Licande Cameriere Maggiore, il Commendator Lagarda Secondo Maestro di Casa, il Bali Santrope comandante de' Vascelli, il Bali Monitara Gran Commendatore, il Commendator Bordo Servente d'armi, il Commendatore Prepò Servente d'armi, il Sotto Maestro Suidiere, il Guardamancia, e suo figlio Gravagnia, il Commendator Miari Segretario Maggiore, e due Camerieri Segreti, e scortato da una Fregata Francese sino a Trieste. Gli furono pagati 300 mila Franchi a seconda della Convenzione, consistendo ogni Franco due tari, sei grani, e quattro piccoli di moneta Siciliana, della quale somma ne lasciò per i debiti 200 mila, e lo resto in polizze di cambio e in danaro effettivo, oltre di altre somme, che in una cassa imbarcossi, e tutti gli argenti, provisioni, e roba, che avea nel Palazzo Magistrale.

Alli 18 il Capitan del Porto Piesrier-ga imbandì nel suo Casino di Campagna alla Floriana in laute pranzo al General Buonaparte. Nelle ore vespertine incominciò a far vela la prima divisione della Squadra, e la maggior parte de' Bastimenti del Convoglio. Partì ancora il legno carico di Argento, oro, e gioje, prese dal tesoro, dallo spedale, e dalle chiese della Religione, scortate da una Fregata, per la Francia. Tutto l'argento fu calcolato 80 quintali circa, e l'oro circa a 200 libbre non comprese le gioje. Il Gran

Maestro dimandò per grazia prima di partire di voler la Reliquia di S. Giovanni Battista, a cui fu subito consegnata, involta in un pezzo di carta senza la solita conserva d'oro.

Alli 19 s'imbarcò di buon ora il General Buonaparte sopra una lancia per portarsi a bordo del suo Vascello, ch'era uscito un giorno prima dal porto. Incominciò l'armata a far vela per Levante, restando soltanto in porto quindici barche Cannoniere, e circa 20 Bastimenti di trasporto. La notte del detto giorno partirono una Fregata Francese, ed una Galea di Malta, della quale fu eletto Capitano Padron Naro amico Piloto Maltese; portando tutte le Bandiere della Religione, e circa a cento mila Fucili. S'imbarcarono sopra la Flotta ancora per ordine del General Buonaparte le guardie del Gran Maestro, i Soldati de' Vascelli, e Galee, e moltissime marinaria, lasciando in Malta circa a sei mila Francesi, e tre Generali, in contraccambio di quanto Maltesi imbarcossi. Il General Vaubois restò in capite, e Bosredont Ransijat fu eletto Presidente.

Nel giorno 20 seguitarono a darsi provvidenze, per sistemare ciò, che i Francesi stimavano necessario alla nuova politica costruzione dell'Isola.

Alli 21 Giugno giorno di Giovedì comparve tre miglia distante da Siracusa l'unica divisione dell'Armata Inglese, che si trova dentro il Mediterraneo, compresa di 14 Vascelli, cioè sette di 74; e sette di 80 pezzi di Cannoni, comandata dall'Ammiraglio Orazio Nelson privo del braccio destro, la quale era passata da Messina, andando in cerca della squadra Francese, e l'avrebbe certamente sopraggiunta se non veniva ingannato da un Bastimento Raguseo nell'averle assicurato che avea fatto vela per Levante, nell'atte che allora ritrovavasi

innanzi Malta. La detta Flotta Inglese poi alli 19 di Luglio entrò tutta nel porto di Siracusa verso le ore 20, ed alli 21 dello stesso verso la meda ora sopraggiunse un Brich con 18 pezzi di Cannoni, e la detta Squadra dimora l'ancora in Siracusa che sono li 24 di do. mese.

Alli 22 circa le ore 14 arrivò in Malta un Bastimento Raguseo, portando 20 mila pezzi duri dalla Spagna in cinque Cassa per conto del Tesoro, ignorando la funesta vicenda, della quale somma se ne impadronì la Municipalità.

Il Console Inglese residente in Malta nominato Guglielmo England, fu trattenuto per giorni 13 in arresto, e sabato 23 Giugno fu da' Francesi imbarcato sopra la speronara del Dispaccio, che lo condusse in Siracusa, da ove dopo la dimora di pochi giorni se ne partì gli venne in Malta sequestrato tutto il suo equipaggio, suggellate le carte dentro la propria casa, ove abitava con la sua Famiglia.

Alli 2 del Mese di Luglio, il General di Divisione Vaubois Comandante in Capite nelle Isole di Malta, e Gozzo, pubblicò in istampa un editto, facendo sapere al Popolo Maltese, che alli 14 dello stesso dovea piantarsi l'Albero della Libertà con quelle solite pubbliche cerimonie, praticate in altri luoghi.

Seguitano tutto giorno le rapine, le violenze de' soldati Francesi adonto di qualunque castigo. Alcuni si mantengono ancora nelle campagne affliggendo i poveri contadini di quei borghi, ma questi animosamente li affrontano a costo della propria vita. Cercano i Francesi impadronirsi delle rendite, e de' fondi delle Cappellanie, ed Opere pie, come ancora di quell'e de' Monasterj e Conventi. Dimandato hanno da' Baroni e Mercatanti la somma di due milioni di lire per lo

mantenimento di nuove truppe in difesa della Città.

I Congiurati mostrano restar contenti del nuovo Governo Democratico, ma la maggior parte della popolazione vive dispiacuta.

I soldati avidi sempre di commettere rapine, abbandonano li stessi posti de' Castelli, lasciando la sola Sentinella.

Alli 14 Luglio si alzò innanzi il Palazzo del Gran Maestro l'Albero della Libertà con lo sparo di tutta l'artiglieria, e la sera illuminazione, ed una Gran Cena, e sotto l'Albero furono bruciati tutti gli Archivj della Religione.

Tutti i Borghi sono evacuati da' Francesi, perchè cacciati da' Maltesi con violenza, e si sono tutti ritirati nella Valletta. Si sono disarmati tutte le Torri, ed i cannoni trasportati in Città.

Quattro Fregate, ed un Brich Inglese costeggiano sempre innanzi Malta per impedirle il commercio; una di queste prese una barca Cannoniera, che veniva da Francia, con alcuni plichi e gli Inglese le buttarono a mare li sei cannoni, si presero tutta la provisione; una con li detti, e lasciarono andar liberi in Malta la Barca con tutti li Francesi.

Dentro il porto di Malta altro non sono restati della Religione, che tre barche Cannoniere, due navi, e due galee non atti a navigare.

Gli Abitanti della Città di Malta dopo le ore 24 si serrano volontariamente dentro le loro case, senza punto uscire, nonostante il caldo eccessivo, che soffrono.

Tutto giorno ne' Cantoni della Città di Malta si vedono fissati Editti, e nuove Leggi, ma non si curano, e la maggior parte resta insegueita.

Sabato 21 del corrente Luglio alcuni abitanti di Malta si rivoltarono contro

i Francesi, e uccisero molti, con pochissima perdita di Maltesi, e si resero padroni di due Forti, con alzare ivi la Bandiera del Re delle due Sicilie.

Questo è lo Stato in cui Trovasi

Malta con le sue Isole.

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ANTONY: THE SHAKESPEAREAN COLOSSUS — Part II *

David Cremona

Among the problems with which Shakespeare was faced when he was contemplating *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*, which was to be in some sort a sequel to *JULIUS CAESAR* (as well as a tragedy in its own right), there were two which he had met before and solved reasonably well. The first is partly technical: how to maintain a fairly close continuity of events with the preceding play in a sequence, and yet allow for a change, often an extreme change, in a principal character. The other, rather more difficult, how to present a personage onstage who is to be truly heroic, without having him fall into Marlovian rhetoric or more rhodomontade.

In both cases, the chronicle plays had already presented analogues. The resolute implacable figure of Bolingbroke in *RICHARD II* is already 'weary' and 'wan with care' in the first line of *HENRY IV* part 1, and is broken in health and spirit halfway through part 2, yet the events in all three plays are otherwise felt to follow on each other without interruption. Earlier still, the lusty and triumphant Edward IV, newly restored to the throne in the last scene of *HENRY VI* part 3, is already spoken of as wasted and ailing in the first scene of *RICHARD III* and dies shortly thereafter, yet hardly enough time seems to have passed, judging by concurrent events, to allow for this. In effect, Shakespeare adopts

an elastic concept of time, in terms of which objective circumstance proceeds at a regular unhurried rate, whereas individual characters of note seem to live at a subjective speed which is considerably accelerated. That Shakespeare was not unaware of the paradoxes involved may perhaps be gleaned from Rosalind's patter on the subject in *AS YOU LIKE IT*: 'Time travels in divers paces with divers persons'. Once the convention is accepted — and in the general suspension of disbelief accorded to the play, this is not difficult — it is seen to work very well.

The problem involved in the delineation of a heroic figure on stage is rather more complex and more delicate; and this is a matter central to *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*, and made further complicated by the dramatic necessity of showing that heroism obliquely, askance, as it were, in the distorting mirror of unflattering vicissitude; indeed, often in eclipse and finally in decline. Many of the plays, concerned with warfare either as matter for conquest, means of political domination, or merely gentlemanly avocation, deal with figures of solidierly eminence, but the nearest parallels must be with those whose protagonists are warriors before they are anything else, even if they overlay individual prowess with some other gloss. A Henry V, simplified as

* *Antony: The Shakespearean Colossus* — Part I appeared in *Hyphen* Number 2, Winter 1978, pp. 36-46.

he is from the earlier Hal, who is yet not without either subtlety or policy — his father's son in that; an Othello, whose 'occupation' is war, victim of his own image of himself; a Macbeth, a fighting general of high birth and higher ambition whose conduct in battle is described in terms which very closely recall those applied to Antony. All three, like Antony, are much concerned with 'honour', a word whose multifarious ramifications lent themselves to paradox; it is when Macbeth begins to quibble with the word that he destroys himself, losing honour in seeking to augment it, in spite of Banquo's warning. He would not, of course, have taken kindly to advice from Banquo in any case, since he feels that 'under him/My Genius is rebuk'd; as it is said / Mark Antony's was by Caesar's'. The analogy is there, certainly, though the other circumstances differ greatly.

The Antony we hear of in the exasperated opening speech of the play is complained of in terms the very antithesis of heroic; he is described as besotted, maudlin, hag-ridden in one sense at least, and ridiculous: 'a strumpet's fool'. Yet the same speech reminds us that this man has been a very god of bottle, Herculean in his strength and feats: all of which is constantly confirmed by other sources, favourable to him or hostile, in the course of the play. Skilfully Shakespeare interweaves disgust and admiration, each setting off the other; and if for the present the Olympian energy is withdrawn, and the Egyptian degradation a squalid reality, yet the existence of that mighty potential has been established. That the context is negative is unimportant. Antony, moreover, will not be drunk forever. The Roman soldier who austere-ly condemns him for his excess — and

it is a heroic excess in debauchery which is, when all is said, only the other side of the coin, of which the obverse is his heroic excess in battle — concedes that 'sometimes, when he is not Antony. He comes too short of that great property / which still should go with Antony'. Sometimes. This then is not a permanent condition, a period of 'poison'd hours', a bank of clouds obscuring for a while the bright luminary that is Antony. A 'Roman thought' can still break through the clouds, and Antony reassume himself. After all, this is the 'masker' and 'reveller' of the earlier play; if we have not had the opportunity before of seeing him in his cups or at his whoring, it was because the pressure of greater events allowed time for neither. Now the crisis is over, and some relaxation is permissible. In Cleopatra, too, Antony has met a 'royal wench', one who has already fascinated the mighty Julius and Pompey the Great, neither (in Shakespeare) much addicted to incidental amours or Sybaritic luxury. Antony, as we know, is particularly prone to just those things. In coming to Egypt he has found, if not a spiritual home, at least an earthly Paradise for that part of his disposition given to sensuality and self-indulgence. It is Aeaea, and Cleopatra is the Circe whose charms effect a swinish metamorphosis in him, for if he is of the Odyssean brand of heroism, no thoughtful Hermes has provided him with the moly to ward off her compelling charms. The only counterspell he can intermittently use is his *Romanitas*. This should not be discounted however: he is Roman, very much so, and a noble Roman at that. He has in fact become one of the three mightiest Romans, one of the 'world-sharers', and it is entirely by dint of the Roman virtues of manly vigour, spartan self-denial, Stoic-

cal indifference to hardship, relentless and unflinching effort in pursuit of his aims. It is his misfortune perhaps that these admirable qualities should in him each be matched, and at times overmatched, by its opposing vice; sottiſh lethargy, groſs ſelf-indulgence, an Epicurean love of ſensual delight, total abandonment in a languor of endleſs debauch. And Egypt the land, and certainly Egypt the queen, are moſt exquiſite'y gifted to gratify theſe vices on a truly heroic ſcale. It may be ignoble, but it is conſiſtent, that the negative Antony ſhould ſo exactly parallel the poſitive one. The ſcale, whether of achievement or of loſs, of ambition or of indifference, is at all times ſuperhuman, and at certain times, terrifying. The negative aſpect may be, at its worſt, an appalling ſelfiſhneſs, an unpardonable irreſponſibility; but there is nevertheless a perverſe ſort of magnanimity in ſuch a ſtatement as 'Let Rome in Tiber melt, and wide arch/ Of the rang'd empire fall'. This is a man who conquers the world with Roman doggedneſs in Roman ſobriety, and careleſſly gives it away piecemeal in Egyptian carouſal and jeſt. One man, indiviſible; yet his Roman friends can only ſee the great triumvir through their ſtraightened viſion, and regret one aſpect of him as betraying the other. His Roman enemies hardly concede him nobility at all.

Antony himſelf, has no ſuch univerſal view of his own character as will permit him to accept himſelf for what he is, the good and the bad together. He cannot ſay, with Parolles, 'Simply the thing I am / Shall make me live'. He lacks the detachment in his Roman moments; eſpecially when his awakening awareness, lashed by ſelf-contempt, is further exacerbated by the ſalt ſmart of external event — ſuch as

the 'garboils' created by his brother and wife in Italy, the latter's death in Sicyon, the victories of Labienus at a time of his own inertia, the political jockeying for poſition in Rome, and the Pompey rebellion, all of which might have been prevented, matched or ſettled by energetic action on his part. Yet though he caſtigates himſelf unſparingly, he is never recriminatory or hysterical, fatal ſigns of weakneſs. Nothing is more miſtaken than to conſider him a 'weak' character. True, he has weakneſſes, flaws; but Lepidus ſpeaks for ſhakespeare when he declares theſe to be negligible in comparison with the ſtrong poſitive qualities; adding that the very magnitude of his character enhances, if only by contrast, the diſfiguring blemiſhes. When Antony gravely ſpeaks of himſelf as 'the firm Roman', it is no vaunt: he is firm in the contemplation of his defects, firm in apologiſing for them where a man of weaker character would not riſk compromiſing his 'dignity', firm equally in reſuſing to be cruſhed by thoſe defects, and firm, in the face of ſpiteful accuſations by Caesar, in reſuſing at once to be provoked into loſing his temper and to be browbeaten into ſhouldering more of the reſponſibility for paſt miſunderſtandings than he diſpaſſionately conſiders to be rightly his. He is weak only in confrontation with Cleopatra, and then it is largely becauſe (as with Lady Macbeth and her Thane) ſhe is, to a very conſiderable extent, a powerful externaliſation of impulſes at work within him. Might Macbeth have reſiſted the murderous ambition within him had he not an even more ruthleſſly ambitious wife to ſpur him on (to ſay nothing of the Weird Siſters)? Could Antony have kept under control the anarchic ſenſuality within him had he not fallen into the toils of the

voluptuously sensual queen of a land of eternal hedonism? Profitless speculation, in either case. In both the plays, events ran otherwise. The parallel is one of which Shakespeare could not but have been aware, I think; there are strong affinities between the two plays. In each, a vigorously heroic soldier yields to the blandishments or persuasion of a succuba, against his better nature and judgment, to his brief gratification and eventual ruin; both of the women concerned are overwhelmed in the *debacle* they have been instrumental in bringing about. The differences are as significant as the similarities, it may be thought. Where inordinate ambition is a corrosive, destroying predator and prey in that order, having already destroyed the positive bond of love between them, sensuality is with difficulty separable from love (in our play, there is no separation, in fact) and through over-indulgence is as assuredly ruinous, there is an Elysium for Antony as there is not for Macbeth, nor any corresponding Heaven; and Cleopatra survives him, partly to suffer longer that she may the more properly purge herself of that remnant animality which still in part tinges her; that done, she too has immortal expectations.

She has moreover another function to perform: with the clear vision of the disillusioned and the dying, freed finally of time and wormy circumstance, she portrays for Dolabella and for the world the true — dramatically, poetically, pneumatologically true — stature of Antony: not the less true for being told, as it were, in a vision, and with the dying rapture of dream music. The Romans can only be expected to see the externals, simplified in the burlesque *reductio ad absurdum* of a play for stink-

ing mechanics to smirk and titter at: Antony to be brought drunken forth, Cleopatra's greatness exposed for entertainment 'i' the posture of a whore'. Yet already in the first act of the play, eternity was in their lips and eyes, bliss in their brows' bent; their every part, a race of heaven. As early as then, they had left the plodding succession of days (the dreary 'tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' which is Macbeth's affliction), for an eternal now whose instancy is love, not perhaps as rarefied as moralists would wish, but love notwithstanding. In this time outside time, the normal division of night and day, with the activity conventionally assigned to each, hardly exists; the concerns of the everyday world matter not at all; the world can go hang. In anyone of lesser stature, this colossal indifference, already remarked on above, would be a foolish and reprehensible solipsism. In them — well, to the Roman world it is a monstrous irresponsibility, no doubt; to us, filtered through the lens of the Shakespearean vision, it might even seem a truly superhuman unconcern with anything so trivial as mortality. They have entered upon eternity — or a reasonable facismile thereof; what have the irksome squabbles and sordid affrays over a few feet — or a few thousand miles — of grubby soil here or there to do with them? It is incapable, that aura of divinity about the indifference, though it is the alchemy of poetic presentation that makes the vision golden. New earth, new heaven are required to compass the love that an Antony can give — cannot but give — to a Cleopatra; the existing arrangement will not do. Antony away, the intervening period till his return to Alexandria is a 'great gap of time' to Cleopatra; similarly, when her barge

is rowed down Cydnus, and time stands still, the city empties itself, and the very air almost had left too, to gaze on her, making 'a gap in nature'. They have their own time; their own space; their own dimension. All about them is larger, richer, other than the mundane world in which, nevertheless, they yet exist, and towards which both, but especially Antony, have grave responsibilities. Which he is ignoring. It is part of their dilemma that they are called upon to live in both worlds at once, and these are incompatible, with different rules, and obligations which run counter to each other. They are constantly being condemned, where they should not even be assessed, by the rules of this world: yet their own views are conditioned by it. The paradoxes abound. Antony acknowledges that he has not 'kept the square'; yet we are told that the excess of all passions beomes him — 'so do they no man else'. Cleopatra equally is seen to be more gracious by reason of her faults: 'everything becomes' her; defects physical and moral are transformed into so many perfections, so that even the holy priests bless her when she is riggish. It is felt to be fitting that two such personalities should be at the top of the hierarchical pyramid of the world; it is no less appropriate that, by a different logic, they should ignore that world and its needs, being who they are and what they are: they stand up peerless. For them it is manifest that 'the nobleness of life is to do thus' (be totally absorbed in each other, in effect) 'when such a mutual pair and such a twain can do't'. No egalitarian nonsenes here about the idylls of Jack and Jill: these are two matched colossi, their legs perhaps of friable Egyptian clay, ultimately frangible, but their heads of super-refined gold towering high above the region cloud, breathing the

heady air of Olympus. Or so Shakespeare induces us to interpret the matter. Granted, this brave claim is made by Antony when in his cups; the later Antony seems to recant, involving himself anew with imperial business. But then, his view of himself, coloured by Roman convention, is not necessarily correct, as has already been suggested. An appeal is always open from Antony sober to Antony drunk. *In vino veritas* is a Roman proverb, after all. Rather than those defects of character which Roman severity and the censorious world condemn as flaws, it might be more profitable, reversing the viewpoint, to examine what considerations inhibit the 'mutual pair' from achieving their own kind of harmony. One element is implicit in the sequencing of the plays already referred to. The Alexandrian revel which opens the play takes place, we are made to feel, at no great time after Philippi, yet we see an Antony not only apparently far gone in 'dotage', beyond all expectation engendered by the finale of JULIUS CAESAR, but naggingly conscious also of his advancing years. With Cleopatra too, and perhaps more keenly, this is a source of unease and self-doubt. Each is regretfully aware of it in himself or herself; both consequently fear for the stability of their love, based as it partly is on manly vigour and feminine beauty, transient qualities. The irony is that their worries and fears are unjustified; but their self-confidence is eroded. Antony is conscious, as every man must be who has reached the head of his particular profession, of nothing left to strive for, and, in the retrospective pause, of the expenditure of energy, concentration and — above all — youth in the achieving of his present status. Since love is traditionally a young man's vocation, yet he is himself passionately involved

with Cleopatra, there cannot fail to colour his love certain complicating factors: uncertainty, jealousy, a loss of dignity keenly realised, an underlying melancholy, a bitterness at times. The jealousy may be extended outside the amatory; to rising soldiers such as Labienus, Ventidius, young Pompey; this in his own profession of arms. It is not a strong jealousy, to be sure — Ventidius' comments may be a little sour, and Pompey's assessment the truer tribute. Such as it is, however, it is age which lends edge to it. Essentially the uncertainty is emotional; unsure of her love, and even of her loyalty, throughout much of the fourth and fifth acts, he torments both himself and her. That she should have 'pack'd cards with Caesar' must have seemed at any time unlikely; but his judgment, distorted by conflicting passions at that stage, is vitiated. A third strand of jealousy may have served further to warp his mind: that of the 'boy' Caesar. Cleopatra is prone to goad him with references to Caesar, suggesting that Antony feels a sense of inferiority to him which is nowhere apparent, except in the matter of luck analysed by the soothsayer and confirmed by Antony. (Macbeth had been similarly scornful of 'the boy Malcolm', who was to defeat him in battle and succeed him as king). It is a jealousy compounded of various elements: the resentment of middle age towards youth, and a youth already established, at that; the scorn of a good man-at-arms, a 'sworder', for one who held his weapon 'Elen like a dancer'; the amused contempt of a professional general for an amateur whose victories were won for him by proxy, by 'lieutenantry'; the total incompatibility and ensuing antipathy between two men whose talents and faults were

almost diametrically opposed; the natural fear and suspicion between two equally powerfully rivals in a shifting situation. Add to these the psychological inhibition Antony feels in Caesar's presence, and we have the makings of a very pretty little ferment of resentment. The one element that seems not to have contributed its venom is a fear that Cleopatra might enchant Caesar sexually; Octavius no doubt is as forbiddingly chaste (to the temperaments of Antony and Cleopatra) as his unenthusiastic sister. Even the eye of jealousy, quick to perceive betrayal where none yet exists, and prompting savage reprisal (not that Thidias/Thyreus wins much sympathy) stops short of considering Caesar as a rival in love.

There are other betrayals possible, to be sure. Cleopatra has been 'a boggler ever', and might (after all) have accepted Caesar's terms; so Antony believes. Yet this is not entirely fair to Cleopatra. True, there is a deal of moral obliquity in her character; she is a born 'survivor'. Then, she has had to be, in the turbulent politics, domestic and international, of her Egypt. She has a highly developed instinct to adapt to any situation she is faced with, however drastic, however desperate; hers in the sinuousness of the serpent that Antony calls her. She is infinitely supple morally, and bends where others might break. Not so Antony: his backbone may be a little curved with age and debauchery, but he has never learnt, will never learn, it is not in his nature, to bow before the whirlwind. Eastern he may be in his sympathies and in many of his pleasures, but this particular flexibility he will find contemptible. And since she cannot make an Egyptian of him, and keep him great, or even alive, she borrows *Romanitas* of him,

most Roman in his death, and kills herself in turn 'in the high Roman fashion', making death proud to take her. Possibly, though, there was little choice left her. The lip that had charmed C. Julius Caesar, Cn. Pompeius Magnus, and M. Antonius in turn is 'wan'd'. She is 'wrinkl'd deep in time'; her complexion darker than it was in her 'salad days'. Even with Antony she dare not rely on her physical appeal alone, but must play an elaborate and sterile game, taunting him constantly, plaguing him with tantrums. She cannot afford, so she thinks, to let him take her for granted. So the jaded meat she has to offer must be made more piquant by sharp sauces and astringent herbs. How far this policy accounts for her more-than-lunar changeability, and how far she is the Elizabeth concept of Woman carried to the *n*th degree, is uncertain. She is queenly and sluttish at once, noble and bawdy by turns, now girlishly sentimental, now shrewishly spiteful, again tearful and pathetic: the epitome of wilfulness, yet stable enough at bottom if she might only be sure of her anchor, Antony. Again paradox obtrudes itself: she can, yet she can not. That is, did she but know, Antony is safely hers: they are the 'mutual pair' of his claim. But of this she cannot be sure for much of the play, or he of her towards its end. *Hinc illae lacrymae*.

The actual events of the play, seen from this aspect, seem unimportant. They allow Antony to make a bid to reassert himself in his own mastery; he shows great forbearance towards Caesar under gross and petty-minded provocation; his presence dwindles the mighty menace of Pompey's bid for domination to a piratical expedition, and the budding world-ruler is fobbed off with the crumbs of Sicily and Sardinia. With some shuffling of his con-

science — for he is a gentleman — Antony marries Octavia 'for his peace', and plays fair for as long as he can; until her brother high-handedly takes it upon himself to suppress Pompey and depose Lepidus, without consulting his new brother-in-law and former partner; moreover he goes out of his way to alienate Antony by slighting remarks publicly made and by a grudging and ungenerous official mention. Morally relieved of his obligations, Antony heads back to Cleopatra, giving Caesar the excuse he needs for launching on all-out, winner-take-all war. Cleopatra and Antony have in the meantime officially crowned themselves in a ceremony as much religious as royal; they seem to have arrogated to themselves the trappings, and something of the status, of divinity. Totally committed to Cleopatra now, he is more heavily infatuated with her than ever before: and his infatuation has by this time not only affected his statesmanship: it is fast corrupting his generalship and invading his common sense. No doubt what he is suffering from is a kind of *hubris*; he has for so long been the heroic warrior and *triumphator* that the thought of his losing to the amateur soldier Octavius is inconceivable, so why should he not indulge darling Cleo's whim and fight on her bright new navy? Protest only evokes stubbornness, and he ignores the remonstrances of Enobarbus, of his seasoned general, even of the old legionary. And after *hubris*, *peripeteia*; eventually, in both the technical and the idiomatic sense of the word, *catastrophe*. And this is just: Antony the mortal, however exalted and renowned among men for his eminence and luck in warfare, is subject to the gods, not least to Fortuna, notoriously fickle. He must die before the immortal can be wholly freed. The Roman commander-in-chief,

self-charged in the most vehement manner of conduct unbecoming a soldier, let alone an *imperator*, and of turpitude disgraceful in any Roman, but especially base in the greatest Roman of all, disintegrates; in successive fits of self-disgust, horror, rage, recrimination, bewilderment, reconciliation, melancholy and after an attempt at rallying of spirits — all totally introspective, as if he cannot escape the fascinated contemplation of his own falling apart — he staggers on to one more heroic but inconclusive victory, then is finally shattered in irreversible defeat. He gropes blindly, wonderingly for identity: Antony in defeat is no longer the Antony he remembers and recognises, the only Antony he has known; who then is he? He has hardly vitality enough now to curse Cleopatra, though he believes she has betrayed him. Yet the news of her death (false though it is) resolves matters once and for all: it is the touchstone that tests true metal. The complex issue is miraculously clarified. The fugitive soldier, the defeated general, the disgraced 'emperor', the renegade Roman, these aspects all cease to matter: the situation is drastically simplified by death. It becomes a clear case of, can he live, and be essentially himself as he now realises that self to be, without Cleopatra. All the ceremony and deference taken for granted in the past, stripped of which he had felt so diminished, are now seen to be nonessentials: robes of state, indeed, but one is a king without them. It is symbolic that at this point he throws off his armour; it is as irrelevant to the real soldier as purple and gold to the lord of men. Macbeth, faced with defeat and death, puts on his armour: soldiery is the one thing in himself he has not betrayed, and which will not therefore betray him. Antony has,

indirectly, betrayed his soldiery; but it no longer matters. His horizons have suddenly widened — widened beyond mortality. Nothing now remains but for him to release that true inner self, finally identified, which can only find empery and satiety in Cleopatra's arms. As with Brutus in the earlier play, his friend and servant declines to be the instrument of killing him; Eros indeed stabs himself sooner than fulfil an oath. Antony is wonderfully humble now: no rating, no intemperate bellowing under the pricks of Fortune. The tone is quiet, resigned: he accepts the tribute of Eros' death, and if he is a little bitter at botching his own suicide, he has the felicity of learning that Cleopatra lives still. He makes no reproaches for her deceit, he is haunted by no guilt, he experiences no shame now: that is all past. He is dying honourably — a Roman by a Roman valiantly vanquished; he is lying in her arms, her kisses on his brow. They may not staunch his wounds nor salve his hurts, but his tormented spirit is wonderfully at peace. His thoughts are for her: with what his failing breath will allow, he soothes her anguish, comforts her for the future, giving what counsel he can; there is no thought that he expects she should follow, though he has attempted to follow her. Finally, without bragging, he invites her to consider what splendour their common past had achieved. And so he dies. The star is fallen; and time is at his period. There are no earthquakes, no mighty upheavals, no fissures in the orphaned earth, no reversal of the natural order, such as even Caesar half-expects at so momentous an event. 'A moiety of the world' is dead; the other half lives on impoverished. Fortune now flaunts Caesar like a minion: he is the 'sole sir o' the world'. Increasingly, however,

we are made to see, as the dying Antony has seen perhaps, as Cleopatra with her mind set on death sees also, how paltry it is to be such, great merely by grace of Fortune, a sop given to men by the gods 'to excuse their after wrath'. Caesar may now dispose of men and kingdoms; he may even dispose of Cleopatra, so it seems. But he is not Fortune; and, 'not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave.' All his far-sighted schemes, his tortuous deep-laid policies, the studious cultivation of the public image seen from the standpoint of eternity, they seem childish, petty, absurd. He is as truly 'an ass unpolicied' as she 'a lass unparalleled'. To rise above Fortune and her current servant by doing 'that thing ... Which shackles accidents and bolts up change', that is greatness. There is moreover some small relish in frustrating Caesar's triumph in its determined fullness — a flick on the nose at the last, to show him how far his power extends, world-master though he may be. It is not easy for so vital a creature as Cleopatra to do, this: to release her hold on life, and with such amused assurance. All her past cries against it: her every instinct must be overborne. In the general *catharsis* brought about by sorrow and humiliation, all her grosser elements are laid aside: she is air and fire. Now indeed worthy of Antony at the last, she can see him with a clarity and a vividness unsullied by the vicissitude of change. Dolabella will not acknowledge the justice of the vision; and we ourselves hardly recognise it from our personal experience of the man. Yet there is no sentimental canonising here, no wistful aggrandizement by hindsight. If Cleopatra has survived her Antony by an entire act that she may prepare herself for him, she also lives that she may provide us with this exceptional portrait

of Antony as she has known him in a timeless past, as he now is in her mind as an abiding reality.

I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony
...His face was as the heav'ns, and therein

stuck

A sun and moon, which kept their course
and lighted

This little O, the earth,

His legs bestrid the ocean: his rear'd arm
Crested the world. His voice was propertyed
As all the tuned spheres, and that to

friends;

But when he meant to quail and shake
the orb,

He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping. His

delights

Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back
above

The elements they liv'd in: in his livery
Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and
island were

As plates dropp'd from his pocket.

To be the eternal wife of such a Titan is in itself an apotheosis; and her courage earns her the right to that title, in the teeth of all pallid moralities. The finale is solemn, hieratic, stately: she is the hierophant presiding over her own dissolution, and all must be done well. Robed, crowned, crook and flail in hand, finally serene beyond change, supreme in majesty and beauty, as if she were once more for Cydnus to meet her Antony: she has never been so self-possessed, so regal, yet tender and lyrically gentle withal. It is a wildly improbable yet exquisitely apt conclusion: one more paradox. She is, what Charmian calls her, the Eastern star, most beautiful at its setting, yet in setting finally matched in an eternal firmament with that other fallen star which is Antony. A last paradox: she kills herself, dying in the high Roman fashion; yet the instrument of her death is as essentially

Egyptian as Antony's shortsword is Roman. More, it is just such a 'serpent of old Nile' as Antony has always called her. Only Cleopatra can kill Cleopatra, as Antony can be killed by Antony alone. Demigods are mortal, but they lay down their own lives at will.

The tragedy — insofar as it is a tragedy — is electric with paradox, as has appeared. Its theme is greatness, its protagonists heroic in the strictest classical mould, Emperor and Queen, exceptionally masculine man in the traditional male roles of warrior and autocrat, essentially feminine woman in the traditionally female posture of enchantress and succuba. Yet both warrior king and seductive siren are in decline, uncertain of themselves and consequently, though needlessly, of each other. To the extent that the progression is one from absolute power and authority to a condition of ruin and suicide, the play fits into the category of tragedy as generally understood. On the human plane, however, there is a counter-movement, a development towards self-knowledge and fulfilment. For this, the inessential and distracting panoply of imperial pomp and military glory must be stripped off, and the stature of protagonists revealed — as with classical statuary — in heroic nudity. It is a lengthy, violent, humiliating and painful process, imperfectly understood and for long resisted: convention blinds even the unconventional. With hindsight it is clear that no other path was open to Antony, too great to be anything but lord of the world, yet too great also to be concerned with so small a thing as the world. Mars, Hercules, Jove, half the Pantheon is invoked to trick him out fully, as Venus and Isis are on Cleopatra's behalf; their real immortality is the

Vergilian one in Elysium, where they will supplant their prototypes, Dido and Aeneas — the one a powerful North African queen, the other the ancestor of all Romans, fleeing from the ruins of gutted Troy — as the exemplars of true lovers. This then is Shakespeare's solution to the second problem, how to depict the truly heroic man, at once a professional soldier like Othello, a great nobleman like Macbeth, and an honour-dealing king like Henry V, but with a Roman dimension added. Let him be great-souled enough to conquer the world, yet magnanimous enough too not to be possessed by it. Unking'd Richard II collapses into a welter of narcissistic self-pity, yet discovers the poet in himself; but Antony, defeated and dying, is calm with the calm, of eternity. He surveys the past without regret. Not Rome, not Egypt, not the world, certainly not life does he grudge losing. He has lived 'the greatest prince i' the world, the noblest'; he dies by his own hand, in Cleopatra arms: all passion spent. Similarly, she slides into death with his name on her lips, the deadly babe at her breast, in an almost sexual languor. No more than for Samson is there cause for mourning here. All has been well done. Both have travailed, suffered and been cleansed of their baser elements; each in dying looks to other, juster worlds than this, which has never been worthy of them. There, they will reassume that eternity which was always properly theirs, untroubled by mundane concepts of duty and the like, so dear to a glorified civil servant like Octavius Caesar. His changes are still to come, nor will they be all pleasant: but they are set firm beyond change, in an endless Elysian afternoon among the asphodels.

INORGANIC COMPLEXES:

AN INTRODUCTION

Alfred Vella

DEFINING COMPLEXES

A **complex** or **coordination compound** consists of a central metal atom which is associated with a number of molecules or ions called the **ligands**. The complex may or may not be charged and generally its properties are distinct from those of the free metal ion and ligands that constitute it.

Complexes are, in fact, more ubiquitous than is generally imagined. When a soluble ionic compound is dissolved in water, its ions are hydrated, i.e. become associated with the solvent molecules by an ion-dipole interaction (fig. 1). In general, cationic radii are smaller than anionic ones and the

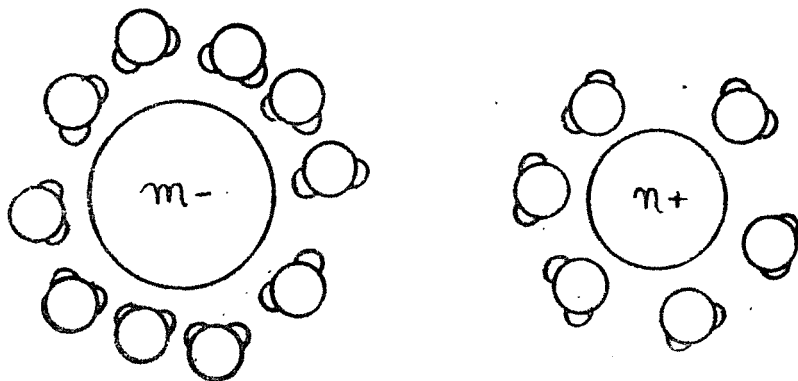


fig. 1.

cation-water interaction is therefore greater and more important than that between anions and water. In fact we can consider the cations to form new distinct species in aqueous medium, namely, **aquo complex ions**. The greater the charge density of the cation (i.e. the charge/radius ratio), the stronger will be the force of attraction of the ion for the water ligands. Thus species like Fe^{2+} , Mn^{2+} , Cr^{3+} etc. exist, at low pH, mainly as discrete hexaquo complex ions $[\text{M}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{n+}$ and direct evidence for the existence of these species comes from ultraviolet spectroscopy and other sources. Non-transition metal ions, e.g., Mg^{2+} , Sn^{2+} , Al^{3+} , Zn^{2+} , are also composed of aquo complexes and physical methods of investigation (e.g. Raman spectroscopy and $\text{O}^{17}\text{n.m.r.}$ studies) support formulations such as $[\text{Mg}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$, $[\text{Zn}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$, $[\text{Al}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{3+}$. Corroborative evidence for the existence of aquo complexes stems from the fact that many salts containing these cations crystallise with

a number of water molecules equal to the coordination number of the presumed aquo complex, e.g. $\text{MgCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ or better $[\text{Mg}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]\text{Cl}_2$ and $\text{Al}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3 \cdot 12\text{H}_2\text{O}$ or better $[\text{Al}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]_2(\text{SO}_4)_3$. However, not all crystal water need be ligand water in the sense that it has little or no association with the anions. Thus in $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$, the water is largely bound to the sulphate (VI), in $\text{CuSO}_4 \cdot 5(\text{H}_2\text{O})$ the water is partly bound to the metal (4 moles) and partly shared between the metal and the sulphate (VI) (1 mole), i.e., $[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]\text{SO}_4 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$.

For large, weakly charged ions like Na^+ , K^+ , Cs^+ , the metal ion — water association will be weak (Coulomb's law) and thus the aquo complexes will be of a rather fragile nature.

MORE ABOUT AQUO COMPLEXES

With few exceptions, metal aquo complexes have the general formula $[\text{M}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{n+}$. Since the water ligands are neutral, $n+$ is the charge present on the metal ion M. The six waters surround the central ion in an octahedral fashion, as would be anticipated from the Sidgwick-Powell repulsion theory. We say that we have an **octahedral** complex and fig. 2 illustrates the shape of such a species.

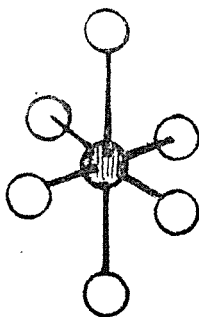
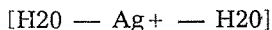


fig. 2.

This octahedral shape is the most common structure of all complex ions. Octahedral hexaquo complexes are found in blue-green solutions of chromium (III) salts, in pink solutions of manganese (II) sulphate (VI) and in the sky-blue solutions of copper (II) compounds.

A notable exception to this octahedral geometry is afforded by the silver aquo complex; for some obscure reason, this complex exists as $[\text{Ag}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2]^+$, i.e. it is a bi-coordinate **linear** species with structure

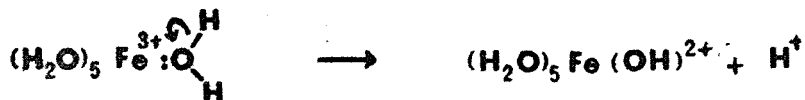


All solutions of hexaquo ions have a pH lower than 7 — the higher the charge on the central atom, the higher will be the acidity (and the lower the pH) of these solutions. This acidity must be due to the ionisation of one or more of the ligand waters of the aquo complex. For $[\text{Fe}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{3+}$, for example, we have



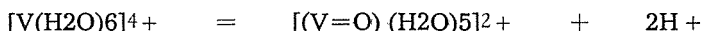
For which, $\text{pK}_{a,1} = 2.2^*$, i.e. the iron complex ion is as strong an acid as orthophosphoric (v) acid with a $\text{pK}_{a,1}$ equal to 2.1.

Presumably, the attraction of the electrons of the O-H bonds by the highly polarizing Fe^{3+} ion induces the observed ionisation, a process which we can depict as follows:



For large, unipositively charged ions, e.g. Na^+ , K^+ , this attraction for the electrons of the water molecule is small, and these ions do not function as acids.

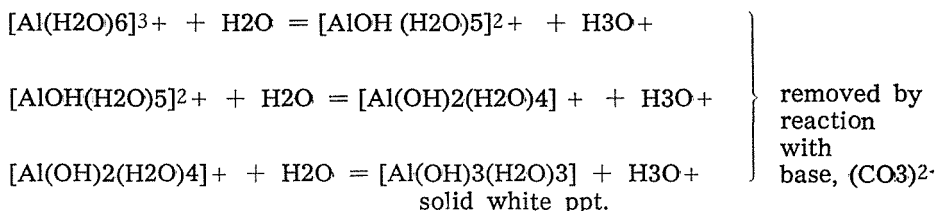
For small, highly charged ions like V^{4+} , this attraction is actually so intense that species like $[\text{V}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{4+}$ do not even exist. Instead, the aquo vanadium ion is in the form $[\text{VO}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_5]^{2+}$, a species that can be thought of as arising from the complete deprotonation of one of the six ligand waters in the hypothetical hexaaquovanadium (IV),



All ionic vanadium (IV) compounds contain this oxo ion; thus, the so-called vanadyl sulphate pentahydrate, a blue crystalline material, is, in fact, pentaquooxovanadium (IV) sulphate: $[\text{VO}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_5]\text{SO}_4$.

Other similar oxo ions are known, e.g., the uranium (VI) species $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$, which occurs in the aquo complex $[\text{UO}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2+}$ and in other uranium complexes.

The acidic properties of aquo ions also explains why carbonates of Cr(III), Fe(III), Al(III) etc. are unknown. When solutions containing these metal ions are treated with aqueous sodium carbonate, carbon dioxide is evolved and a precipitate of the metal hydroxide is thrown down. Thus, for aluminium (III), we may represent the process by the following diagram:



Similarly, certain sulphides cannot be prepared by 'wet' reactions, i.e. by the interaction of metallic aquo ions and solutions containing sulphide. Thus, no Fe_2S_3 is formed when iron (III) solutions are treated with aqueous

* $\text{pK}_{a,1}$ stands for $-\log$ (acid ionisation equilibrium constant). The subscript 1 refers to the first ionisation of the six that are theoretically possible.

sodium sulphide. Instead, hydrogen sulphide is given off and hydrated iron (III) hydroxide precipitates. That this is not due to the instability of the sulphide itself is shown by the fact that the compound Fe_2S_3 can readily be prepared by dry methods.

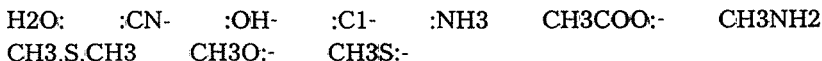
In all the above reactions, the hydroxide of the metal is formed when the complete ionisation of three water molecules occurs. This ionisation is induced by the presence of basic species (e.g. $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$ or S^{2-}) which react with H_3O^+ and remove it from the equilibrium system (see above). When the base is very strong, as in the case of OH^- , and with highly acidic complexes, e.g. hydrated aluminium (III), beryllium(II) or titanium(IV), the solid metal hydroxides may dissolve in excess base to form anionic hydroxo complexes. e.g.



Such complexes, therefore, show amphoteric behaviour.

OTHER LIGANDS

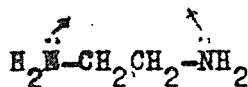
A species can act as a ligand if it can be strongly attracted by a positively charged metallic nucleus. This rules out all positively charged ion, e.g. H_3O^+ , NH_4^+ , $(\text{CH}_3.\text{NH}_3)^+$ and also neutral, non-polarizable molecules which are devoid of any readily available lone pair electrons, e.g. CH_4 , SiH_4 , CF_4 . Preferably, the ligand should possess a lone pair of electrons sited on an electronegative atom, and be negatively charged. A few examples of commonly encountered ligands are:



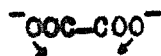
Hydrogen sulphide does not generally function as a ligand. Although the sulphur atom has two lone pairs of electrons, these are not easily accessible since sulphur is not a very electronegative atom and therefore the C-S bond is not sufficiently polarized. If we substitute the hydrogens in H_2S with methyl groups, as in dimethyl sulphide, $\text{CH}_3\text{-S-CH}_3$, the inductive effect of the alkyls renders the S atom slightly negatively charged, and thus 'activates' the lone pairs towards ligation with a metal ion.

Ligands may be classified on the basis of the number of bonds that they can form with the metal atom. Thus, if they can form one bond with the metal, they are said to be **unidentate**. All the ligands mentioned so far in this article normally act as unidentate species. Ligands that have two donor sites per molecule are said to be **bidentate**, i.e. having two 'teeth' with which to hold on to the metal. Examples of bidentates are

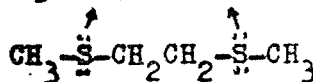
1,2-diaminoethane



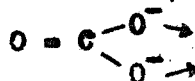
ethandioate ion



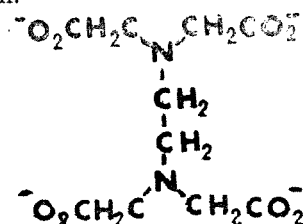
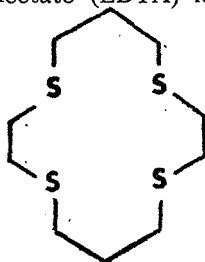
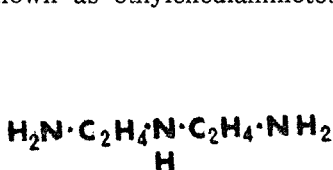
2,5-dithiahexane



carbonate ion



Ligands with higher denticity are known, thus the tridentate 1,4,7-triazaheptane (I), the quadridentate 1,4,8,11-tetrathiacyclotetradecane (II) and the sexidentate bis(di(carboxymethyl)amino)ethane, (III), more commonly known as ethylenediaminetetraacetate (EDTA) ion.



When a polydentate ligand forms a ring structure by bonding with the metal, then it is said to be a **chelate** ligand. Thus bidentate 1,2-diaminoethane is acting as chelate ligand when forming the complex $[\text{Ni}(\text{NH}_2\text{C}_2\text{H}_4\text{NH}_2)_2]^{2+}$; two 5-membered rings are formed each composed of a nickel atom, two nitrogens and two carbon atoms (fig. 3a):

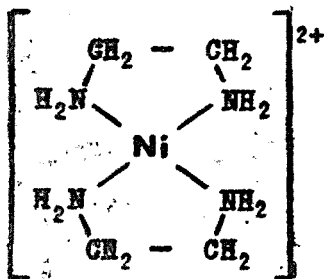


fig. 3a

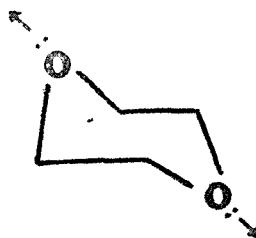


fig. 3b

On the other hand, dioxan (fig. 3b), although a bidentate ligand, is not a chelate. In dioxan, the two oxygen atoms have their lone pair electron lobes directed away from each other and cannot, as it were, bend over backwards to bond to the same metal atom and form a ring.

A few years ago, a formidable ligand was synthesised containing eight donor atoms. Labelled OTO (for 1,4,8,11,15,18,22,25-octathiacyclooctacosane), it acts as a sort of double quadridentate ligand with Ni^{2+} when it forms the complex compound $[\text{Ni}_2(\text{OTO})](\text{BF}_4)_4$. The structure is shown in fig. 4. The four sulphur atoms bonded to each nickel atom are in one plane: the plane of the nickel atom.

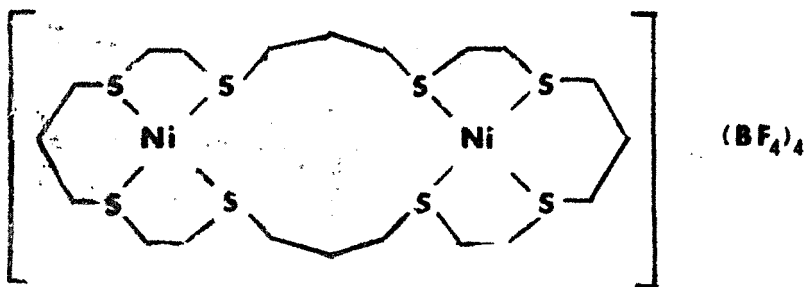


fig. 4

NAMING COMPLEXES

As is usual in naming simple salts, the cation is mentioned first and then the anion. The ligands are named before the metal ion, negatively charged ligands preceding neutral molecule ligands. If more than one type of neutral (or negatively charged) ligand is present, they are named in alphabetical order. Thus, for example, ammine before aquo, bromide before chloride. The prefixes di-, tri-, tetra-, etc.* are used for multiple ligands of the same kind and the central ion's oxidation number is shown with a Roman numeral. When the complex ion is overall negatively charged, then the metal ion's name takes on an -ate ending. The names of some common ligands are given in the Table below.

* The prefixes mono-, bis-, tris-, tetrakis, etc. are used for the more complex-named ligands.

H ₂ O	aquo	F-	fluoro
NH ₃	ammine	Cl-	chloro
CO	carbonyl	Br-	bromo
NO	nitrosyl	I-	iodo
CH ₃ NH ₂	methylamine	CN-	cyano
(C ₆ H ₅) ₃ P	triphenylphosphine	OH-	hydroxo
		(CO ₃) ²⁻	carbonato
		(NO ₂)-	nitro
		(NO ₃)-	nitrate

The following list of names shows how the above rules are applied in practise.

[Co(NH ₃) ₆]Cl ₃	hexamminecobalt(III) chloride
[CoCO ₃ (NH ₃) ₅]NO ₃	carbonatopentamminecobalt(III) nitrate(V)
K ₃ [Mn(CN) ₆]	potassium hexacyanomanganate(III)
[NiCl ₂ (P.Ph ₃) ₂]	dichlorobis(triphenylphosphine)nickel(II) (Ph=phenyl)
(NH ₄) ₂ [NiCl ₄]	ammonium tetrachloronickelate(II)
K ₃ [Fe(C ₂ O ₄) ₃]	potassium tris(ethandioato)ferrate(III)
[Fe(NO)(H ₂ O) ₅]SO ₄	pentaquonitrosyliron(II) sulphate(VI)

SHAPES OF COMPLEXES

We have already mentioned the octahedral shape of six-coordinate complexes. Coordination compounds of the type ML₆, where L is a unidentate ligand would possess this shape, e.g. [CrCl₂(H₂O)₄]⁺, [Fe(NO)(H₂O)₅]²⁺, [Cu(NH₃)₄(H₂O)₂]²⁺, [Fe(CN)₆]⁴⁻. When chelating ligands are present in octahedral complexes, the chelate always straddles two *cis* positions of the octahedron, e.g. in [CoCl₂(NH₂.C₂H₄.NH₂)₂]⁺, fig. 6 where en stands for the 1,2-diaminoethane molecules.

It is not difficult to see that when more than one type of ligand is present, isomerism will be possible. Indeed the multitude of possible isomers (and sometimes the ease with which they can interconvert) has perplexed early workers in the field of complex chemistry — and perhaps even earned it its name! Thus from aqueous solutions of chromium(III) chloride, three different complexes can be isolated:

- a violet compound with structure [Cr(H₂O)₆]³⁺ (Cl⁻)₃
- a pale-green compound with structure [Cr(H₂O)₅Cl]²⁺ + (Cl⁻)₂. H₂O
- and a deep-green compound with structure [Cr(H₂O)₄Cl₂]⁺ (Cl⁻). 2H₂O

A fourth isomer, the neutral complex Cr(H₂O)₃Cl₃. 3H₂O, has been prepared from ether solutions. This last isomer can in fact, exist in two possible forms: the **facial** isomer (fig. 5a) and the **meridional** isomer (fig. 5b). The deep green isomer, dichlorotetraaquo chromium(III) chloride can also exist in two forms: the **cis** isomer (fig. 5c) and the **trans** (fig. 5d).

Optical isomerism is also possible, especially when chelating ligands are involved. Thus the cation in dichloro-bis(1,2-diaminoethane)cobalt(III) can

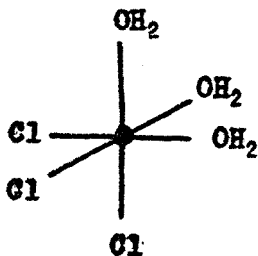


fig. 5a

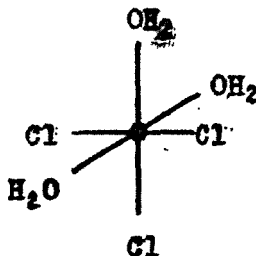


fig. 5b

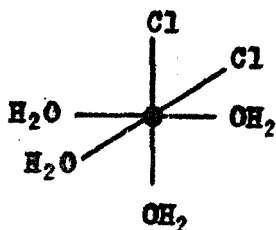


fig. 5c

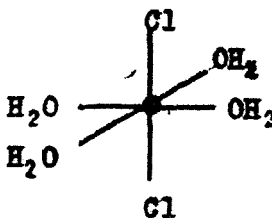


fig. 5d

exist in three forms: the **trans**, optically inactive form (fig. 6a) and two **cis** forms, one being the mirror image of the other (figs. 6b, 6c). These two **different** compounds are both optically active*.

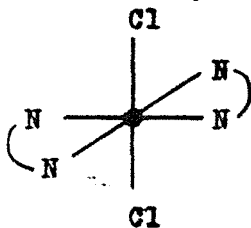


fig. 6a

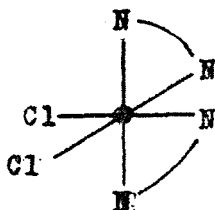


fig. 6b

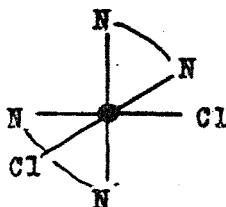


fig. 6c

Four coordinate complexes ML_4 , can either be tetrahedral, as in $[ZnCl_4]^{2-}$, $[Hg(CN)_4]^{2-}$, $[FeCl_4]^{2-}$, $[CoBr_4]^{2-}$ or flat planar. The only important flat planar complexes are those of nickel(II) and copper(II) and a few other second and third row transition metals. Perhaps the best known of these flat complexes

* To ascertain whether a complex or (any molecular species) is optically active or not, look for the presence of a plane of symmetry. If *absent*, the molecule will exist in two different mirror image forms and both forms will be optically active, i.e. will be able to rotate the plane of polarization of plane polarized light.

is the tetramminecopper(II) ion, $[\text{Cu}(\text{NH}_3)_4]^{2+}$. However, such an ion, when present in aqueous solution, will certainly be approached very closely by the water molecules, especially above and below the plane of the ion. It is probably best to regard such 'flat' complexes as being tetragonally distorted octahedral ones, at least when present in solution (fig. 7).

Moreover, even when they crystallise into solids, planar complexes are known to arrange themselves in such a way that each metal ion is still octahedrally surrounded by ligand atoms (fig. 8).

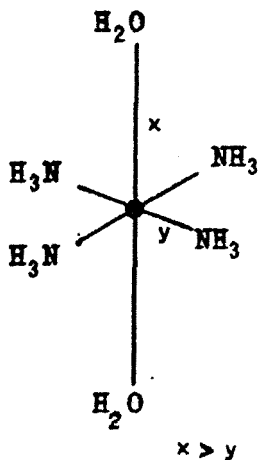


Fig. 7

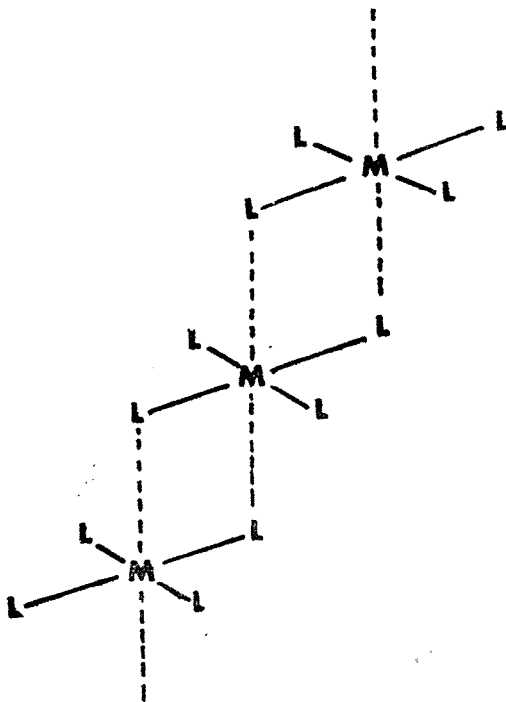


fig. 8

MEMORIA E POESIA VERGHIANA

Joseph Eynaud

La memoria verghiana è essenzialmente romantica e tale rimane nei capolavori, nei momenti più intensi del racconto realistico, perchè sempre viva intorno ai nuclei dell'emozione, popolare nel senso migliore attribuito dai Romantici a questo termine di riferimento, oggettiva, capace di porsi tra i personaggi e rivedere, con loro e per loro, ciò che ama e rievoca. Così il personaggio diventa il punto di vista; la prospettiva del racconto nasce da lui, non appare preordinata dagli impulsi sentimentali di una storia interiore.

Così, come nota il Russo nel suo saggio *Giovanni Verga* (Bari, Laterza, 1941) accanto al "pathos" tragico nascono le note di un umorismo acre. Il modo epico-comico è profondamente legato alla storia italiana, come l'"idillico aceto" di cui parla Orazio, l'incontro di drammatico e comico, il ridere sulle lacrime, il piangere tra le risa, poichè tutto nasce da un popolo che ha conosciuto profonde pene, ammaestrato da lutti e sofferenze. In questa luce appaiono i momenti dell'amaro umorismo verghiano: quando per esempio, nei *Malavoglia*, l'ostessa del paese Santuzza, che puzzava di vino e aveva sempre il miele in bocca, compiangere la morte di Bastiano perito in mare durante la tempesta: "Beato lui! — sospirava la Santuzza, — è morto in un giorno segnalato, la vigilia dei Dolori di Maria Vergine, e prega lassù per noi peccatori ..."; e quando, nel *Mastro-don Gesualdo*, Verga descrive il mondo che circonda il protagonista morente: "Un esercito

di mangiapane, staffieri e camerieri, che sbadigliavano a bocca chiusa, camminavano in punta di piedi, e vi servivano senza dire una parola o fare un passo di più, con tanta degnazione da farvene passar la voglia".

Nuove appaiono, così, le luci della memoria verghiana, perchè non seguono una via predisposta in modo meccanico — la ricostruzione del documento, la fotografia, l'inchiesta sociologica — né vagano secondo impulsi irrazionali, ma procedono, più intense o velate, crude o lievi, secondo un andamento piano e a fuoco, scoprendo rilievi esatti e contorni sfumati, visi a tutto rilievo e rapidi profili, non escludendo un sottile filo della ragione quasi illuministico né un più antico riferimento al dramma e alla commedia greca, voce di un popolo e di una civiltà.

Con una formula felice, "la insurrezione lirica dei primitivi", il Russo ha definito il mondo della memoria e della osservazione verghiana filtrata attraverso lo scarno lavoro stilistico: lo scrittore così racconta la storia interna di un popolo, che è antica per le tradizioni che si sono tramandate in uno spazio umano piccolo, entro un orizzonte fermo che l'unità italiana non ha ancora smosso, distaccato dal suo fondo. E' una memoria storica che opera e dà vita alla materia, non con abito dello storico ma con la sensibilità viva del poeta. Verga ha tutte le qualità del grande poeta: il ritmo della scrittura, la forza della immagine, le sin-

tesi che portano alla vetta una progressione drammatica in modo rapido, la chiarezza e la misura del paesaggio; e ha anche grandi qualità di narratore quando racconta, con passo tranquillo, con fare largo, le vicende e ha, infine, doti evidenti di drammaturgo nei dialoghi, nelle azioni, nei passaggi, è cioè uno scrittore nel quale tutte le componenti della letteratura si sommano.

E' poi uno scrittore triste e grigio: ogni vivacità appare misurata, non calcolata con arte, trattenuta da un carattere schivo e nemico delle esibizioni, mai pirotecnico, incapace di risolvere un'immagine sulla superficie levigata della pagina, lontano dalle tentazioni del plagio e dell'imitazione letteraria così diffuse dal dannunzianesimo, pronto a cogliere cadenze e ritmi altrui, sollecitato da un orecchio esperto. La tristezza grigia del Verga quando sfocia nelle elegie diventa naturale e profonda, anche tenera, con le stelle e le luci lontane; quando non trova la propria vena si impasta con la vecchiaia, con le antichità delle cose, diventa come il musco e l'edera, e quando s'apre drammaticamente, allora prende altri e più violenti colori, ma sempre su gradazioni basse e profonde, raramente allegre e squillanti. Come ogni poeta, il Verga si esprime mediante colori registrati su alcune grandi tonalità, sulle voci dei personaggi, sugli orizzonti che chiudono un mondo o gli aprono davanti la suggestione dell'ignoto. Non ha tentazioni metafisiche profonde: l'ignoto piuttosto che l'inconoscibile gli appare davanti, nelle tempeste o nelle sere buie, guardando il cielo o le luci del mare; mentre la terra grassa della malaria, le cavità delle zolfare, le gole pietrose, gli appaiono familiari e dolorose, senza mistero.

Anche la contemplazione è rara: Rosso Malpelo non so guardare la luna come il pirandelliano Ciaula, così simile per certe situazioni d'età e d'ambiente, né piangere di sollievo. Nel ragazzo verghiano la miseria e le offese, la morte del padre — che della miseria e dell'offesa è il ricordo bruciante — mutano gli slanci affettivi, il bisogno di amicizia, in rabbia e cattiveria ed egli è buono quando picchia l'amico; è un vinto perchè tutto il bene s'è trasformato in un doloroso e violento antagonismo. Nel ragazzo pirandelliano la fatica da bestia mansueta non ha ucciso il candore, non gli ha tolto la capacità di alzare gli occhi e contemplare la luna, di avvertire, in quello sguardo, lo sgomento di una confusa libertà della poesia, presagio di ciò che l'uomo può essere.

E' stato detto che il Verga resta fedele alla sua poesia realistica, alla "roba", animato da una "passione economica": riconosciuta come una dura legge della vita sociale la condizione della miseria, della fatica, egli scopre, nell'amore per la casa, per la terra, per tutto ciò che il lavoro e il possesso dei beni materiali può dare all'uomo, una realtà della poesia, il mondo degli affetti e delle pene, egli, vede il decadere della vecchia nobiltà. Ma Gesualdo non è il simbolo di una nuova classe che avanza, non è il mercante Lopatchin del cecoviani *Giardino dei ciliegi*; dietro a lui tramonta un mondo, quello della nobiltà feudale e agraria, ma insieme a lui non c'è una borghesia che incalza. Si può dire che il Verga veda ciò che muore e ciò che sopravvive, il corrompersi della nobiltà, la dolorosa esistenza del popolo: Gesualdo è un popolano che si è distaccato dalla propria gente e che muore solo; i suoi, per destino storico, sono Diodata e i figli

di lei, non Isabella, né il duca suo marito, non i Traù né i Leyra. Gesualdo chiude un ciclo anche con la solitudine di uomo muore in un palazzo, tra i camerieri, il lusso, le convenzioni, come un grosso albero trapiantato, in un terreno sterile. Il suo è e rimane un dramma solitario, pur così diverso dalla eroica solitudine romantica e dalle sue esaltazioni letterarie.

E' stato detto che il mondo verghiano brulica di piccola gente, quasi una commedia della vita sociale, fitta di pettegolezzi e di bocconi amari, con poca pace e molti intrighi quotidiani e che da questo fondo umano si stagliano le grandi pagine, le scene tragiche, liriche ed elegiache; ma il respiro di questo mondo, tra la terra, il mare, le zolfare, la casa, il passo dei muli, e i paesaggi che s'aprono, è antico e profondo. Il Verga limita l'orizzonte per scavare nella profondità delle cose: è la sua vita di scrittore, di coloro che scelgono il particolare per giungere all'universale, il concerto per scoprire leggi più ampie e generali, l'uomo per capire l'umanità, la storia di una comunità non la storia di un popolo intero o di un continente; è il via di uno scrittore che non procede secondo degli "a priori" — siano essi le norme di una superiore moralità, d'una ricerca religiosa già orientata, o di una volontà politica — ma secondo la realtà e la sua storia interna, che è storia di costumi, di tradizioni, di leggi stratificate, di condizioni economiche e sociali, di antiche favole dolci e amare, senza l'illusione di cogliere una felicità o di affermare un valore perenne, ma con una chiara coscienza del modo come la vita diventa, in certi luoghi e in talune età della storia, profonda, quasi formata da tanti strati, uno sull'altro, non ancora aperta, dinamica,

smossa, tolta dalle sue radici, pronta a tentare nuove strade.

L'amore per la roba è insieme il motivo dominante e la piega dolorosa dell'opera verghiana, con i suoi risvolti comico-drammatici. Nanni l'Orbo grida: "Voglio l'onor mio, don Gesualdo! L'onor mio che non si compra a denari!", ma quando s'accorda col padrone sulla chiusura del Carmine si calma; il duca di Leyra fa trattare l'aspetto economico del suo matrimonio con Isabella dal notaio; il canonico Lupi, il barone Zacco, il notaio, le loro mogli, le figlie, tutti cercano di concludere affari vantaggiosi; è un modo doloroso di vivere, oppresso dalla roba, mai liberato dall'importante soltanto il modo con cui la dura legge della vita sociale. Non è Verga che guarda, vede quel mondo oppresso; importa la scelta che lo fa guardare e descrivere seguendo il filo duro, difficile, d'una poesia che non si concede riposo nella contemplazione astratta, nella ricerca intellettuale, nelle speranze morali o religiose, ma continua ad affondare, con forza drammatica, tra la stessa gente, in mezzo ai problemi e alle cose. Manca al Verga il divertimento del letterato, egli non gioca, come Maupassant quando descrive i rivoluzionari francesi, vede, nelle pagine della smossa del Gesualdo, soltanto "una fiumana di gente, una baraonda, delle armi che luccicavano, delle braccia che si agitavano in aria, delle facce accese e stravolte che apparivano confusamente al lume delle torce a vento". E' una folla senza ideali evidenti, mossa dal bisogno o dall'interesse, un modo pessimistico di guardare.

La poesia verghiana ha il suo mondo nella casa e nella roba, in una intimità antica, raccolta intorno ai sentimenti, alla fatica e alla pena, chiusa nelle tradizioni, in un universo

primitivo.

La poesia comincia con *Nedda* (1874), ma è ancora descrittiva: è rappresentazione di luoghi, animazione realistica di vicende:

"Pioveva, e il vento urlava incolerito; le venti o trenta donne che raccoglievano le olive del podere facevano fumare le loro vesti bagnate dalla pioggia dinanzi al fuoco"

Poeta è pienamente in *Vita dei campi*: la prosa verghiana, qui, si presta a una lettura del suo tessuto lirico-drammatico, nelle forme chiuse del ritmo e dell'immagine scandita in versi di una profonda modernità; è, questa, lettura stilistica, nella quale vengono tolti gli appoggi narrativi o discussi per isolare le immagini:

"La vedi la 'puddara',
che sta ad ammiccarci lassù
verso Granvilla,
come sparassero dei razzi
anche a 'Santa Domenica'?"

La saggezza precoce e amara di Rosso Malpelo approda a questo breve canto dove non c'è pietà divina o umana:

"La rena è traditora ...
somnia a tutti gli altri,
che sesei più debole
tii pestano la faccia,
allora is lascia vincere"

La poesia delle cose è, in *Malaria*, nel grande equilibrio tra fantasia e

realtà. La natura è dentro, nell'uomo, non soltanto materia vivente, ma condizione di esistenze che, con lei, si sono fatte ad un modo, nella semplicità e nella pena; l'anima d'un personaggio può avere l'afa, l'arusa il fango, la polvere del paesaggio, e questo la tristezza, l'abbandono, la stessa insensibilità d'un corpo stanco.

"E vi par di toccarla colle mani — come dalla terra grassa che fumi, là, dappertutto, torno torno alle montagne che la chiudono, da Agnone al Mongibello incappucciato di neve — stagnante nella pianura, a guisa del l' afa pesante di luglio."

Infine la poesia si nutre della saggezza amara dei proverbi che nascono, appunto, quando la vista del cielo e del mare, della casa vicina, della felicità e della morte invita a definire una condizione antica, una esperienza di travagli e di pene, prima tramandata e poi vissuta, una saggezza anonima figlia della storia, ma di chi, della storia, ha portato soltanto il peso.

"(Padron 'Ntoni) Per far da papa bisogna far da sagrestani.
(Padron 'Ntoni) L'uomo e' il fuoco, e la donna la stoppa:
viene il diavolo e soffia."

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D.Litt. Professore di Lingua e Letteratura
Italiana al MCAST (Dept of Educational
Studies).

MALTESE LITERATURE IN THE SIXTIES *

Peter Serracino Inglott

What in your opinion led to the flourishing of contemporary Maltese literature (poetry and drama) in the 1960's?

In my opinion it was connected with the sense of the achievement of a national identity which was in turn related to the achievement of political independence. A colony is a country which has no control over its foreign relations. Identity is achieved precisely by being able to enter into relationships with larger realities than oneself. Hence an identity is established if one can participate in a process of give and take, of being sometimes the recipient and sometimes the donor in relation to these other realities. It is this which political independence makes possible and therefore it is a precondition for the existence of a national identity. As long as these opportunities for exchange with larger realities outside did not exist, it was hardly possible to achieve the expression of a national identity.

When such contacts are non-existent the result is romanticism in its extreme form and this is what Maltese literature was like before the 60s and independence. The romantic poet is the one who feels that the values of his community have collapsed; that he is thrown back upon himself, that he is forced to create his own values because he is alienated from his fellow humans and from the larger reality which lies outside him but

with which he cannot connect and which therefore comes to be devoid of interest, stripped of meaning and even possibly hated. The romantic escapes from the objective world outside, from the real present, into worlds of false nostalgia and by closing in upon himself produces a very limited kind of provincial poetry, the poetry of a ghetto. This is what Maltese poetry was like before the 60s. With the possibility of being able to interrelate with other national communities and expressions outside Malta, with the sense of now being able to participate in the dialogue of nations, it became possible to give and take, to assume or to reject those revolutions in language which had occurred in the world outside, in relation to the changes which had occurred in history, and at the same time to realize in what individual ways these forms of expression which had become common in the contemporary would could be adapted, modified, individualized as a result of the local inheritance of a particular language and of a particular history.

Do you think the younger generation of poets compares well with the poets of the 60s?

I think there can be no doubt that the poets who emerged in the 70s are minor in relation to those who emerged in the 60s. I think that an estimate of their value can be reduced to a general estimate of the value or function of minor poetry. What the

* This is the text of an interview by an Italian student who was writing a thesis on a related subject.

minor poets seem to do is to act as intermediaries between the major poets and the public. The public finds it hard to assimilate the innovations of the major poets. The minor poets assimilate these innovations and they present them embodied in their own poetry in a more diffused form, in a more thinly spread out form; they therefore help the passage of the linguistic changes and innovations effected by the major poets into the common language. They help the major poets to produce an impact on the masses which may be otherwise at too great a distance from the points reached by the leading major poets. I think this is essentially what the poets of the 70s have done. They have helped to make the language of the major poets more accessible to the masses by habituating them to a mode of expression which is less dense, less original, less powerful than that of the major poets but which helps the general reader to acclimatize himself to certain forms of expression, to accept them in a certain sense as normal. The minor poets open the way of access to the major poets.

Of the poets represented in 'Malta, the New Poetry', who do you think is the most significant?

Daniel Massa. He is about the only poet to have treated to whole gamut of possible human feelings from religion to love to politics, from foreign travel to the relationship with the landscapes and the environment of home, something which no other poets have done. In fact, when compiling an anthology of recent Maltese poetry, I found that he was about the only poet to have produced religious poetry of very good value, about the only poet to have written pure

love poems, about the only poet to have written political poetry which is not propaganda, a mere protest, but which is a deep exploration of political realities. Apart from this wide range which he has, I think Massa is about the only poet to have the depth of content and thought combined with the sense of form which together make up real greatness in art. On the other hand, somebody like Mario Azzopardi has a set of reactions to reality which he is capable of embodying in powerful images and which he also embodies in forms which have a rough relationship to what he is trying to say; but an apparent reluctance to correct, to polish, to revise, to secure the perfect coincidence of form and matter, to go over the less successful bits, to purify, lead to his poems not having that sense of achievement, of embodiment of a perception in something concrete, which Massa's poems have.

I think that after Massa, the most interesting poet is Achille Mizzi. In his case, he is very strongly preoccupied with the dilemma which could be stated in the words *evolution* and *entropy*: the force of progress which leads life to grow and develop on the one hand, for which he is enthusiastic, and, on the other hand, the perception of death forces at work. However, I think that the greatest interest of Mizzi is that he expresses himself in a very distinctive literary form which is very often like that of a litany and which recalls the way in which St. John the Evangelist writes his Gospel. Mizzi has been influenced especially by the apocalyptic writing of St. John. He takes up a theme and expresses it in a sentence, in a phrase which seems to be closed. Then he picks up from it a particle of thought, encapsules it in an image which is

then again closed, only for another particle to be taken up again, a third, a fourth, a fifth time; with each new statement producing a variant, producing a kind of development of the theme which is not a logical or a dialectical one, but one in which the same entity is contemplated for a variety of points of view in succession.

I think this particular style which no doubt owes its origin to Semitic, especially Hebrew, forms is one for which the Maltese language is particularly apt. Because of this reason I would regard Achille Mizzi as a very significant poet, especially from the point of view of the utilization of forms of writing which are particularly suited to the Maltese language as well as because he is preoccupied with the central themes of our time.

Victor Fenech is also a good poet, an unequal poet, somebody who experiences deeply certain problems and which he expresses in a manner which I think relates or reflects the attitude of a man who, aware of dilemmas, manages to solve them through moderation, that is through finding the golden mean. I think his kind of poetry is interesting because it presents one way of resolving the dilemma between indifference and fanaticism which so preoccupies Ebejer. But it's a way which excludes many human possibilities and I think implies a certain limitation of vision affecting the nature of art itself.

A more conscious adoption of this point of view is that found in Oliver Friggieri's later poems. He is a man who, much more deliberately than Fenech, has adopted the idea of the golden mean, has adopted Horace as his teacher, has sought to express a kind of belief in the achievement of a peace of soul through a certain

coolness which does not exclude care for humanity, which appears to try to cool down the passions which lead to fanaticism without falling into the indifference of passivity and death and inanimation. His later poetry is striking because it contrasts with his previous attitudes which were completely on the side of wholehearted commitment and which led to his producing a kind of volcanic explosion of images which is typical of modern poetry, but which he seems to have abandoned because of the fear, which fanaticism seemed to give rise to, of leading to violence of a sort which may have seemed to be appearing dangerously on the Maltese scene. It may also have been his way of resolving his own personal conflicts.

In the case of Fenech I think a roughly similar position is taken up, less explicitly however, and hence giving a sense that the dilemma is not so perfectly resolved. This may explain why he seems able to keep up a greater animation in his verse than appears in the very smooth, very apparently rounded poetry which Oliver Friggieri has lately produced.

A case on his own is Joe Friggieri. The main interest of his poems is that they express both in their imagery and in their modulation the attitude of somebody who hesitates, who has a vision which he is almost afraid to communicate because he suspects that it will be profaned. This attitude of the man who seems to suffer a failure of nerve when he is on the brink of taking a leap is perfectly captured in his poetry which therefore has an extremely individual note; although he also can be seen as the spokesman of a nation, which has achieved a very acute consciousness of the problems which any kind of

decision is likely to give rise to, and hence hesitates before taking any irreversible plunge, before any burning of the boats, preferring to keep all possibilities as open as possible.

Do you think that Francis Ebejer will remain a monolith on the Maltese literary scene?

I think that Francis Ebejer is likely to remain the isolated figure which he has so far been. I think his success in the theatre is related very closely to the misfortunes of his private life and to the fact that his own personal experience happened to provide him with an inner strength and power to animate a number of literary forms which happened to be extremely apt for the expression of national crises, and that enabled him to reach the peaks of dramatic art. He did that I think in an unqualified way in two plays: *Boulevard* and *Il-Hadd fuq il-Bejt*. I think it is extremely significant that Ebejer's work is very unequal, for while in these two plays he achieves an extremely high level, he has also produced plays which are good, but in no way, in my view, comparable to these two. He has also produced work, such as novels, which is of a much lesser quality. But because he has gone through a terrible crucible of personal experience the expression of which could function as a metaphor for larger social experiences, it can hardly be expected that others can produce anything to parallel his best work.

Clearly, the personal experience which could act as this metaphor for national experience concerns man-woman relationships. His picturing of such relationships could function as a metaphor because, from a national point of view, as has often been noted and exploited by even such

writers as Pynchon, Malta has been something of a matriarchal island, of an island dominated by a woman-figure, and the significance of this woman-figure is connected with an aspiration for protection, for security, for an escape from risk, and hence to the preoccupation with the old Tristan and Iseult theme, the basic theme which has been called by Pynchon "the single melody banal and exasperating of all romanticism since the Middle Ages"; it states that the act of love and the act of death are one. It is this connection between love and death which are combined in the figure of the Mother-goddess which became an overshadowing symbol in Maltese culture. Now, this kind of picture of woman came to be associated with a political form. In a sense the father-figure represents the monarch, the absolute authoritarianism of a colonial ruler, while the mother-figure seems to be associated with the softness, with the kind of chance, or quasi-chance, procedures, which appear to rule, to condition decision-making in a democracy; especially in a democracy which, at times, may seem to be close to anarchy.

The dangers of this kind of figure are no less than those of the other kind of figure. The dominance of this kind of "woman" is no less dangerous than the dominance of the kind of "man" who is the tyrant. While it seems that something in between, a dialogue between the two, a synthesis between the two, some kind of communion between these two figures, is what human beings really basically need.

I think thus that it is when Ebejer succeeded to give embodiments, in terms of metaphors derived from his personal experience, of a national and

political dilemma, that he has been most successful. In many of his other plays, he presents either a purely political problem or a purely personal problem with the result that the strength of a vision which depends on the two dimensions being taken together, in order to produce a metaphor, is lost.

I think Ebejer's achievement is so connected with having a strong personal experience of a man-woman problem, which can function as a metaphor for a political problem of a more general character, that somebody who has not had this personal experience in his own life, can only with difficulty, or hardly at all, manage to produce anything similar. For this reason I think that Ebejer is likely not to be paralleled by anyone else.

Could you say something about the reaction of the Maltese audience to Ebejer's works?

The Maltese public welcomed Ebejer's plays because they obviously struck a chord in its own heart. I think however that this appreciation was due to a subconscious realization of what Ebejer was saying which very few were capable of bringing to the surface of consciousness.

For this reason I think that the attitude is one of admiration mixed with puzzlement, provoked by the fact that Ebejer achieves a paradoxical expression corresponding to the dilemma which they themselves unconsciously feel. His work is an intellectual quest which raises problems and lays one open to risks, while its objective is achieving peace and simplicity. Most Maltese feel in themselves an inner tension due to two opposite poles of attraction: on the one hand, indifference, indifference as

almost a sacrament of death, and on the other hand fanaticism, the fanaticism which is associated with deep love.

At times, when Ebejer seems to present the idea of art as a means of resolving these tensions, of achieving the reconciliation of the two extreme attitudes, as in *Boulevard*, I think he provides a sketch of a solution through poetic creation, which itself is an image of creativity in general — in other words, he suggests that the tension is resolved through creative activity, which is seen essentially as the production of metaphor, that is, of a means of connecting two apparently disparate experiences. By connecting them, by interrelating them, by creating a pattern and hence a feeling of sense, which removes the feeling of absurdity which dominates as long as the polarity, the contradiction, the contrast between the two poles remains unresolved. Many, I think, in Malta appreciated and responded to one side of the metaphor, the side which presents a personal drama like that of *Il-Hadd fuq il-Bejt* and they took this kind of play as a purely human story, leaving out the dimension of political and national meaning which it has, if read metaphorically. But if one does that, since on the plane of personal experience it is rather unique, it is not an experience which anyone can feel to be his own, it becomes a play which can be contemplated objectively without its presenting a personal challenge. Most people can see it then without having their sense of security troubled. But, if they were to bring to the surface of consciousness the other dimension, the socio-political one, then they would be disturbed, because they would find that there are themselves

involved in the problems which he is presenting. Then the play would be a challenge to them, requiring that they change their habits, their attitudes, that they confront their own deep dilemmas and the public as a whole is always afraid to face this kind of disturbing problem.

So I think that in a certain sense

the Maltese public while responding to certain aspects of Ebejer's plays has refused to confront the deep challenges which they present to the nation as such.

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MOLIERE:

L'HOMME A LA CONQUETE DE L'IDEAL

Alfred Falzon

De nos jours il semble qu'on lise Molière pour le plaisir de connaître l'oeuvre d'un célèbre homme de théâtre classique dont tout le monde parle. J'ai entendu dire, parmi nos étudiants, qu'il s'agit là d'un divertissement. J'en conviens. Mais uniquement lorsque Molière fait rire et tourne en ridicule certains personnages qui nous paraissent grotesques et peu sympathiques. Ce qu'on semble ignorer, c'est le génie de Molière: à travers le jeu de "l'être et le paraître" Molière est avant tout un observateur pénétrant des hommes, de leur caractère et de leurs moeurs. Il profite de toutes les occasions pour offrir à ses lecteurs, à son auditoire, la vérité de ses portraits.

Mon hommage à Molière a essentiellement pour objet cette brève méditation sur l'étonnante destinée posthume de son oeuvre qui témoigne d'un homme aux prises avec la société de son époque, voire la société de toutes les époques. Car on trouve dans son oeuvre, écrite dans un style souvent simple et direct, les traits minutieusement étudiés des personnages de tous les temps, bref, la peinture d'un caractère éternellement vrai. Et pourtant, jamais les hommes ne cesseront de s'interroger sur Tartuffe ou sur Don Juan, sur Orgon ou sur Monsieur Jourdain derrière lesquels on essaie de deviner le mystère de la personnalité et des

rêves du grand auteur dramatique français.

Apprécier l'oeuvre de Molière au-delà de la farce, de la comédie, c'est tout d'abord connaître l'homme et son idéal. S'il s'en prend aux principaux personnages de ses pièces théâtrales, s'il expose au vif leurs manies et leurs travers sans toutefois se laisser identifier à tel ou tel de ses héros, c'est qu'il croit à la noblesse d'un idéal auquel il attachait toute sa dignité d'homme. Comment sinon expliquer tant d'audaces dans l'attaque contre les abus du pouvoir, contre les nobles, le cergé, les médecins, les précieuses et les bourgeois, tant de mépris contre l'hypocrisie et le mensonge d'un homme "qui fut toute sa vie en lutte" ¹ jusqu'à la maladie et la mort?

La comédie moliéresque corrige les hommes en les divertissant. Elle utilise la malignité humaine et laisse un arrière-goût d'amertume. Le tableau qu'elle nous présente de l'humanité n'a certainement rien d'enchanteur. Elle ne fait ressortir que les vices, les défauts, les ridicules des avares, des hypocrites, des faux savants, des imbéciles. C'est une façon de mettre en garde les honnêtes gens de leur apprendre à ne pas être la risée de la société.

Or, Molière met en scène un nombre de personnages qu'il raille et accab'e d'accusations ne craignant pas le risque qu'il court forcément

1. Maurice Béjart, chorégraphe du ballet-comédie *Le Molière Imaginaire*, interviewé par la revue *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* 1977.

pour raffermir sa croyance inébranlable aux engagements constants de la vie. Lui, qui a vécu au milieu de ses comédiens, qui a partagé leurs souffrances et leur misère, a voulu poursuivre jusqu'au bout sa lutte pour la sagesse qui n'est que la vérité quotidienne. Il évoque le monde imaginaire d'un bourgeois entiché de noblesse, de femmes savantes voulant jouer à la savante, de précieuses qui se piquent d'une littérature qu'elles ne peuvent comprendre. Mais, en même temps, il introduit des personnages — des hommes et des femmes de mesure et de bon sens — tels que Cléante (*Le Tartuffe*), Béralde (*Le Malade Imaginaire*) et Madame Jourdain (*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*) qui refusent de fuir un combat épuisant pour démasquer l'imposteur. La morale de Molière est essentiellement dans le refus du mensonge, de tout

ce qui est faux. Toute une philosophie se dégage du théâtre de Molière, dont l'idéal demeure foncièrement classique.

Avoir lu Molière et aimer Molière ne suffit donc pas pour parler de Molière. Faire rayonner devant nos étudiants en lettres le nom de Molière n'est pas suffisant. La programmation de son œuvre dans nos établissements secondaires (classes de 6e et de 7e) non plus! Son œuvre dramatique demande plus d'approfondissement, certainement plus de réflexion! Il faudra que nos étudiants, notamment ceux qui aspirent à poursuivre leurs études au niveau supérieur, soit à l'Université ou soit à l'Ecole Normale (M.C.A.S.T.), aient la possibilité de pouvoir juger sainement le génie de Molière, "législateur des bienséances mondaines".

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