

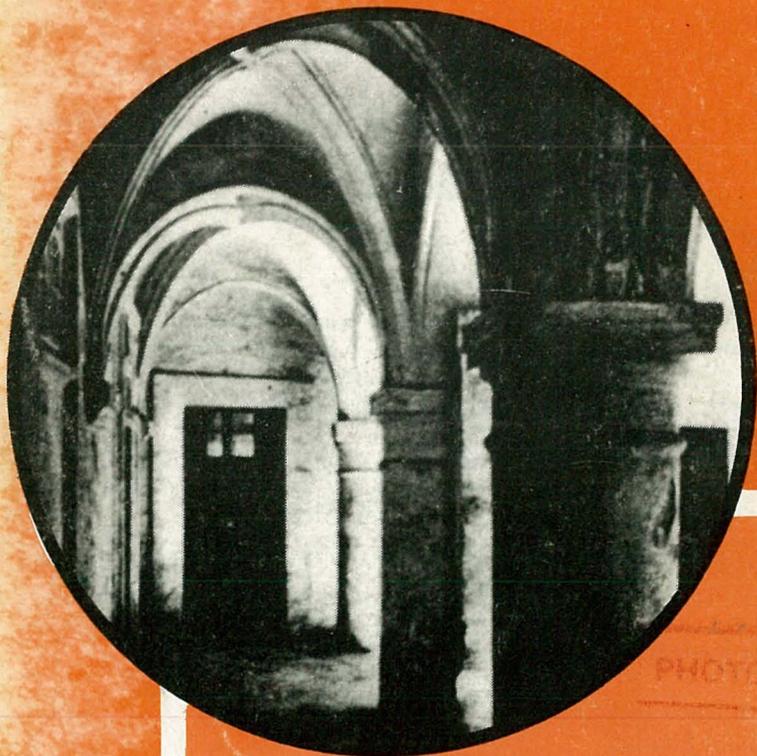
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PHOTOCOPIES

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in Malta – *Alexander Bonnici***

**Rebel in the Mind: The poetry of Mario
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**Shakespeare's Notion of Morality in
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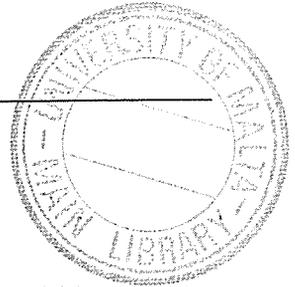
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Cover Picture: The Inquisitor's Palace

THE MINISTERS OF THE INQUISITION TRIBUNAL IN MALTA

Alexander Bonnici



THE first one hundred years of the medieval Inquisition in Malta (1462 – 1561) is considered to be the prehistory of this tribunal which had jurisdiction dealing with the detection and punishment of heretics and of all persons guilty of any offence against Catholic Orthodoxy.¹ On 21 October 1561, a new type of Tribunal, known in history as the *Roman Inquisition*, was established in Malta. Mgr. Domenico Cubelles, Bishop of Malta, and Mgr. Martin Royas, his successor, were the first two Inquisitors of Malta. But the Roman Inquisition was re-established in 1574. From then on, the Bishop of Malta was never again an Inquisitor. An independent tribunal, with its own palace at Birgu, became known as the Holy Inquisition or the Holy Office. But it was still the Roman Inquisition. It was a Tribunal that lasted up to the time of Napoleon's occupation of Malta in 1798. There was a series of 62 Inquisitors, from Pietro Dusina to Giulio Carpegna. Besides being Inquisitors, they were Apostolic Delegates; but, as Apostolic Delegates, these Prelates had a more limited authority.²

The present study is built on original and unprinted manuscripts most of which are jealously preserved in the Vatican Secret Archives. Few other documents of equal importance are found in the Archives of the Inquisition in Malta. Grand Masters and Inquisitors tried to

1. For the medieval Inquisition in Malta, G. F. Abela, *Della Descrizione di Malta* (Bonacota, Malta, 1647), 558 – 559; M. A. Coniglione, *La Provincia Dominicana di Sicilia* (Catania, 1937), 42 – 43, 47 – 50, 69 – 70, 295; G. Wettinger, *The Jews in Malta in the Late Middle Ages* (Midsea, Malta, 1985), 82 – 85, 90, 93, 99, 259 – 323.
2. For a critical judgement about most of the material that refers to the Inquisition Tribunal in Malta, A. Bonnici, "L'Inquisizione di Malta: 1561 – 1798: Riflessioni Critiche circa il materiale edito e inedito", *M(elita) H(istorica)*, V, 1(1968), 1 – 31.

oust each other. In most cases, they quarrelled about their jurisdiction over the inhabitants of Malta. The present research refers to ecclesiastics and laymen that depended on the Inquisitor; but each Grand Master would have preferred to have them subdued to him; hence conflicts resulted. Maltese History books often present the Grand Masters' views. This paper intends to put forward the Inquisitors' point of view.

THE RETINUE AND MINISTERS OF AN INQUISITOR

Each Inquisitor had his retinue, which was referred to as "*his family*". As a highly distinguished prelate, third in importance after the Grand Master and the Bishop, each Inquisitor needed a) a butler b) a secretary c) a chaplain d) a waiter e) some liveried footmen f) a cook g) and a young man that helped in the kitchen.³

While the Inquisitor's retinue played no particular role in Maltese society, the Officials and Ministers of the Inquisition Tribunal enjoyed some exemptions and privileges. They were the dependents of the Holy Tribunal. They were classified in five grades: officials, counsellors, cursors, administration ministers, and patentees.

The most important among the officials was the *Assessor*. His rank placed him over all the others because he shared the Inquisitor's position. In fact, he was also the *Vice-Inquisitor*. The Assessor, not only helped in collecting, examining, and presenting the evidence for the prosecution, but also substituted sometimes the Inquisitor himself. Through a delegation of the Inquisitor, the Assessor presided over the tribunal, declared the innocence of some persons, and also proclaimed definite sentences. Up to the time of Bellardito, no Inquisitor ever left Malta before the arrival of his successor. But then, in 1592, Mgr. Paul Bellardito died whilst Inquisitor in Malta. On account of that unexpected vacancy, Fr. Francesco Condulli was the first Assessor to be appointed to hold the office of *Pro-Inquisitor ad tempus*. This means that he took charge of the Tribunal as Acting-Inquisitor up to the arrival of the new one. From then on, it often happened that the Assessor was chosen as Acting-Inquisitor in a period of vacancy. In most cases, the Inquisitors, who were always Italian, appointed a Maltese diocesan priest as the Tribunal's Assessor.⁴

3. Bibl(ioteca) Naz(ionale) Roma, *Vitt(orio) Eman(tuele)*, 838, f.9r.

4. During the period of Mgr. Anthony Pignatelli, the Assessor of the Tribunal was Don Pietro Francesco Pontremoli. He enjoyed the highest esteem of the Inquisitor through all the term of Pignatelli. The Inquisitor could not pay him better than by entrusting him with several cases. Before leaving the island, Pignatelli confirmed his confidence in him by putting him in charge of the Tribunal as *Pro-Inquisitor*, up

Other officials were clerics or laymen.

The *Fiscal* was a legal official, who had the function of a public prosecutor. Witnesses were afraid to present themselves in court on account of reprisals by friends or complices of the convicted persons. The Fiscal of the Tribunal officially gathered all denunciations, and presented them in the tribunal.⁵

All officials were meant to ensure the administration of justice. The presence of a *Public Notary* was indispensable.⁶ The accused part was taken by his *Advocate*. In case of poverty, the Tribunal itself handed the case to the *Advocate of the Poor*.⁷ A *Sub-Fiscal* helped the fiscal.⁸ A *Chancellor of the Tribunal* faithfully and diligently wrote down all the details of each case.⁹ An *Instructor* gathered all possible informations about each case.¹⁰

The Inquisitor made use of the other officials of minor importance: *interpreters* of diverse languages,¹¹ the *Captain of the Rod*, who was in charge of the execution of sentences,¹² a *Medical Doctor*,¹³ and a *Jailer*.¹⁴

The *Cursors* were the running messengers of the Holy Tribunal; they were not considered among the officials. These laymen formed, by themselves, a section of the Inquisition ministers.¹⁵

The *Counsellors* of the Holy Office were diocesan priests or friars, renowned for their knowledge in Theology or Canon Law.

to the arrival of the successor: N(ational) L(ibrary) M(alta), *Lib(rary)* 8, f.216r. Then, when *Mgr. Charles Cavalletti*, Pignatelli's successor, died in Malta in 1652, Pontremoli performed all the duties of an Inquisitor for about one year, up to the arrival of *Mgr. Frederick Borromeo*: *Ibid.*, ff. 216v. – 217v. His activity in the service of the Tribunal came to an end during this period, when he died in May 1654: *Ibid.*, f.218r. For Inquisitor Bellardito and Pro-Inquisitor Condulli, A(rchivum) S(ecretum) V(aticanum), *S(ecretaria) S(tatus) Malta*, 124 C, f.16v.

5. This and the subsequent notes refer to a list sent to Rome by Inquisitor Casanate at the beginning of 1659. For the fiscal, ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, f.379.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.* The name of several interpreters can be traced in various Inquisition proceedings. For instance, for Fr. Columbanus of St. Michael, a Discalced, Carmelite, A(rchivum) I(nquisitionis) M(elitensis), *Processi*, 61 A, nos. 35, 36, 8/2/1647, ff.195r – 197r.
12. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, f.379r.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, f.379r-v.

Each Inquisitor availed himself of a certain number of them. Their term of office in Malta was life-long. If necessary, an Inquisitor appointed new ones. In normal cases, each new Inquisitor confirmed all those who had been previously chosen by his predecessors. Their duty was to give authoritative advice, based on their knowledge and experience. But they were just counsellors, and an Inquisitor was not bound to follow their advice.¹⁶

Other assistants of the Inquisition Tribunal were the *Administration Ministers (Ministri per l'Azienda)* and *Trustees (Depositari)*, who were ecclesiastics or laymen,¹⁷ and the *patantees* who, through patent letters granted, were to keep themselves ready for any request or demand of the Tribunal in the service of the Catholic Faith.¹⁸ Since the Inquisitor was also the Commissioner of St. Peter's *Fabrica*, he enjoyed the service of some other officials who helped him in the administration of this Tribunal.¹⁹

The Inquisitor was bound to pay a very great attention in the choice of all his ministers. Their way of life was expected to be exemplary for its integrity. The very same virtues that shone in the Inquisitor himself were to be admired in all the Ministers of the Holy Tribunal.²⁰ On account of this, all those whose commercial activity was not deemed honourable were not fit to stand among the Ministers of the Tribunal. From 1635 onwards, those who were engaged in trading slaves were not to be enrolled anymore as patentees of the Holy Office in Malta. Besides, those who were already serving the Tribunal were to be eliminated, if they failed to abstain from that dishonourable occupation.²¹

A FREE-HAND GRANT OF PATENTS

From the very beginning of the Holy Inquisition in Malta, each Inquisitor was free in the choice of his officials, ministers, and patentees. Patentees of the Order of St. John could become patentees of the Inquisitor as well. For instance, Fr. Francesco Condulli, while being a conventual chaplain of the Order of St. John, during the period of Inquisitor Paul Bellardito, in 1591 was elected as Fiscal and

16. *Ibid.*, f.379r. The name of some Counsellors can be traced through the Inquisition Proceedings. For Fr. Philip Cagliola, a learned Franciscan Conventual, AIM, *Processi*, '61 A,n.14, 15/1/1648, f.70r-v.

17. ASV, S.S. *Malta*, 186,f.379v.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, f. 380r; Bibl(ioteca) Vat(icana), *Ottob(oniani) Lat(ino)*, 2206, p. II, ff.348v-349r.

20. Bibl. Vat. *Borgia Lat(ino)*, 558, ff.89v-90r.

21. *Ibid.*, f.78r.

then Assessor of the Inquisition Tribunal. For his knowledge in theology and canon law, he continued to act as Assessor under various Inquisitors, even when simultaneously he became Vice-Chancellor of the Order. But a decree of Pope Clement VIII, dated 6 April 1600, prohibited the Inquisitor from granting patents to persons who were already patentees of the Order of St. John. In successive years, some problems were created in the grant of patents to ecclesiastics. Occasionally, for the fact that they had become patentees of the Inquisitor, some of them expected not to be obliged to submit themselves to the diocesan Bishop. As a result of this, after repeated solicitations from Bishop Balthasar Cagliares, in 1621 when Mgr. Anthony Tornielli presided over the Tribunal, all parish-priests were declared incapable to become patentees of the Inquisitor.²²

Numerous abuses abounded among laymen as well. Grand Master Lascaris, during the period of Inquisitor Frederick Borromeo (1653 – 1654), was eager to exclude from a complete dependence on the Inquisitor all those persons who earned their living as wholesale traders in edible products and those whose social activity was closely related to common welfare. The Grand Master's views were evident. Such persons, if allowed to be in the circle of the Inquisitor's patentees, would have abused of their exemptions and infringed the civil code. Appeals to the Roman Congregations were so frequent that the Pope was finally persuaded that the demands of the Grand Masters responded to equity and justice.²³

Although the Holy See granted the above faculty to the Order of St. John, the free-hand of the Inquisitor had to be respected. Inquisitor Borromeo received a direct and clear communication from Rome; but it was not sent in the usual way, that is, in a brief or despatch. Since it required a very delicate handling, it was communicated to him just orally. According to the Grand Master's request, from then on no patent letter could be granted to the above-mentioned persons. Besides, if a person who was already a patentee gave an evident proof of an abuse of his exemption, his name had to be erased from among the subjects of the Tribunal. At that time Borromeo himself felt alleviated because he judged it more convenient for the Inquisition Tribunal that the patentees enrolled bore witness to be quiet and well-off citizens.²⁴

22. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 124c, f.16r-v.

23. F. Borromeo, "Relazione di Malta e suo Inquisitorato" (MS. at NLN), in *Malta Lett(eraria)*, s.II,v.II(1927), p. 187.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 187 – 188.

The Inquisitor had the right to choose or change all his officials. But in case of choosing the Advocate, Fiscal, and Trustees (*depositari*), the Inquisitor had to consult the Supreme Congregation, and wait for a confirmation.²⁵ In rare cases, especially when abuses were feared, the Inquisitor's choice was not ratified. The Supreme Congregation listened also to the complaints of the diocesan Bishop. If a cleric happened to be, in some way or another, troublesome to his Bishop, notwithstanding the recommendations of Inquisitors, the Supreme Congregation insisted on its refusal of admitting him among the patentees.²⁶ Nevertheless, up to the end of the Tribunal in Malta, some priests still remained among the Inquisitor's patentees. During the pastoral visitations of the Bishops in the parishes of Malta, priests, who were patentees of the Holy Office, had their documents inspected by the Bishop, so as to keep him informed. At that time, while enjoying some special exemptions, such priests were not independent of the diocesan Bishop. When Raniero D'Elci presided over the Inquisition Tribunal (1711 – 1715) two priests of Senglea, Fr. James Flomotonito and Fr. John Baptist Salemi, on 28 January 1715, presented their documents to Bishop James Caraves to prove that they were patentees of the Holy Office in Malta.²⁷

THE NUMBER OF THE INQUISITOR'S DEPENDANTS

In 1600, the Supreme Congregation decreed that the number of the Inquisitor's patentees should be 20, and that of the officials, 12. The Inquisitor could not alter the number without the consent of Rome.²⁸ The number was not an excessive one. However, the Knights insisted that the Inquisitor could do at least without some of them. None the less, the Holy Office in Rome answered that the established number of 32 was a moderate one.²⁹

Inquisitor Honoratus Visconti, in 1624, ingratiated himself with Grand Master Antoine de Paule when he reduced the number of his patentees from 20 to 12. But the Supreme Congregation disapproved, and obliged him to appoint another 8, in order to return to the former number.³⁰

25. *Bibl. Vat., Borg. Lat.*, 558, f.73v; for an example of a confirmation of a fiscal, *AIM, Corr(ispondenza)*, 8 (1642 – 1648), 16/3/1647, f.212r.

26. *A(rchivum) A(rciepiscopale) M(elitense), Lettere e Decreti delle Sacre Congregazioni, spedite in tempo di Mons. Mich. G. Balaguer, Vescovo di Malta*, v,II, f.561.

27. *AAM, V(isitatio) P(astoralis)*, Caraves, XXVII, f.515r-v.

28. *Bibl. Vat., Borg. Lat.*, 558, f.77r.

29. *NLM, Lib.*, 1074, f. 5r.

30. *Bibl. Vat., Borg. Lat.*, 558, f.77r.

Abuses sometimes crept in. The number of the patentees was not increased. But the patentees were expecting to extend their privileges to all their relatives. Again, a norm of the Holy Office in Rome, on 13 April 1600, clarified: “*The privileges of the Holy Office patentees are just personal. As a result of this, they cannot be extended to other members of their family*”.³¹

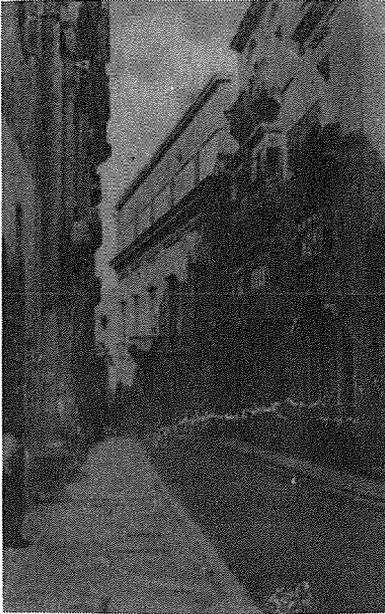
Later on, the norms were not clear enough. Little by little, the Inquisitors caused annoyance to the civil authority of Malta when they began to judge in their own tribunal all the relatives of their patentees. The initiative sprang up from the patentees themselves, because they preferred to be sued by the Inquisitor, rather than in a civil court. Consequently, due to ambiguity in the instructions given by Roman Authorities, Inquisitor Marescotti (1663–1666) complained with bitterness against the Grand Master for having derogated him from his alleged right of suing in the Inquisition Tribunal the relatives of the Holy Office patentees!³²

From above, it can be ascertained that an Inquisitor had other dependants. For instance, for a particular of all the dependants of the Inquisitor, one can give a glance to their number in 1659, in the period of Inquisitor Casanate.

Counsellors (diocesan priests or friars).....	10
Officials (3 priests and 8 laymen).....	11
Cursors (laymen).....	8
Administration Ministers (2 priests and 5 laymen)	7
Patentees (laymen)	20
Officials of the Tribunal of the Reverenda Fabrica of St. Peter (2 priests and 5 laymen)	7 ³³

The Papal Secretary of State, after repeated hostile actions from the Grand Master, examined the situation in order to state whether the Inquisitor’s dependants were excessive in number. Inquisitor Casanate was requested to send the above given detailed list of all those who fell under his jurisdiction. Yet, the official answer was that the number was not excessive.³⁴ Thus, at that time, the total of all the dependents of the Inquisition Tribunal amounted to 63 persons. The average number of those that depended on the Tribunal varied between 60 and 70 persons.

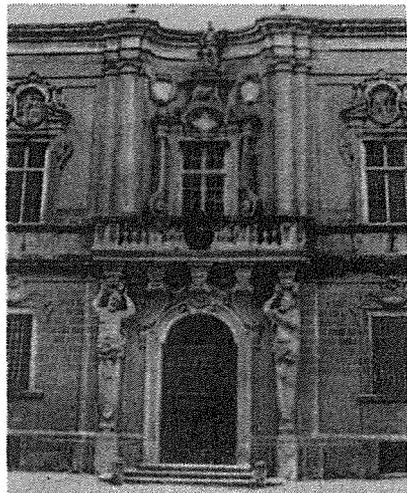
31. *Ibid.*, f. 74v.
 32. *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. II, f.342v.
 33. *ASV, S.S. Malta*, 186, ff. 379r – 380r.
 34. *Ibid.*, f.380r.



The Inquisitor's Palace at Birgu: a sixteenth century building erected around the place where the Knights had their civil court, when they settled in Malta in 1530.



This Siculo-Norman Courtyard in the Inquisitor's Palace is the unique construction that still reminds of the edifice built around the castellania of the Knights.



The old diocesan seminary at Mdina is today the site where original documents that refer to the Inquisition of Malta are preserved. As a public archive, it is open for consultation.

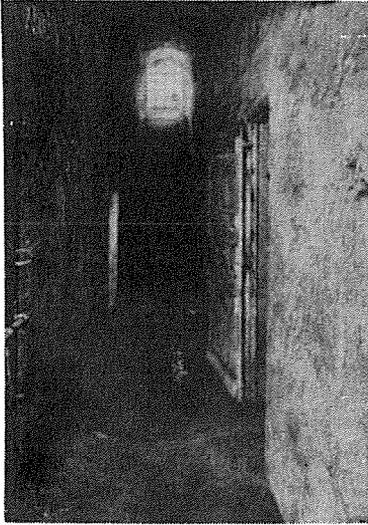
In most cases, each new Inquisitor added or substituted some officials or patentees. At times, individuals who served the Holy Office for years sought from the Supreme Congregation the privilege of being enrolled in the number of the Inquisitor's patentees. It may have happened that they had requested that privilege from the Inquisitor himself; but it was to no avail. On account of that, they asked for a recommendation from the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office. During the period of Inquisitor Anthony Pignatelli (the future Pope Innocent XII), who served as Inquisitor between 1646 and 1649, John Mary Habela, in a declaration to the Supreme Congregation, stated that he had served as a physician in the Inquisition jail without ever expecting any stipend. As a recompense, he implored for a recommendation in order to be incorporated in the number of the Holy Office patentees.³⁵

Those who depended on the Bishop of Malta were much more than the Holy Office patentees. On 17 June 1649, John Matthew Bonnici, Notary for the diocese of Malta, sent a complete list of all those that depended on the Bishop. From his report we know that in Malta there were 20 canons, 422 priests, 347 unmarried clerics, and 226 married clerics. They were 1015 in all. But Inquisitors repeatedly insisted with the Supreme Congregation that all those who formed the household of a non-cleric patentee should enjoy all the privileges of the patentee himself. Finally, on 4 March 1671, during the period of Inquisitor John Tempi, the Supreme Congregation gave its consent. The patentees' privileges were not extended to his relatives, but to those only who depended on him for their living and dwelled in his own house. Then, in 1713, when Mgr. Ranierius D'Elci presided over the Tribunal, Pope Clement XI confirmed those privileges. Thus, the Grand Masters lost their jurisdiction over at least another one hundred persons.³⁶

Inquisitors affirmed that the patents of the Holy Office were not requested for any venal gain. According to the Inquisitors, the burden of the civil authority was at times oppressive. On account of this, some Maltese freed themselves from the Grand Master's authority by asking to be enrolled as patentees of the Holy Office. While an Inquisitor had to be judicious in choosing his patentees, he was warned not to deprive them of their rights unless for very serious crimes. All Grand Masters were pleased in a punishment inflicted by the Inquisitor himself. Hence, Inquisitors were admonished not to

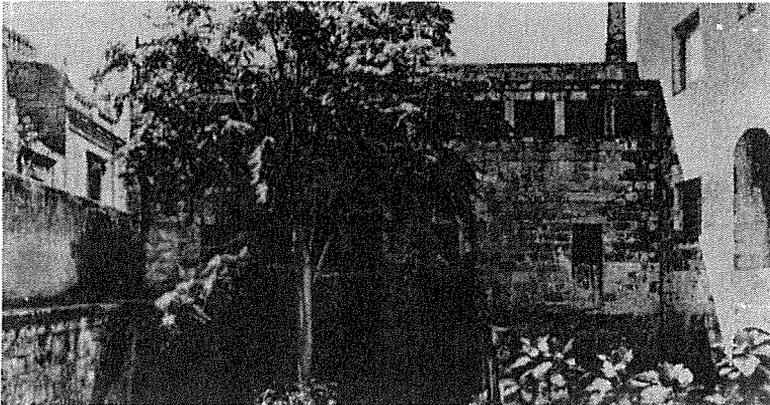
35. AIM, *Corr.*, 9 (1649–1654), 9/1/1649, ff.4r-7r.

36. ASV, *Vescovi*, 31, f.223r; S.S., *Malta*, 124c, f.12r-v.



The Prisons on the ground-floor of the Inquisitor's Palace, as reconstructed by Inquisitor John Baptist Gori Pannellini (1639–1646). a) The entrance and b) the corridor that leads to the cells.

The upper part of the Inquisitor's Palace, which was destined for the Inquisitor's private residence.



give that satisfaction to the head of the Knights. The fear of being some day excluded from among the patentees would have brought the unpleasant consequence that no one seeks anymore the patents of the Holy Office. The patentees had the right to be sure of the esteem and protection of the Inquisition Tribunal.³⁷

A praiseworthy Inquisitor defended strenuously all his patentees against the Order of St. John. Each Inquisitor kept in mind that a patentee, in being deprived of the patents of the Holy Office, was consequently placed again under the jurisdiction of the Grand Master. It meant that, unwillingly, a person became a possible victim of the Knights' anger for his previous exemption. The fears or even doubts of such consequences would have compelled the inhabitants of Malta to renounce to their patents spontaneously, rather than to live in the peril of being, someday, deprived of them.³⁸

In deterring the patentees, the Inquisition Tribunal would suffer serious consequences. The Inquisitor would have been deprived of the respect and service that he usually enjoyed. The Grand Master and the Knights would have been pleased to see the Inquisition Tribunal without its ministers. A Tribunal, without counsellors, officials, and patentees would have fallen in disgrace, for being deprived of its former prestige. Bereaved of its jurisdiction, the Inquisition Tribunal would have been depreciated, and perhaps annihilated.³⁹

THE BENEFITS OF EXEMPTIONS

Occasionally, both the Grand Master and the Bishop of Malta, not only did not facilitate the Inquisitor's labours, but they also seemed to create real obstacles. Due to this, all the Ministers of the Holy Office were fully exempt from any other Tribunal, and subjected to the Inquisitor alone. Relying on the benefits of this privilege, they could freely exercise their office without the fear of any other Tribunal and without ever being unduly molested.⁴⁰ While an Inquisitor in matters that regarded faith enjoyed a plenary faculty over all ranks of persons, without any exception in favour of the Knights of St. John,⁴¹ the Ministers of the Holy Office were subjected to his jurisdiction also

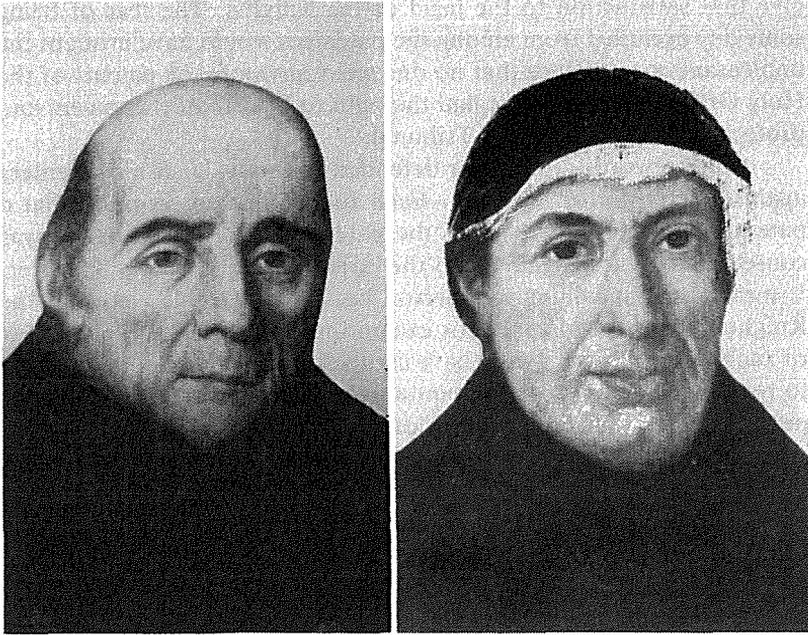
37. *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. II, f. 345r-v.

38. *Ibid.*, ff.345v-346r.

39. *Ibid.*, ff. 345v-346r, 373r.

40. *ASV, S.S. Malta*, 186, f.116v.

41. A. Bonnici, *Evoluzione Storico-Giuridica dei poteri dell'Inquisitore nei Processi in materia di Fede contro i Cavalieri del Sovrano Ordine di Malta* (Roma, O.S.M. de Malte, 1970), 52.



1–2: *Fr. Francis-Augustine Bonnici (1723–1802) and Fr. Bonaventure Chercop (1746–1802), two franciscans conventual friars, who were among the Inquisitor's Counsellors, during the last years of the Tribunal.*

in all their civil and criminal lawsuits.⁴² Although Knights and Bishops vehemently protested against these powers, Inquisition reports testify that the Inquisitor continued to summon before him all his subjects in any lawsuit.⁴³ This power, however, varied from time to time because it was revoked or annulled, and then conceded, and tolerated again.

Among his ministers, the assessor, the fiscal, and the notary assisted the Inquisitor in all congregations that referred to the negotiations of the tribunal. The Inquisitor used also to invite the Vicar of the diocesan Bishop, some counsellors, and two members of each Religious Order that had houses in Malta. Usually, however, except in cases of a public repudiation of a heretical belief or in an extremely important decision, just two members from Religious Institutes were invited: a Dominican and a Discalced Carmelite. The Inquisitor's

42. *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. II, f. 310r.

43. AIM, *Memorie Zondadari*, v.I (*Relazione Generale del sistema Politico di Malta*), 1777.

patentees or *familiares* were chosen from among the local inhabitants who, as much as possible, dwelled scattered across all the island of Malta. He was free to choose Maltese or foreigners; but most of them were of Maltese origin. This traditional usage helped to dispense the Inquisitor from having a bigger number of ministers of major importance. In fact, the patentees were bound to inform the Inquisitor about anything which, in their opinion, concerned the tribunal.⁴⁴

Many Maltese laymen depended on the Inquisitor as officials, cursors, administration ministers, or patentees. In Malta, all of them had the right to enjoy the privileges granted to ecclesiastics. Notwithstanding this, Grand Masters and Bishops disagreed. So many times, protests were raised, especially against what they deemed to be an exaggerated number of the Inquisitor's patentees.

The following were the main privileges of the Inquisitor's patentees, their particularities, and some of the problems that emerged.

1. The 'Privilegium Fori'

The *Privilegium Fori* is a favourable concession granted to some persons through which, in their civil and criminal lawsuits, they had to be brought into the ecclesiastical court, unless other provisions had been legitimately made. The *Privilegium Fori* in favour of the dependents of the Holy Office meant that, in their lawsuits, they could not be judged anywhere except in the Inquisition Tribunal.

Through all the seventeenth century, nothing was clearly and definitely established. Some particular aspects of this privilege underwent variations from time to time. At the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, the Inquisitor expected to judge in his tribunal all those who had grievously offended anyone of his subjects. In 1588, Inquisitor Paul Bellardito, with an intermediate agency of the Grand Master, examined and definitely concluded a law-suit against a knight who had injured the captain of the rod of the Holy Office.⁴⁵ Once again in 1601, Inquisitor Fabritius Verallo was instructed by the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office about his duty in judging a certain individual who had wounded some patentees of the Holy Office.⁴⁶ In 1610, Inquisitor Evangelista Carbonese jailed and then set free with a warning a knight of St. John, for having wounded the feelings of the chaplain and two other dependents of the

44. Bibl. Vat., *Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. II, ff. 309v – 310r.

45. Bibl. Vat., *Borg. Lat.*, 558, f.76v.

46. *Ibid.*

Holy Office.⁴⁷ Up to then, however, the Inquisitor could not pride himself in having any concrete powers over those who committed a crime against his patentees.

Again in 1610, Inquisitor Carbonese asked the Supreme Congregation to grant him an indult to authorize him to handle all cases: civil, criminal, or mixed, active and passive, in which the officials and patentees of the Holy Office were involved. Pope Paul V replied that the Inquisitor could try to introduce such a practice, but prudently and without any fuss.⁴⁸ But, just a few months later, Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt complained against that practice. The Pope then instructed the Inquisitor to abstain from the exercise of that faculty.⁴⁹ Silently, the above granted faculty was therefore revoked. According to a declaration of the year 1635, in the period of Inquisitor Fabio Chigi (the future Pope Alexander VII), the patentees of the Holy Office were subject to the Inquisition tribunal just when they were sued by others. In suing another person, they could not have him judged by the Inquisition tribunal, without first consulting the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office.⁵⁰ Those then who were ecclesiastics were bound to recognize the authority of the Bishop; in case of being unduly charged by the Bishop, the Supreme Congregation intervened in their favour.⁵¹

In 1659 Inquisitor Jerome Casanate vigorously defended this privilege for all his subjects. He insisted that there should be no wonder about such a privilege because in Malta it was enjoyed by all the Knights of St. John, all the patentees through a bull of the Pope, and by all the patentees of the artillery commander. Besides, it was just according to tradition that the patentees of the Holy Office be exempt from any other authority.⁵²

Shortly after the situation changed in favour of the Holy Office patentees. In 1666, Inquisitor Galeazzo Marescotti complained with Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner for not permitting him to judge those who were sued by his patentees.⁵³

2. The Privilege of carrying Arms

In Malta such privilege was enjoyed by all Ecclesiastics and Knights. None the less the patentees of the Holy Office, according to a

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, f. 75r-v.

51. *Ibid.*, f.75v.

52. ASV, S.S. *Malta*, 186, ff.117v, 119v – 120r.

53. *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. II, f. 342v.

declaration of Inquisitor Casanate in 1659, had the faculty to carry arms, only if they obtained the consent of the Inquisitor.⁵⁴

3. The Exemption from keeping a Horse

The Maltese were bound to keep an armed horse in order to give a hand in the security of the island in case of necessity. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, a declaration of the Holy Office in Rome had already considered the Inquisition Officials and patentees exempt from that law.⁵⁵ Inquisitor Casanate furnished comments about that exemption. He remarked that, bringing in mind the financial state of the island, the Knights, who had always enjoyed that exemption, had far major possibilities to keep a horse than any other rich Maltese individual. Besides, considering the poor social condition of those who were patentees of the Holy Office, undoubtedly, no less than two out of each three of them could not obey this law, without a considerable financial inconvenience.⁵⁶ Though this privilege was confirmed during Casanate's term of office, just a few years later it was revoked. In fact, Inquisitor Marescotti in 1666, complained of the fact that Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner had convinced the Supreme Congregation to oblige all the patentees of the Holy Office to keep an armed horse, as anyone else, for the defence of the island.⁵⁷

4. The Exemption from carrying a Sword

The ban that ordered the Maltese to possess a sword so that they might help in an occasional invasion of the island was promulgated by Grand Master De Redin in 1658. As a result of this, since the civil authorities of the island had let pass by so many years before compelling the Maltese to have a sword, it was judged evident that there was no real necessity. Besides, the officials and patentees of the Holy Office were not the only persons who enjoyed that exemption. Such exemption was granted to all the ecclesiastics, physicians, surgeons, hair-dressers, aromaticians, medicine-doctors, notaries, and also to those clerks employed in the chancery, treasury, and civil courts.⁵⁸

5. The Exemption from obliging their slaves to carry an iron ring round their ankles

This exemption was not an exception in favour of the Inquisitor's patentees. In a general way, the concession was granted in favour of the Catholic Faith to all those slaves who asked to be baptized.⁵⁹

54. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, ff.117v, 120r.

55. *Bibl. Vat., Borg. Lat.*, 558, f.74v.

56. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, ff.117v, 120r.

57. *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. II, f.342v.

58. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, ff.117v, 120r-v.

59. *Ibid.*, f.120v.

On the other hand, considering the actual facts, the use of those iron rings was of no avail:

- a) The iron rings created no impediment in an attempt of a flight because they were very light in weight.⁶⁰
- b) They were not any particular sign of slavery on account of the too numerous exemptions. In fact, many slaves turned Christians.⁶¹
- c) They did not stand for a distinction between Christian and Muslim slaves. Christian slaves carried a normal hair-cut, while Muslim slaves had their head shaven, with the exception of a tail-like twist at the back of the head.⁶²
- d) The use of those rings was absurd because they were never fixed and permanent. They could be removed and put on, without the help of any other person.⁶³

The ban to carry on those rings was proclaimed in 1658; but, just the same, after its publication, non-Christian slaves continued to walk across the island without bothering about the iron rings. Besides, strange to say, while Grand Master De Redin insisted on the patentees of the Holy Office that their slaves should obey such a law, he never took any action to have the ban observed at least by his own slaves.⁶⁴

However, due to their insistence, the Grand Masters were granted a decree of the Supreme Congregation, through which they obliged the slaves of the Inquisitor's patentees to wear those useless rings around their legs!⁶⁵

6. The Exemption from sending their slaves during the night to the Public Prisons

"Safety had suggested the building of the slaves' prisons. There was a large number of them in Valletta in the service either of the Order or of private families and they were naturally the cause of great worry to the Government. Verdala constructed a large prison for them in Strada Cristoforo where he obliged them to spend the night"⁶⁶

The Grand Master's slaves were exempt of that law. Besides, the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office. took a resolution that the Inquisitor should not send his slaves to the civil prisons by night, until the Grand Master stood firm in his decision not to send his own.⁶⁷

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.* See A. V. Laferla, *The Story of Man in Malta* (Aquilina, Malta, 3 ed., 1958), 79.

63. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, f.121r.

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p. II, f.342v.

66. Laferla, o.c., 78 – 79.

67. AIM, *Corr.*, 6 (1633 – 1636), 27/10/1635, f.182r., ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, f.121v.

Although the prisons were built at the end of the sixteenth century, no action was taken till the time of a new ban in 1658. Up to that year, each slave-master was free to send his slaves to the prisons or not. Even then, however, the insistence of the Grand Master was not enough to shake some indolent knights in order to obey the law. Other masters, as well, were not deterred by that new ban. Besides, those who were in charge of the slaves prisons did not keep any registers to note the absence of missing slaves.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, in the very same document through which the Inquisitor had been forbidden from sending his slaves to the prisons, the Supreme Congregation declared that the Inquisitor's patentees were not exempt from the law.⁶⁹ In fact, in 1659, when Inquisitor Casanate had it included among the privileges of his patentees, his unique argument was a very simple one. That law, according to the Inquisitor, was not binding because the slave-masters felt free from sending their slaves to the prisons. As a result of this, no such obligation could be imposed on the Inquisitor's patentees. But, to the Supreme Congregation, the Inquisitor's reasons were illogical.⁷⁰

Shortly after, in 1666 however, Inquisitor Marescotti, complained that the slaves of his patentees were kept enjailed at night, without any possibility to stroll around the city of Valletta.⁷¹

7. The Exemption from presenting themselves armed for Military Reviews

There was nothing strange or special about this privilege because it was already enjoyed by all those who were released from the obligation of carrying a sword.⁷²

8. The Exemption from watching as a Sentry

This privilege was also granted to those who were discharged from the obligations enumerated in nos. 4 and 7. Besides, the patentees of the Holy Office were explicitly exempt through a concession of the Supreme Congregation in 1599.⁷³

Some years after the privilege had been confirmed in 1659, the Grand Master obtained from the same Congregation permission to oblige also the patentees of the Holy Office to perform this duty.⁷⁴

9. The Exemption from paying a tax on contracts

This was a common exemption extended to all the Knights and

68. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, f.121v.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p.II, f.342v.

72. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, f.121v.

73. *Ibid.*, ff.121v – 122r.

the patentees of the Holy Office through a papal bull. The patentees of the Holy Office were exempt through a declaration of the Supreme Congregation.⁷⁵ For instance, in 1664, a certain Matthew Habdilla was declared exempt from paying that tax because he was a patentee of the Holy Office.⁷⁶

10. The Exemption from paying a tax for the fortification of Malta

In Malta, this exemption too applied to all the Knights, the patentees of the Order of St. John, and to the Artillery Commander.⁷⁷

11. The Privilege not to be obliged to buy corn, rice, and barley, which were sometimes distributed to the population

This privilege was also granted to all the Knights of St. John. It was then guaranteed to the patentees of the Holy Office as well, through a decree of the Supreme Congregation.⁷⁸

These numerous privileges excited the hatred of the Grand Master against the patentees of the Holy Office. In fact the Knights used all their efforts to convince these patentees to give up their patents. They endeavoured to convince others not to accept to be among the Inquisitor's patentees. But it was to no avail. As a result of this struggle, the Holy Office patentees were deprived of many rights and offices in Malta. For instance, they were not admitted to bear witness in favour of anyone in court.⁷⁹

Hostile and bitter words were often uttered against all privileges of these patentees. As time passed, their privileges were confined within certain limits. In fact, according to Inquisitor Marescotti, nothing was left of their former rights. In 1666 their exemption from civil authority was reduced to a meaningless word.⁸⁰

While considering the above mentioned privileges, we notice that the patentees were endowed with the same privileges of the Knights of St. John. Notwithstanding this, while the Knights with all their might and ability were always on the alert to safeguard all their privileges, they themselves could not tolerate the privileges of the Inquisitor's patentees. According to the Inquisitors, the Knights aimed continuously to undermine, weaken, and eventually annihilate the privileges of anyone else on the Island.

75. ASV, *S.S. Malta*, 186, f.122r.

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*, f.122r-v.

79. *Bibl. Vat., Ottob. Lat.*, 2206, p.II, f.342v.

80. *Ibid.*, ff.342v – 343r.

REBEL IN THE MIND:

THE POETRY OF MARIO AZZOPARDI

Grazio Falzon

*qu'il ramasse, recolle
et veut confondre.*

Alain Bosquet

Mario Azzopardi is the *enfant terrible* of contemporary Maltese poetry. A maelstrom of debate surrounds his imaginative and iconoclastic verses. He is fearless in his attempts to mock tradition or push it to the limits of this passion for life and passion for words. His poetry is verbal pyrotechnics sprawling in a phantasmagoria of images of a tortured mind.

In the mid-sixties, the Island of Malta severed ties with the British Crown and achieved independence after 160 years of colonial rule. Political freedom coincided with a period of internal social upheaval; new socio-economic forces traumatized the new-born nation.

Azzopardi was among the most outspoken activists; he was at the time committed to social and cultural change free from rigid traditional systems. He protested vehemently against an alienated silent majority that had been manipulated far too long by opportunistic political regimes and a church he considered backward and hypocritical. He jolted and shocked Maltese consciousness by his manifestos satirizing popular customs and beliefs.

A non-conformist, Azzopardi was at the vanguard of a crusade for innovative literary forms that were free from the archaic influences of the Italian *Risorgimento*. He was largely instrumental in bringing about the most radical changes in poetic thinking and composition in modern Maltese literature.

Azzopardi's poetic success, though largely the result of a unique talent, reflects cross-cultural forces and influences. He was exposed and sensitized to contemporary overseas literary trends. He felt a special affinity with American poets; he consciously aligned himself with the American ideogrammic stream of poetry, instigated primarily by the Projectivist and Beat poets. He considered the American influence vital for his own experimental mode in poetry.

The Beats erupted into the American literary scene in the late

fifties. They rebelled against “square” society and rejected its unimaginative and restrictive modes and ideas.

About a decade later, Azzopardi burst on the island scene in impetuous, rebellious verses. A sort of “drop-out” himself, he readily identified himself with the Beat poets. He was equally intolerant of inhibited social behaviour; he denounced bourgeois society and the establishment it represented and helped perpetuate.

In true “beat” fashion, Azzopardi adopted improvised style and syncopated jazz beat in his poetry. Like jazz players, he favoured spontaneity and strident, discordant juxtaposition of subjects.

mitt holma li hlomt – elf demgha li gbart fi kwies
 fondi bla qiegh irfist fuq dell l-imghoddi
 u qsamt gharqubi ma’ kull pass li tajt
 nohlo eternità
 fil-boghod – fil-boghod
 jixghel neon gumi yam yam
 u nerga’ nibki dmugh lumija
 (“Gumi Yam Yam”)

Azzopardi also transplanted the “field-approach” of projective verse to Maltese literature. He followed the method expounded in the fifties by Charles Olson, chief exponent of the Black Mountain poets.

Projective verse is “composition by field”. The finished poem corresponds to the natural situation of things and happenings as perceived by the poet. The principle at work behind the process is that, to use Creeley’s phrase: “form is never more than an extension of content.” Olson describes the poem “kinetically” as “a transference of power”. Such composition, he says, involves feeling the poem as “at all points a high-energy construct.”

Following Olson’s “open form”, Azzopardi discarded metre and verse forms in favour of a free placement of lines and phrases over the page. Through this arrangement, the poet conveyed rhythms of thinking and breathing. Working primarily by ear, he suggested the spacing of movements and silence, sweeps of breath and their pauses. The poem became an intellectual and emotional complex held together by a magnetic tension of diverse components.

An azzopardian poem is analogous to a piece of music by Schönberg where jazz rhythms, folk melodies and atonal phrases are abruptly juxtaposed:

pala tas-šhab tittratieni
 xemx impotenti bajja tixraq fir-ramel
 qamar krexxent nofs qalb
 sakemm int
 tibda tobghod dix-xemx dal-qamar
 dit-temperatura perversa

tal-karta tas-sema
 l-ilma jofrogh f'sorm il-blat
 jofrogh bis-selha ta' l-obwe bhal ggant
 bhal centawr fis-sodda ma' qahba
 ("Tliet Movimenti ghal Sinfonija")

The particulars are inter-related not simply by their proximity but also by the imagination, which can form relationships between the most heterogeneous elements if placed together. Azzopardi wove a poetic tapestry which the reader sees jumbled from behind. But to the conscious poet it is a private algebra of words and symbols.

The meaning of the poem resulted from the co-inherence of the particulars in their mutual interpenetration. This technique is not unlike Cezanne's structuring of one colour against another, which the viewer's inward eye harmonizes with the sensations of experience.

This juxtapositional mode or ideogrammic method (to use the name given to it by its inventor Ezra Pound) appears as gratuitous heaping of incongruous elements. Indeed, reality itself appears chaotic.

Pound built his poetic theory from Chinese script which is mimetic of nature itself. From this juxtaposition of unconnected things, the Chinese written language can draw more pictures and can thus imply further symbols, concepts, and immaterial relationships.

This "heaping of pictures" is especially important in the case of a language like Maltese, which has very few terms for abstract or intellectual concepts.

Azzopardian poetry is essentially an enactment of process and structure of nature's own chaotic juxtapositions fused into compactness by the poet's perception. Behind the shocking contours of Azzopardi's forms there loom primitive shapes and patterns. His "poiesis" reveals the oneness of nature, its all-togetherness, its "jewelled net of interconnectedness" to use Gary Snyder's description.

Azzopardi the poet is a "savage" not according to the meaning given by a pseudo-civilized society, but in a simple primitive sense. The jungle of modern reality serves this untamed poet as nature did his ancestral neolithic man. His poetry reflects the rugged beauty of cliffs and dark blue water below his hideaway in the north of the island. His visions are interplays of mediterranean lights and shadows; his sounds are harsh-edged, like rock-music.

The conceptual basis of Azzopardi's work does not differ markedly from that of French surrealism.

Azzopardi's "*tama koncentrika*" and "*dirghajha cimiteru*" are reminiscent of Eluard's "*nuit hermaphrodite*" and Breton's "*revolver à cheveux blancs*".

Azzopardi is akin to Breton in his agenda: subversion of the

existing order and restoration of the rights of the imagination. Both poets aimed at destroying the social man in the individual by liberating imagination, desire, and expression. They believed that truly creative forces are to be looked for in the depth of the irrational self. In his first manifesto of 1924, Breton wrote that surrealism's intention was to expose the inner experience of the self free from established criteria be they rational, esthetic, or moral.

Azzopardi liberated the self from outside reality by demolishing normal and logical relationships between objects, words, and images; in doing this he also created a surreality of fresh images and associations:

u l-eteru nqasam b'hoss ta' gallettina:
 kemm hu isfar il-qamar il-lejla!
 hares 'il fuq u lemhu ahdar
 bhāl halq l-armla
 tigreż il-gawwi mejjet
 (“Ghaxar Varjazzjonijiet fuq l-Imhabba”)

He reaches a sphere of universal correspondence where, in Eluard's terms: *“tout est comparable à tout.”* A surreal serendipity floats between the arbitrary and the determined:

qtar-gharaq ixoqq žibeg f'nofs deżert afrikan
 u l-metafizika t'arloggi mdendlin
 mal-blat minutieri bla saħħa mitluqa
 jittewbu
 elf holma ta' sogħba
 elf hsieb mhux imwettaq
 u trapjantat
 l-gharaq mibdul stallattiti w stalagmiti
 (“Passività”)

In Azzopardi, objects, memories, associations, projections erupt in counterpoint against a reflective structure. An undercurrent of rhetoric makes his poems cohere densely as reasoned objects of thought. His poetry is a vortex of energies revolving around a calculated centre; it is a torrent of images that people itself in the free manner of a fugue.

Azzopardi can be compared to Aimé Césaire for whom surrealism embodied an esthetic and political “engagement”. It was a medium with which to smash all forms of foreign domination. Césaire struggled to liberate Martinique *“cette île désespérément obturée à tous les bouts”* from French control; Azzopardi dreamed *“il-helsien”* from Britain of a *“gens miskin imghattan”*.

Both poets attacked the official language that sanctified bourgeois ideas and values in politics and literature. They each considered their respective linguistic hypocrisy as symptomatic of a schizophrenic

society, where stated values were poles apart from "actual" values.

Azzopardi is equally disillusioned and sceptic of political systems. He seems all but lost in an island-world hopelessly manipulated by political forces. He inveighs against the pervasive power of the regime that oppresses and exploits the spirit of its citizens.

The psyche of the poet is inseparable from its intuitions of the nation's psyche. The political conflicts and absurdities are internalized by the poet. The poems register the personal implications of the predatory drives of political leaders, the face-saving ruses, the sufferings and ignorance of the little people at the expense of smug upper classes.

The socio-political poetry of Azzopardi is part diatribe, part satire, part dream-vision. He rebukes his country: "*j'art parassita li nishet u nhobb*":

O l-bandi li ppridkalkom
kull min kewwes biex jixtrikom
fit-turtiera tat-tpartit
f'isem Kristu tal-kruċjati
jew il-ligi tal-padrin.
(“Maltija”)

The poet was ready to: "*nissallab biex nifdi ġens miskin/imghattan*" but the reaction of his own people crushed his spirit. His people looked down on him and:

bnew hitan trasparenti bejniethom u bejni
u ghadewni b'mignun
(“Ghanja ta' Settembru”)

The poet's angry political lines of the turbulent sixties have lost their timeliness; but they did rock Maltese consciousness at the time. Azzopardi dismissed the country's historic heritage as irrelevant against the poverty and ignorance of the people. He crusaded for a creative patriotic love of mother country.

fuq kull kampnar il-landi mtaqqba
tat-tradizzjoni jqanpnu
l-assedju tal-elfdisamija
minn żaqq il-kitarri
minn madwar roulettes amerikani
mit-tabernakli tal-pilloli
tan-nervi n-nies ixxennaq
it-tmiem
ta' l-assedju modern –
fl-arena
l-alla tal-bierah jew hemm alla gdid?
(“Assedju – stil 1967”)

Azzopardi's revolt and its stylistic correlatives also parallel those

of the “*novissimi*” literary movement in sixties’ Italy. Azzopardi echoes Antonio Porta’s criteria of shock and provocation. Both poets break up language patterns and use violent images and discontinuous syntax to produce intensely personal compositions.

Azzopardi’s world is a maze of mirrors that reflects, magnifies, and fragments his image. His poems are uncompromisingly narcissistic.

The poet strips away a palimpsest of externally imposed selves in order to uncover a self which turns out to be not the real self but his idealized self. Echoes of secret dimensions trail his poems:

jien
 il-battista bla ras fuq lajlo tal-lastku
 jew san pietru gharwien imgebbed rasu ’l isfel
 johlom imqajjem izzigx fuq xmara
 jew naggar ibaqqan il-blat tal-enimmi
 (“Mirage x”)

Like a spider, the poet spins from his own life and his work glimmers with the tension between disclosure and concealment. He writes candidly but elliptically. The gap between poet and reader becomes a space in which familiarity, awkwardness, estrangement, timidity, honesty, and duplicity all co-exist.

His language is both hermetic and transparent, exposing and shrouding him simultaneously. His shadows enhance his art. Rent by shafts of light, all his poetry seems lit from within by the tension between the visible and invisible, presence and absence, proximity and distance.

Hemm orizzont incert.
 Hemm rahal jistenna.
 Hemm l-ekklissi tax-xemx
 Ihaffru gandotti rotob fl-ilbies skur tan-nisa.

Dan-nahat hawn il-ksieh.

Ir-riha tieghek ghandha riha vjolenti;
 donnok mara taf tirbah kollox u tidhaq.
 Hemm rahal jistenni
 naqsam pont jistrieħ
 fuq saqajn aghsafari spulpjati.

Jekk tasal s’hawn ir-riha tagħha
 tghidulhiex b’das-suwididju.
 Lanqas m’ghandkom tghidulha bil-pont.
 (“Il-Pont”)

There are silences in Azzopardi’s poetry. The syntax breaks down, the sentence is suspended. A single word reverberates in the surrounding muteness. The unsaid intrudes in the said. Yet the poet, ever mobile, makes his lines move with a manic intensity.

The subtlety of syntax often articulates the curve of a perception or the morphology of an emotion. Unable to confide in the official language, he contorts and twists what is given; he coins and borrows words at will. His contrivances are intended to outwit language and impress the establishment.

Serene sights or pleasurable sounds rarely disturb the sombre mood of the poet; he prefers his poetry to be etched in pain:

Issummat
l-uġigh interzjat
fil-lirika tiegħi
(“Fl-Għabex”)

The sun rarely if ever illuminates Azzopardi's landscape. Rather, a haunting moon casts a melancholy glow over his mindscapes. Images of dark and night palpitate with enduring pathos:

. . . il-qamar
bħalma nesa jixgħel
il-pjaga tiegħi mohbija
(“Nisa taz-Żerniq”)

Azzopardi's “*uġigh*” comes close to the pain experienced by American Confessional poets that flourished in the early and mid-sixties. Although Azzopardi's suffering verges on paranoia, it does not reach the extremes of Lowell, Plath, or Sexton.

In one of his latest “confessional” poems, Azzopardi, is overwhelmed by an unbearable depression:

Ruh tiegħi qabar tan-niket;
x'qed jistona fil-vers notturnali
f'dal-habs tiegħi assedjat?
(“Lunatorju”)

His anguished poetry has roots in his sensitivity to the human predicament. It leads to a sharp sense of the pain of existence under even “normal” conditions. “Where but to think is to be full of sorrow”: this line of Keats reflects Azzopardi's sensitivity.

The poet tries to transcend his “*purgatorju twil*” and exorcise the “*blat tal-lava jiddewbu*” from his head; but he knows that his poetry “*miftuqa . . . dejjem tnixxi*” from a heart that “*ma fieqet qatt*”.

Azzopardi's sorrow is that of a lyrical existentialist. He is intensely concerned with the condition of the self, its limits, its freedom, its choices, its responsibility, its enduring angst. He is trapped in his “*habs assedjat*”. He is a man in despair clinging to nothing. He has no nostalgia either collective or personal; neither is he hopeful of the future. Hope, “*tama bla riflessi*”, he dismisses as a lie:

U jien il-gejjien jistenna l-korp
 ta' karba mmensa
 jew
 id-daghwa tremenda
 fl-irrelevanza tax-xita.
 Fil-vojt.
 Fin-nuqqas.
 Fl-indifferenza ta' l-univers
 it-tifsira tal-ġenju tiegħi
 trasluċenti bħall-ġenn.
 ("Nawsja")

The poet stands aloof from his world, lost in his freedom. He asks his son to remember: "*Int innifsek u wahdek*", a truth the father has lived and is deeply conscious of:

. . . tarmi hwejġek
 u timxi hiemed u wieqaf,
 għarwien.
 lest tingazza fil-kesha
 ta' min jagħżel li jkun wahdu
 ("Bħall-Poeżija")

The poet suffered a *Götterdämmerung*, a twilight of man-made idols. He has lost faith in the gods of his childhood. Now he does not fit in anywhere. He is exiled from the sacred world of fixed values; he has been cast out of paradise and cannot return.

He must choose for himself. He must invent for himself his own meaning. There is no one to provide him with values; he must create them or else he is helpless and forlorn.

In his anger, he tries to shock. He "sins" in public. He tries to horrify. He strives to be the "*poète maudit*"; as such, he can possess a character that is fixed and sacred:

Hemm riġment isus warajh
 bil-kanni sserrati bil-fanali
 bin-nerfijiet u l-vaguni tal-habs.
 Hadd ma jintebah bl-immunità tiegħu.
 L-iskrataċ ma jinfdux.
 U l-ġebel ma jferix.
 ("Il-Poeta")

The poet wants to shape his life freely; but at the same time he is tormented as he apprehends his freedom and the awesome responsibilities it entails. He sees his life as suspended; in his predicament between a past he is bitter about and a future he dreads. The present is "*eżistenza għamja u truxa*" made up of "*mument spissi/tal-mewt tiegħi bla konsum*"; the future reduces itself to "*il-mewt dgħajsa bla qluġh/tiċċajpar fl-orizzont*".

The way to flee the anguish is to deny the freedom and adopt some form of psychological determinism. One symbol that the poet adopts is that of stone, "ħagar". Azzopardi is fascinated by stone and rock. Rimbaud was too.

Stone symbolizes the sartrean "en-soi", the in-itself. Stone is solid, impenetrable, consistent, and simply there. "L-aħjar nibqgħu maqfulin fil-ġebła" dreams the poet. He longs for the interiority and the restfulness of stone. He longs to identify himself with the "rassa samma" and the "dewmien etern" of "ħagar". It is a vain desire. The "en-soi-pour-soi", the in-itself-for-itself is the perfect being, both consciousness and substance. The poet is obsessed by an ideal which is a contradiction. As such, he is condemned to suffer an impossible dream.

For Azzopardi, life is a self-deceiving existence "imtertra bil-mewt". Life "tfur bil-mewt" and draws oppressively toward an inescapable end. The poet is haunted by the tragic absurdity of death, the nothing that is, "ix-xejn tax-xejn assolut".

Il-Bniedem l-ibgħad pjaneta
torbita
fl-ispazju tal-mewt.
(“Zodjak”)

In his thanatological poems, Azzopardi comes closest to the tragic vision of life. The dark breeze of death lurks behind many an azzopardian composition. Death is an ever-watching presence, implacable, both fascinating and horrifying. It is rarely peaceful. Images of death resemble the ghoulish imaginings of Bosch:

u mill-ibgħad eghrien nagħraf
iz-żegħir ta' żwiemel morda
gejjin ikarkru wraġhom id-dell tal-mewt
(“Sitwazzjoni 32”)

And in "Il-Lejla l-Qamar qed jitwerreċ" the poet, impersonating a living-corpse in a glass coffin, is traumatized by:

. . . l-qamar, qed jingħi dmugh id-demmm
u d-dwiefer ta' zkuk is-sigar qed icarrtu
mbicċer il-firmament
u l-weraq isfar qed jingħasar
u l-wirdien saġfi selah ġwinħajh
inhabbat mal-ghatu fuq wiċċi

Faced with the sudden death of a friend after a heart attack, Azzopardi is stunned:

il-margini qadima
izda rqiqqa bħall-ostji
bejn il-lum u l-bierah;

bejn mument u iehor
l-eternità.

(“Sepulkru”)

Religion cannot provide comfort to Azzopardi. It is, for him, an ambivalent demon. His attitude is particularly scathing against structured religion, against values dictated by self-righteous ecclesiastics, and against pious superstitions of the common people “*mohħhom għar tas-santi*” and “*saqajha mnigġsin*”.

Azzopardi rails against the forces of organized religion that have forged him:

araw ħuti dak ħruq li hemm fl-infern
ma nitqanqalx
b'qalb(i)na safja ma' l-angli tas-sema (sejjer
ground –
viva maria
x'gise m għandha
l-andress –) magħhom nittewbu taħt in-navi
jnemmsilna hemm alla tal-kartapesta msammar
b'imsiemer
finta ram illustrat – mhux hekk mhux hekk –
sallbu(ni): b'idejja miftu . . . ħ . . . a
bejn zewġ kampnari
w aħarqu mohħi jdahħan saġrificċju f'incensier
erħuni nissawwab bejn il-kustilji ta' kurċifiss
kontemporanju.
(“Maz-zlieġa tax-xemgħa tinħaraq”)

On the occasion of his 24th birthday, the poet blows out symbolic candles of church indoctrination:

dawn huma x-xemgħat li bellgħuli oppju niexef
u saddewli ħalqi bil-biza' tal-mistoqsija
din ix-xema' fiha riħa ta' mikrofni
fuq il-pulptu jgħajtu mitoloġija mistika
mingħajr konvinzjoni
. . .
din bassritli żwiemel ikarkru mewt spirtwali
. . .
u din qieghda tteptep alla-trianglu jmeslaħ sikkina
u jxammem fuq mohħi žibeg tal-għaraq
(“24 xema' f'għieh il-poeta f'egħluq sninu”)

In “Orbita 12” the poet longs to take off in outer space and drift faraway from cupolas erected “*f'għieh il-vanġeli morda*”.

He refuses to compromise with “*allat imniġġsin*” or “*allat bla fattizzi*”. He is sceptical about a priest-fabricated god that “*ilahħam u jghaddam*” and “*imeri l-gjometrija*”. This same god:

. . . hu l-assenza tal-ward
meta int tixtieqhom l-aktar.

Ma jkellmikx
lanqas meta ddeffislu
l-isbah fjura fil-kustat miftuh.
(“Mewta taqta’ l-fjuri”)

He views Christ and His redemption in an equally stinging imagery:

. . . il-kurcifiss ta’ fuq is-sodda jittewweb
in-nghas u n-noia ta’ redenzjoni bla siwi.
(“Meta jitbaxxa d-dawl”)

After losing two of his children within a three-week period, the poet, in a moment of utter grief, rejects the offer of grace:

u mill-ghanqbuta ta’ smewwiet ghajjena
alla mejjet-haj inewwel idu
’l isfel ’l isfel
jilghab l-ego sum
u jien ma nahtafhiex
(“Sa l-ghanja tinxef zbiba mummja”)

Some of Azzopardi’s lines are blasphemous. On closer study, one senses his interior crisis of an essentially God-haunted mind in search of lucidity, meaning, and innocence. Behind the poet’s tantrums against priests, dogmas, and God, there lurks a prodigious complex of a childhood obsessed with sin and guilt.

Hounded by inner voices, the poet wavers between blasphemy and prayer, agnosticism and penitence. He longs to unburden his conscience from the “*piż tad-dnub*” and heal the “*wegghat antiki*” that throb inside his brain. Deeply conscious of “*rezonanzi mwahħlin/mal-kuxjenza*” he feels he is “*l-iskerz indemonjat*” and indeed “*l-espansjoni tal-infern*”.

In “*Preghiera*”, in a contrite mood, he turns to God:

ddewwibli mohhi
meta s-sigra tas-supervja
tkun riflessa f’ghajnejja
ccajparli d-dinjità
ta’ min jaf jitbikkem wahdu.

Characteristically torn in his spiritual neurosis, the poet enters “*il-lejl oskur*” of the soul, evoking the “*noche oscura de l’alma*” of San Juan de la Cruz in his search for a mystical union with God. The mediaeval saint experienced the dark night of the soul caused by the painful consciousness of human limitations and the apparent absence of God. The poet goes looking for God in a cathedral where “*navi t’umdu/kaverni tremendi jahbu ’l Alla*”. And on the verge of disbelief, he is saved from utter faithlessness by an inner voice of conscience:

Ridt nikkommetti ġest anjostku
 b'għajnejja blalen tas-sadid
 u l-kuxjenza ma hallitnix.
 ("Askesis")

Azzopardi appreciates the symbolic visuals of church liturgy that have punctuated his impressionable young years. Cross, chalice, rosary, nails, fire, blood, heaven and countless other religious images and references recur throughout the poet's oeuvre; they enrich significantly the dynamics of azzopardian vision and art.

Azzopardi cannot altogether forgo a belief in a supreme being, a principle of universal cohesiveness. In his latest works he turns increasingly to symbols and images from oriental philosophies and religions. He is eclectic in his interests; he will experiment with any idea with which he identifies or which responds to his present mood.

Azzopardi is fascinated by contours and edges. This sense of physical configuration reflects his consciousness of an object or event that is most truly revealed only at the border of its outline or form.

The circular form, "*it-tond*", appeals intensely to Azzopardi; deep psychological motivations are at the root of his attraction to "*is-simmetrija taċ-ċirku*". The circle is the symbol of the self; it expresses the totality of the psyche in all its aspects. The circle symbolizes the ultimate wholeness of life, whether it appears in primitive sun worship, or modern religions, in myths, in Aztec art, in mandala drawn by Tibetan monks.

The mandala is the magic circle symbolic of the transcendent self, encompassing all sides of man's nature and forging opposing forces into a unity. In the poem by the same name of "*Mandala*", Azzopardi communes not with an anthropomorphic deity, but with "*il-milja tal-vojt tond*", the void of inexhaustible contents, the flow of a timeless cosmic configuration. In a fusion of Christian and Buddhist imagery, the poet is drawn as if by a spell to a "*sagrament tal-holm*":

U kien hemm wesgha tonda
 lesta tilqa'
 dal-kwadranġu
 minn gos-shab.

But after the celestial spectacle, he is disenchanted; he cannot believe wholeheartedly and typically, spurns the oriental ritual:

Miljun sena u sebgha l-istess holma.
 L-istess spazji l-istess tond frustrat.

Looking at the spectrum of Azzopardi's thematic preoccupations, one is struck by the frequency and importance of female figures in the poet's field of vision.

Females dominate the azzopardian cosmos in myriad and subtle ways.

Azzopardi's heroines are akin to his own existence devoid of absolute values: they exemplify the poet's ethic of fullness of life. They are victims, outsiders, outcasts, sinners. Yet they are at the same time innocent and free, exuding mystery and fascination.

Azzopardi is irresistibly drawn to these females. He is on their trail throughout his wanderings; he seeks them out in the hope of companionship, a love relationship. The meetings turn out to be apparent chances; they are doomed to failure. The female he craves is generally unresponsive, elusive, unattainable. Love, like God, remains a mirage beyond his grasp.

The poet's unfulfilled love with its exasperation of desire recalls Goethe in "Xenien", extolling "*das Gift der unbefriedigten Liebe*" which burns and cools.

After an encounter on a train across Italy, the poet finds himself alone that night:

mank nista' niftakar għajnejk
f'dal-limbu kjariskurat
fejn hlomt li sibtek
(“Fuq ferrovija”)

Females in Azzopardi's poetry are like apparitions that flash and soon vanish but that shimmer on long after in the inward eye. All that lingers on the page is a sensual image of a mysterious absence. The passage of a female is transmuted into reverberations of dream and desolation, reminiscent of René Char's "*le silence de celle qui laisse rêver*".

Azzopardi's torment of the unattainable loved-one echoes Pablo Neruda's own despair in "Poésia XV":

y me oyes desde lejos y mi voz no te toca
y me oyes desde lejos y mi voz no te alcanza
(“Veinte poemas de amor”)

In Azzopardi's situation, the male-female space is hardly ever a bridge of exchange, or "*un espace translucide*" to use Paul Eluard's terms. Reciprocal "*visibilité*" is inextricably bound-up with eluardian love. The act of seeing across a transparent *milieu* is the means par excellence to communicate and share love. In the case of Azzopardi, the male-female space remains an infertile chasm. Is Azzopardi's experience a metaphor for the difficulty of being with another person and the impossibility of love?

A woman he noticed one evening remains a twilight image, an erotic thought:

il-mara krepuskolata f'ghajnejh
 u f'rasu sidirha
 ("Les Images")

Elsewhere, the poet is bewitched at the sight of a female undressing and about to swim nude under cover of night. The poet falls in love with the vision, but:

. . . taht il-harsa 'nfinita tar-ragel li habbha
 it-tfajla ta' l-adriyatiku
 dabet f'dell bla gometrija.
 ("Ghaxar Varjazjonijiet fuq l-Imhabba")

Many a poem tinged with pathos evokes a loved-one in an inaccessible beyond, forever distant. In "It-Tfajla tal-Muntanja", the poet remembers a tender encounter. The bliss was short-lived; the poet abandoned the stranger and promised her he would love her, characteristically, from a distance: "*Se nibqa' nhobbok kif naf jien mill-bogħod*". After another encounter with another female, he finds himself alone, in love with an absent loved-one: ". . . *nibqa' waħdi/nisma' lehnek*".

Erotic images of female hair, eyes, breasts, thighs, link these nameless and enshrined loved-ones with night, sea, moon, heaven:

Kienet safja malli rajtha tholl xuxitha
 tinza' nuda fuq il-blat.
 U saret lejl u saret baħar xtaqt nintreha
 mmut f'gisimha.
 ("Trinoctium Castitas")

Through temporal and spatial separation the females he loves meld sensuously with images of earth. The persistence of his doomed loves echoes the eluardian "*harmonie de l'absence*" in which loss fashions images more intense than physical presence:

illum ghandli lura xufftejja u ruhi
 tiegħi biss
 u nara kemm hu sabih li niftakrek biss
 bla rridek wisq.
 ("Bahrija")

The sensuous lyric "kannizzata" unveils another nameless female but leaves her all her mystery and intangibility. The *voyeur* eyes of the poet net their prey through a latticed space:

Minn gos-slaleb tal-kannizzata
 nizlet mara mnezżgħa bħall-ilma

Transfigured in marine transparency, the female enlarges the contours of the poet's imagination. Nevertheless:

. . . f'ruħna mera
 lmaht, kull ġenna t'art li tlift

kull ciklu solitudni
li għazilt minflok minn habbni

The encounter reduces itself to a one-sided gaze. The vision fades out and the poem trails off in silence.

Besides considering a female as potential love-mate, the poet is conscious of woman as the yin force, symbolizing warmth, fertility, darkness, mystery.

The poet associates the females element with elemental matter and natural phenomena. Water and land become feminoid: “. . . u saret lejl u saret baħar”. Twilight, clouds, seasons, time, life revolve subtly around the female: “*fl-għabex t'għajnejk*” and “*il-ħarifa ta' qalbek*”.

Fire, a prime transformative element is associated with feminine inwardness; it is also related to the capacity for *rêverie* which is implicit in most of Azzopardi's women.

The moon symbolizes a heavenly earth, a female presence. Women's reality is akin to cyclical metamorphosis and movements of a changing moon:

. . . u tiftakar kemm-il lejl
għax hi kienet saret il-lejl
u l-lejl kien jafha sewwa
 (“Lapida”)

On one occasion, the moon is transformed into a fantasy of a male in the night and a female “*ħalliet il-qamar xitwi jħobbha*”.

The principle of nature inherent in the female ties to the pain of becoming and dying. The female principle stands for sorrow, but also the peace of the grave, “*diragħajha ċimiteru*”.

The plethora of images and symbols emanating from nature distill the essence of woman and transform it into a myth of femininity. This acts like a deep reservoir of creative mystery for the poet.

According to Jungian psychology, the “*anima*”, which is the feminine constituent of the male psyche, suggests an interiorizing movement toward private sensibility. In this introspective role, the feminine orientation is at the basis of Azzopardi's artistic approach; it becomes the cornerstone of his consciousness. The “*anima*” feminizes the poet's experience of reality and his interpretation of it.

The focus of Azzopardi's femininity is anarchistic, liberating, imaginative. His art revolves upon an unceasing unwillingness to allow ossification of a fixed centre or rigid boundaries. The poet's very surrealism and juxtapositional style point to a feminine orientation, a mind unshackled by absolutes and systems. The poet creates personal stories. The non-sacred aspects of such tales is also closer to

the poet's feminine bent than the religious or ideological nature of collective myths.

The act of composition itself becomes a kind of epiphany. For Azzopardi the writing of a poem becomes a means of empathetically experiencing an alternate mode of consciousness. The poem becomes a sublimation of Baudelaire's "*femme fatalement suggestive*": an esthetic female counterpart and her lover, the poet who desires her, are enclosed vicariously together within the space of the written poem. This perhaps accounts for the unique passion and intensity that characterize Azzopardi's work.

A host of other figures recur with an unusual psychic resonance throughout Azzopardi's poetry. Among the most frequent figures are: moon, night, sky, sea, and bird.

The moon dominates azzopardian cosmology; it communicates a variety of images and associations.

The moon's presence adds a surreal, mysterious, or sensual dimension to the drama enacted in the poem. In "Għanja ta' Settembru":

hekk ghajtu t-trombi
meta l-qamar kien ghoddu sar kankru demm
ghajtu l-helsien.

In "Suite 345", one finds the villagers waiting and waiting for the fullness of chance "*taħt qamar żlugat*". In "Kemmi hi wiesgħa din ixtajta" the moon "*tghatta bl-istrixxa tal-vistu*". The epic poem "Unfinished Suite 869" opens under a moon "*żvergnat bla protesta*".

In the poem "Wara nofs inhar fil-bajja" a nocturnal ritual will unfold under an eerie full moon:

il-lejla jmissu jitle' qamar kwinta
taħt il-harsa hamra tiegħu
ha toħroġ l-armila magħluba
b'uliedha suddjakni
jsawtu l-ilma bil-qasab tal-gnejna

taħt dal-qamar
hallu l-mara tintelaq għat-traxxix
forsi tindáf
bla tixtieq iehor
iħabbilha

In the nightmarish poem "Il-lejla l-qamar qed jitwerreċ", a cross-eyed moon catches the poet lying in a glass-coffin:

u l-qamar qed jingħi dmugh id-demmi
u d-dwiefer ta' zkuk is-sigar qed iċarrtu
mbiċċer il-firmament
u l-weraq isfar qed jingħasar

u l-wirdien saġfi salah ġwinħajh
iħabbat mal-ġhatu fuq wiċċi

When the moon disappears, darkness conspires with night. In “Leggenda”, a young woman “*b’kawtiela skura trid tisfida l-lejl*” ends up surrendering her body to a wintry night. The woman in “Lapida” recalls many a night for “*hi kienet saret il-lejl/u l-lejl kien jaġfa sewwa*”. And in an erotic sequence of “Għaxar Varjazzjonijiet fuq l-Imħabba”, a nameless woman:

nizlet għall-ilma
sabiha daqs il-lejl
u l-lampi tal-ġenna ntfew sabiex tghum nuda.

The sky is mostly an awesome “*sema*” where a “*temperatura perversa*” is charted; where there is “*maħżuza s-sentenza ta’ ħajti*” and where clouds drift “*ġisfolja mewt war’oħra*”.

The sky is “*bahħ ta’ wesgħat*” recalling the “*espaces infinis*” of Pascal. The immensity of space “*bla ħjiel ta’ dijametru*” intensifies the immense solitude of the mind, and dwarfs the ego to “*ix-xejn tax-xejn assolut*”.

On rare occasions the sky can be an exhilarating sensation as in the opening lines of “Vjaġġ”:

f’imnifsejja ħlewriet is-saġhtar
hekk kif il-lożor tal-harir jithallew
jaqghu jitmewġu pezez mahlula
mis-sema

For Azzopardi, seawater is a plurivalent metaphor in which varied facets and moods merge. The sea is an image of the flowing unity of the cosmos; it is a symbol of the unconscious life of the self. The sea connotes sensual images; it is alive with spirits. It is an ever-receding horizon; it is the infinite, timeless beyond. The sea is the primal source, the womb of life. But it can also be a tragic tomb.

In “Marinara”, a nameless fisherman died on the water, unwept, unremembered. And:

il-gawwi sallab karba mal-lejl
l-istilel għattew wiċċhom
u l-ilma kellu l-ġhatx
u l-baħar ħassu jegħreq

The poet wonders in “Epifanija” how many oarsmen “*issallbu mas-siġar taħt l-ilma*”, or where their people rowed “*meta stadu l-qamar tar-rizurrezzjoni*”. In the poem “Għoddhom waslu l-angli” water nymphs collected the bones of “*kull xebba li salpat weħiedha*”.

The bird is a haunting image in Azzopardi’s universe. In “Nikta”

a blind pigeon is found shot dead. A cry of a bereaved mate rends the sky:

romol il-lehen tat-tajra
 maqbud fuq l-ishab
 afflittat
 lehen bla vuçi.

Elsewhere, a sick dove “*tferfer gwinhajha misluha/tokrob l-ennwi tagħha*”. Seagulls “*sallab karba mal-lejl*” mourning a nameless fisherman who died forsaken on the water. In the poem “*Talba ta’ fil-ghaxija*” the author identifies with the nightingale:

ikanta għalxejn
 għas-silg
 bla tama.

In the memorable poem “*Paesagg 2*”, birds caught in a wire trap shatter the night sky with their shrieks:

il-lejl imtedd minn tulu fuq l-egħlieqi
 u maqbudin mill-gwienah
 l-aghsafar xaffru d-dlam ighajtu
 mill-ingassa tal-wajar.

The heart-rending cry of the bird in Azzopardi’s poetry desecrates the rilkean “*rond cri d’oiseau*” in which “*tout vient docilement se ranger*”.

Is then the shriek of the bird an intimation of the horror of the void, the “*xejn tax-xejn*”, the nothingness that threatens to submerge the human? Or is it emblematic of Azzopardi’s existential predicament, his freedom, with its preciousness and its ineffable anguish?

As an inhabitant of a small island, Azzopardi is extremely conscious of the surrounding sea that isolates him and confines him inexorably. Consequently the thematic motif of “*évasion*” is inherent in his work. Wandering beyond the shores of the island expands the poet’s world; nevertheless, the “elsewhere” becomes only another experience of loneliness and sadness. Wherever he escapes, he drags his “*mal*” with him.

Paris, the city of life becomes a soulless wasteland:

Jien l-aridità li qed tnixxef dil-belt:
 l-id ingazzata tal-lejl
 mingħajr is-sider tax-xebba
 (“*Notre Dame*”)

Venice is for the poet nothing but “*cimiteru ta’ gondli*”; Prague is a city that “*nixfet tibki*”; it is a “*belt tad-dmugh*” and “*pjazzi*

where “*xemx tal-bronż/irħiet mewt divina*”. In Berlin, the poet is distressed by:

wicħha abjad in-nies
ftit tintebah bid-differenzi ta’ bejnietna
. . . jien ukoll wiċċi abjad bħalhom.
(“Bahnhofstrasse”)

After wandering across the capitals of Europe, the poet confesses his sense of disenchantment and interior desolation:

ġbart hafna frak
u ruhi saret katalogu ta’ nies bla fattizzi.
(“Tao Te Cing”)

The poet escapes from his insular microcosm ever seeking to free his self “*prigunier tal-verità*” and his conscience “*fgata fl-alka*”. His quest is futile; it is vitiated by an enduring “*malinkonija tragika*”.

Ultimately, the creation of the poem itself seems to provide a cathartic release for the poet’s neurosis. Poetry affords access to the interior faraway of the unconscious where the poet is reborn as his instinctive and passionate self.

The poems presented here are moments of Azzopardi’s artistic itinerary from his initial self-conscious studies to his later more mature sublimations.

Encounter with Azzopardi’s rebellious mind may be troubling, but it accomplishes what it aims to do: to subvert our commonsense and complacencies, to challenge our imagination, to remind us that life begins, in the words of Sartre, “*de l’autre côté du désespoir*”.

* * *

In my translations I have tried to approximate the original poems as faithfully as possible. I have aimed to convey a sense of the poet’s emotion and style and to achieve a final composition that would stand on its own as poetry.

Translation is a difficult and risky task. I am aware of the danger of transmuting poetry into another tongue. A poetic translation can never reproduce the original poem. Each language has its own particular structure, sounds, images, and allusions.

Azzopardi’s poems present unique problems for a translator. As with all poets, Azzopardi’s art is inseparable from his language and style.

The earthly sounds inherent in the original Maltese language are lost in English. Furthermore, Azzopardi’s syntax is particularly difficult to translate because of its distorted patterns of word-order, ambiguous juxtapositions, and personal usage of words.

A translator must grapple with his own sense of the structure and inner voices of a poem. The experience of a poem resides in its totality not only in each of its words and their sounds, but also in the relations among those words, the connotations, the images, the pauses, the interior immensity of words.

I should like to thank my wife Judith for her invaluable assistance in the final version of the translations.

PROFESSOR GRAZIO FALZON lectures in Romance Languages and Contemporary French Literature at the Pacific University, Oregon, USA.

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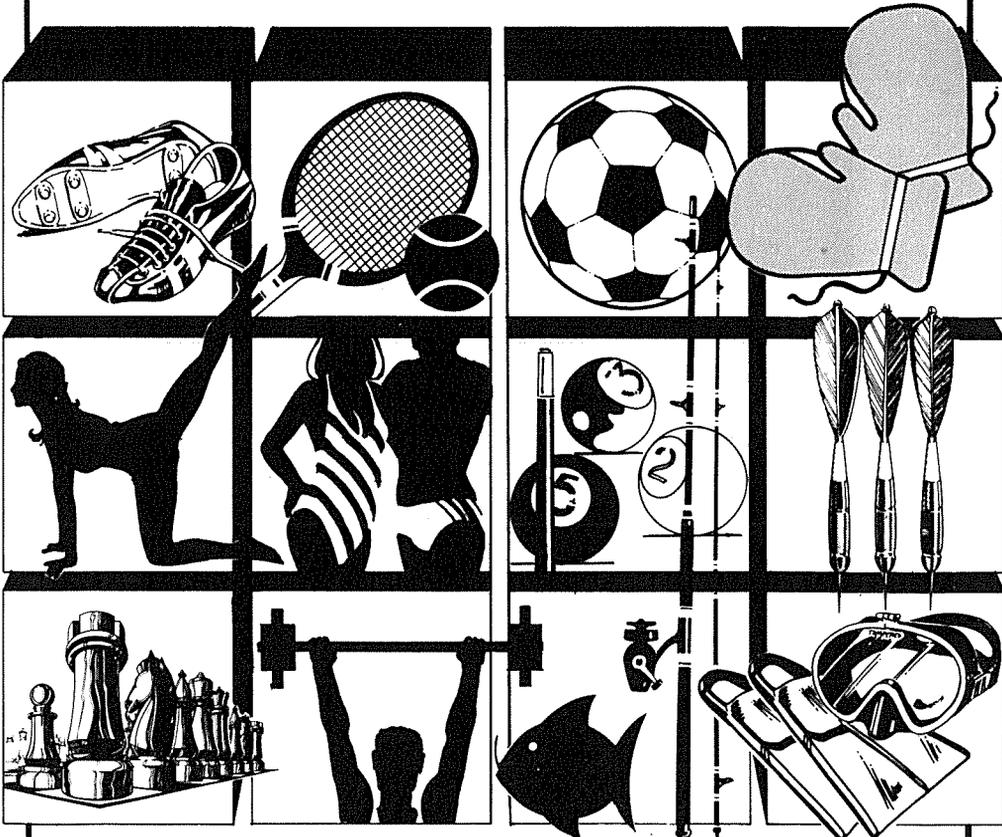
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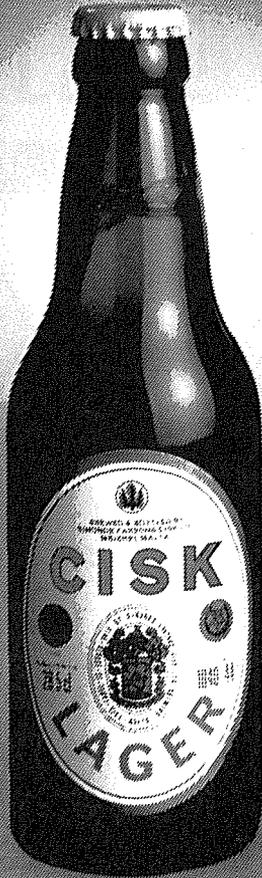
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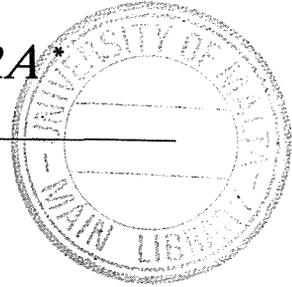


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SHAKESPEARE'S NOTION OF MORALITY IN *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA**

Peter Vassallo



I feel I ought to preface my lecture by stating that I shall focus in the main on *Antony and Cleopatra* as a specifically Roman play and that certain assumptions I shall make are implicit in the Roman plays as a whole and, to a certain extent, in Shakespeare's History plays. It is, indeed, in these plays that moral and political assumptions impinge on each other so that it sometimes happens that we gradually become aware that a political decision may be fraught with moral considerations and, vice-versa, a moral attitude, as I hope to demonstrate, may be harnessed to a political cause.

Shakespeare's interest in Roman history, or the great personages of Roman history, is something he imbibed with the prevalent spirit of the age and this was largely a matter of a conditioned response to history in general. The philosophical basis of the Elizabethan view of history encouraged by the propagators of the Tudor Myth was that set forth in Thomas Sackville's Induction to the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559) as a process whereby discerning men could have a glimpse of the destiny of those who rose to fame or notoriety – a catalogue of Fate in which was reflected the rise and fall of Princes and States. The moral which was inculcated in the recording of history for the benefit of administrators (*magistrates*) was that they were expected to learn from the vicissitudes of those who were truly great by emulating their virtues and shunning their vices. This didactic attitude to history, or rather the exhortation to contemplate the lives of famous men by applying certain correspondences to their own times, is mostly evident in the interpolations in Sir Thomas North's fine translation of the French version (by Jacques Amyot) of Plutarch's *Lives*. This work

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entitled *The Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* was published in 1579. The subsequent editions in 1595, 1603 and 1612 were themselves evidence of the enormous popularity of this book with the Elizabethans. Shakespeare it seems owned his personal copy and used North's *Plutarch* as his prime source in *Julius Caesar*, *Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus* and of course *Antony and Cleopatra*. The first question that comes to mind is: what was there in the matter of Rome the Great, as it was called, that was so appealing to Shakespeare and his contemporaries? To begin with, one would suggest that history was presented not as a series of facts somewhat loosely connected, but that the lives of the historical personages in this version of ancient history were dramatised and that the protagonists were given set speeches at a moment of importance or crisis. Secondly, a historian like Plutarch was not only concerned with writing historical biography: he did not hesitate to provide a moral running commentary on incident or situation, thereby endowing the behaviour of the protagonist with exemplary significance. A third reason was undoubtedly the interest generated by the chosen themes and subjects, which were largely of a political nature, and from which the Elizabethans themselves could derive moral edification. The most obvious instance here was that of the murder of Julius Caesar – with its moral ambiguity in relation to the justifiability or otherwise of Caesar's assassination. Added to all this was the implicit concept of *Romanitas* itself – the way a Roman of distinction was expected to behave in a set of circumstances and the correspondence between the nobility or otherwise of his behaviour which was often held as a paradigm for Elizabethan behavioural codes.

This code of honour or respectability is evident in Shakespeare's early and immature *Titus Andronicus* as well as in the mature *Coriolanus*. One aspect of *Romanitas* is portrayed in the Elizabethan refinement on the Senecan plays of Revenge, in the emergence of the Stoical avenger who in a difficult or impossible circumstance of adversity is obliged to take the law into his own hands and exact a kind of retribution after his own fashion. The focus in some of the Elizabethan versions of the popular Senecan plays (notably *Titus Andronicus*) is on grim endurance and a ruthless sweeping to one's revenge until that revenge eventually becomes more of an obsession than a code of honour. In the absence of human justice, the stoical avenger becomes a crazed justiciar.

Other aspects of *Romanitas* are more central to my purpose and I shall dwell briefly on their manifestation in Shakespeare's plays. The main aspect of the Roman theme was its respect for order and stability in the state, and the sense of duty felt by the citizens to preserve this order from civil strife and personal ambition. The

Respublica was likened by Elizabethan statesmen to the Commonwealth which was the Elizabethan term for “common good”. The leading citizens of Rome were imbued with a sense of nobility and integrity coupled with *pietas* – a sense of duty and loyalty to one’s fathers and one’s traditions which was to prevail over self-interest. Thus, according to Virgil, *pious* Aeneas (from whom the Roman Emperors were alleged to have descended) deserts the beautiful Dido, Queen of Carthage, who has fallen in love with him in order to follow the instructions of the Gods to found the state of Rome. Aeneas’s rather shabby abandoning of Dido after making love to her was in Elizabethan times cited as the supreme case of the virtuous Roman’s placing of duty before pleasure in his scale of priorities. Nobility and a sense of decorum were to be shown even in adversity, and this often took the form of death by suicide rather than capture by the enemy. A certain magnanimity towards the defeated was expected, though not always shown. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus the protagonist, defeated at Philippi, resorts to self-annihilation in the true Roman fashion and we are told “Brutus only overcame himself/And no man else hath honour by his death”; and Antony, who hounded Brutus to his death, feels justified in exclaiming, “This was the noblest Roman of them all”. The ethos of the Roman world is forever present as a backdrop to *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. These plays are largely but not exclusively concerned with power and the maintaining of political stability and, together with the history plays (*Richard II* and *Henry IV* in particular), they constitute Shakespeare’s profound study of personal motivation in politics. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare concentrates on the behaviour of men in politics who conspire to eliminate a tyrant – it is the way they feel and argue and the extent to which they delude themselves that interests the playwright, rather than any abstract political principles involved – the minds of men and the relationship which properly binds men in the natural bonds of society interested Shakespeare far more than political abstractions. The political man errs (as Brutus does) by endeavouring to impose upon events an interpretation dictated by the bias of passion. As Cicero puts it:

Men may construe things after their fashion
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves
(I.iii. 34–5)

Even the political realist, Shakespeare implies, is inevitably drawn to the world of illusion.

Shakespeare’s Roman plays, by the dramatic re-enacting of moments of political and personal crisis in the lives of the great Romans, must have had the effect of corroborating the Elizabethan concept of the didactic value of History. From *Titus Andronicus* to

Coriolanus we have an implicit warning of the dangers besetting the State when citizens attempt to overthrow constituted authority. When Romans of rank and esteem fall out among themselves or fail to cooperate in promoting the general good, the result is often the plunging of the state into anarchy and ruin. Shakespeare conveys this in an interesting metaphor which he borrows from Plutarch and which he develops in *Coriolanus* – the “body politic” is compared to the human body by the patrician Menenius:

There was a time when all the body's members
Rebell'd against the belly; they accused it
That only like a gulf it did remain
In the midst of the body, idle and unactive,
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
Like labour with the rest.

(I.i. 101 – 6)

The idea of stagnation and mutual distrust is reflected in the public issues of *Coriolanus* but these lines could just as well have been spoken by Octavius Caesar when he accused Antony of indulging his sensual appetites at the cost of neglecting his duties to the state.

One other reason may be adduced in attempting to explain why, as far as the Elizabethan reading public was concerned, the history of Rome had achieved such widespread popularity. North's version of Plutarch's *Lives* must have enforced the view that History was in some mysterious way connected with the Divine patterning of the Destiny of man. From a moral and aesthetic point of view it was linked with the concept of Divine retribution of “poetic justice”. Richard III on the night before the decisive battle of Bosworth in which he was to be defeated by Henry Tudor is visited by the ghosts of this former victims who persistently remind him that the day of reckoning has come and that he will be requited for his villainy. Similarly in *Julius Caesar* the ghost of Caesar stalks the streets of Rome to remind Brutus and the conspirators that justice has caught up with them:

And Caesar's spirit ranging for revenge
With Ate by his side come hot from hell
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry “havoc” and let slip the dogs of war.

(III.i. 271 – 4)

This notion of retributive justice extends to the tragedies, and in *Macbeth* the forces of retribution gather around Macduff and are poised to rid the land of the blood-thirsty tyrant Macbeth. It is, however, significantly absent in *King Lear* where Shakespeare adds a new dimension to the mysterious force of evil – a dimension which led Dr. Johnson to object to the play on the grounds that it lacked the

symmetry of “poetical justice”. Here Shakespeare’s insights into human nature and his understanding of human suffering made him transcend the confines imposed by historical patterning – as far as Shakespeare was concerned, it is the way of the world that the innocent must suffer with the guilty and that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Shakespeare instinctively must have realised that notions of poetic justice, while giving his plays a neat structure, tend to falsify life as he experienced it. The death of Cordelia, though cruel, was dramatically necessary.

Such observations are necessary, I believe, for our understanding of Shakespeare’s conception of the ancient world of Rome and his awareness of the moral edification most Elizabethans derived from the dramatic representation of the lives of famous men in antiquity. I now wish to focus on one of the most famous of his Roman plays – *Antony and Cleopatra*, written after *Julius Caesar* – and before *Coriolanus*. For the historical details of the play Shakespeare turned to Sir Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch’s collection of the Parallel Lives of the Greeks and the Romans which by Elizabethan standards was one of the great books of antiquity. Plutarch’s purpose in writing the Lives had been to put side by side parallel biographies of Greek and Roman men of eminence. Plutarch himself was actually a contemporary of the Emperor Nero (AD 54–68) and a Greek by birth. As a matter of fact, there seems to be quite a strong bias in favour of Greece in his juxtaposition of Greek and Roman Lives (for instance, Alexander of Macedonia is shown as a greater leader than Julius Caesar) and it is obvious from the frequent interpolations that he drew his ideals from Greece. North’s translation provided Shakespeare with an interesting historical perspective because both Plutarch and Shakespeare saw history in terms of human character and they both interpreted history (Ancient History) to Elizabethan society as a state of affairs in which outstanding men influenced and moulded events by their personal decisions based on traits in their own characters. There can be no doubt that North’s history influenced him deeply and that Shakespeare thought it fit to adopt some of the finest passages in North to his own purpose. One oft-cited example will serve to show how Shakespeare actually versified North’s vivid account of the tremendous impact of Cleopatra on Antony:

Therefore when she was sent unto by divers letters, both from Antonius himself and also from his friends, she made so light of it and mocked Antonius so much that she disdained to set forward otherwise but to take her barge in the river of Cydnus, the poop whereof was of gold, the sails of purple, and the oars of silver . . . And now for the person of herself: she was laid under a pavilion of cloth of gold of tissue, apparelled and attired like the goddess Venus commonly drawn in picture; and hard by her, on

either hand of her, pretty fair boys apparelled as painters do set forth god Cupid, with little fans in their hands with which they fanned wind upon her. Her ladies and gentlewomen also, the fairest of them were apparelled like the nymphs Nereides (which are the mermaids of the waters) and like the Graces, some steering the helm, others tending the tackle and ropes of the barge, out of the which there came a wonderful passing sweet savour of perfumes, that perfumed the wharf's side, pestered with innumerable multitudes of people.

The corresponding passage in *Antony and Cleopatra* is too well-known to quote but it is interesting to observe Shakespeare's method of collaborating with his sources. To begin with, he preserves the eloquence of his original, he condenses it and concentrates on the vacuum created by Cleopatra's extravagant presence. What is dramatically interesting is that Shakespeare puts this fine piece of poetry into the mouth of Enobarbus – a plain-speaking, hard-boiled and rather cynical Roman soldier who seems out of patience with his leader's infatuation with this Egyptian slut. Indeed the whole passage might appear incongruous when spoken by this rough and ready fellow, and we might reasonably expect it to be more appropriate if uttered by someone with finer feelings, someone like Demetrius or even Philo. But there seems to be an important and subtle reason for this – a reason in fact which lies at the very heart of Shakespeare's dramatic conception of the tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra as lovers who transcend the earthly confines of which they form part. Shakespeare was writing a play about love and power – about the fall of a great man ultimately descended from Hercules – ostensibly because he allowed himself to be enchanted by this sensual Egyptian “gypsy”. In Shakespeare's source Enobarbus is just a name, but in the play he is developed into a commentator on men and customs who provides a convenient point from which the tragedy of Antony is to be perceived. And yet for all Enobarbus's cynicism, there can be no denying the fact that Enobarbus too is fascinated by Cleopatra despite himself. It is precisely this fact that gives the play its moral ambivalence. Cleopatra does represent the antithesis of Roman values but there is no gainsaying her perennial fascination.

This brings me to a point central to *Antony and Cleopatra*: the problem of the play's moral ambivalence. Bernard Shaw put his finger on this issue in his rather facetious criticism of the play. His comments on Shakespeare, it is true, must always be taken with a pinch of salt since Shaw delighted in being deliberately perverse – but this critique of *Antony and Cleopatra*, in *Three Plays for Puritans* (1901), it must be admitted, has more than a grain of truth in that it is certainly perceptive:

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* must needs be as intolerable to the true Puritan as

it is vaguely distressing to the ordinary healthy citizen, because after giving a faithful picture of the soldier broken down by debauchery, and the typical wanton in whose arms such men perish, Shakespeare finally strains all his huge command of rhetoric and stage pathos to give the theatrical sublimity to the wretched end of the business, and to persuade foolish spectators that the world was well lost by the twain.

Shaw's point, if we are to read between the lines, really is that Shakespeare seems to have lost his moral bearings somewhere in the play and that, realizing this, he suddenly attempts to endow Antony and Cleopatra with more dignity than they deserve and than the play should allow them. The operative word is *strains* in "Shakespeare finally strains all his huge command of rhetoric and stage pathos". But the fact remains that the play does achieve sublimity towards the end, and the latent feeling generated by the structure of the play really is that the world was well lost by the twain – to use Shaw's own words in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare seems to suggest from the outset that there is no clear-cut moral stance from which we can judge the play. On the one hand Antony is to be rebuked for his "dotage"; that is, mindless infatuation – he is "fondly overcome by female charm" – and here Shaw's puritans would have pointed an accusing finger. On the the other hand there are definite hints in the play itself to the effect that Antony's feelings for Cleopatra really amount to a deep and ennobling love.

At this stage it would be illuminating to consider the way in which Shakespeare builds up the character of Antony's main antagonist, Octavius Caesar. On the political plane we have a clash of two personalities, each seeking to dominate the Roman Empire, and we are led to ask ourselves who is best suited to become sole ruler when the Triumvirate disintegrates, as it inevitably must. In Caesar's eyes, Antony is the abstract of all faults that all men follow – for Caesar, young in years, is old in wisdom and the wayward Antony in the play is old enough to be his father. Octavius Caesar at first sight might be taken for an embodiment of the cardinal virtue of right reason – a sort of youthful Palmer urging an older Sir Guyon to resist the snares of the enchantress in the Bower of Bliss. The situation really is that the eighteen-year-old heir to Julius Caesar feels morally justified in rebuking one of the finest generals of his day for his dalliance with this serpent of the Nile, urging him to be a good Roman – before the play is over Octavius has indeed become, it would seem, the quintessence of *Romanitas* in the play, an embodiment of those very qualities which Elizabethan moralists and statesmen revered. A closer look at the play should make us realise that instead Shakespeare portrays him as a cold and calculating young politician totally lacking in warmth and generosity. Antony, for all his folly and self-indulgence, emerges as

the better man. Caesar's greatness lies in his capacity to be successful in everything he does. Antony in fact comes close to the truth when he says of Octavius:

His coin, ships, legions,
 May be a coward's, whose ministers would prevail
 Under the service of a child as soon
 As in the command of Caesar

(III.xi. 22 – 5)

What Antony means of course is that Caesar's actual power lies in his ability to operate a smooth and efficient machine. Octavius Caesar's greatness is attributed to his lucky stars and not to his innate qualities – in Antony's words.

The very dice obey him
 And in our sports my better cunning faints
 Under his chance. If we draw lots, he speeds;
 His cocks do win the battle still of mine,
 When it is all to nought; and his quails ever beat mine . . .

(II.iii. 33 – 7)

It might be argued that this is a rather unfair assessment of Caesar since it is coloured by Antony's prejudice and need for self-justification. However, Caesar as he emerges from the play is to my mind Shakespeare's profound study of the Machiavellian statesman – the Machiavel, that is, not in the popular Elizabethan misconception of Machiavelli's writings where he became synonymous with arch-villainy or devilry frankly proclaimed to the audience (setting "murderous Machiavel to school"): Shakespeare had fully exploited this aspect of the Machiavel in *Richard III*. No, here we have a more subtle and more sophisticated version of the Machiavel – closer to Machiavelli's own notion of the astute and calculating politician who has acquired the quality of *virtù* (a quality which is difficult to define but by which Machiavelli seems to mean that astuteness which enables a statesmen to turn unfavourable situations to his advantage). Caesar's "nobility" in wanting to make peace with Antony, thereby patching up their animosity, is suspect – instead of convincing us of the love for his sister Octavia, we are made to see the offer of his sister in marriage to Antony as a political ruse to bind Antony to his own concept of order and self-restraint. Enobarbus's wry comment is of course prophetic of the way things will work out, for Octavia's "holy, cold and still conversation" will certainly not restrain Antony from seeking his Egyptian dish again. There is, in fact, a hint that this political marriage has been engineered by Caesar in order to provide a pretext for a final showdown with Antony. The imagery he uses in recommending his sister's virtue to Antony suggests this, I think:

Let not the piece of virtue which is set
 Betwixt us as the cement of our love,
 To keep it builded, be the ram to batter the
 Fortress of it.

(III.ii. 28 – 31)

Octavia is here referred to as a “piece of virtue” cementing a love which is non-existent. Is not this an unconscious admission of his own forebodings? In Caesar’s view it is merely expedient for them to be friends. Moral righteousness is to this Machiavel a convenient stick with which to beat his political rival.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the political world is juxtaposed with the world of love in a manner which sharpens the ambivalence of the play’s central theme into tacit ironical comment. The galley scene in the play is an interesting instance of this. T. S. Eliot called it a “prodigious piece of political satire” – for Shakespeare seems to enjoy reducing worldly power to a kind of burlesque. Caesar, Lepidus and Antony drink complacently to their own unsteady alliance and get drunk in the process. Lepidus is maudlin and “stupid drunk” – he is also dull when he is not drunk – Antony indulges in witty nonsense, wise inanities, and Caesar, himself tipsy, frowns on the proceedings and is angry with himself. But for all this artificial gaiety, Shakespeare reminds us that it is the cold world of ruthless politics that they inhabit (far away from the warm climate of love). During this feasting Menas, the friend of Pompey, suggests to him that he might cut the ship’s cable and then the throats of the Triumvirs. Pompey’s reply is revealing:

Ah! this thou shouldst have done,
 And not have spoke on’t. It me ’tis villainy;
 In thee ’t had been good service . . .

(II.vii. 75 – 7)

and Pompey goes on to talk about his honour coming before his profit – hollow words indeed as Shakespeare makes his audience realise. There is another instance in the play where Shakespeare builds up a scene in order to deflate Octavius Caesar. The country bumpkin who brings a basket of figs to the trapped Cleopatra is in his own way an essential cog in the wheel of history, because he is the ultimate agent whereby Cleopatra can outwit conquering Caesar – the queen of Egypt aided by a country yokel can turn Caesar into an “ass unpolicied”.

As Cleopatra says:

’Tis paltry to be Caesar.
 Not being Fortune, he’s but Fortune’s knave –
 A minister of her will.

(V.ii. 2 – 4)

The imagery of Shakespeare's tragedies, as many Shakespearean commentators have noted, provides a tacit comment on their central theme. In this play, I would suggest, Shakespeare subverts most of the values of *Romanitas* established in the Roman plays. Plutarch had shown how the great Antony lost his chance of becoming master of the Roman Empire because of his irrational and un-Roman infatuation with this Egyptian seductress. Shakespeare gives this well-known theme a new dimension by showing us how the source of Antony's weakness becomes his strength. Antony's "dotage" is in fact love – and history has celebrated Antony's love for perennially fascinating Cleopatra – for their love has eclipsed Caesar's unquestionable power. The imagery of the play buttresses this notion – the vastness of the imagery associated with Antony extends his personality to universal and cosmic range. The sweet carefree dalliance of love itself – the passion of this Roman Mars for the Egyptian Venus – and the sheer poetry this inspires, has the effect of sublimating their relationship into an intense passion which transcends this "dungy earth" – the Roman world of prudence, caution, temperance, strategy, tactics and expediency is utterly rejected.

Well may Antony exclaim:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
Feeds beasts as man; the nobleness of life
Is to do thus, when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't.

(I.i. 33 – 8)

Indeed in their infatuation, love, lust, call it what you will, this "demi-Atlas" of the world and his Egyptian serpent stand up "peerless". The Roman Empire is cribbed and confined by comparison with the limitless sphere these lovers inhabit. There is surely no straining here after effect, as Bernard Shaw would have us believe – Shakespeare is not hard put to it to contrive a sublime and fitting ending. The play flows naturally to its appointed end, which is not the defeat of Antony but the outwitting of the pragmatic Caesar, circumscribed as he undoubtedly is by the very earth he has conquered, by luck, strategy and guile. And yet Shakespeare refuses to allow his audience to think of these lovers as an ideal couple perfectly suited to one another. In his rage Antony can be brutal and he can make his beloved recoil in horror – "I found you as a morsel cold upon Dead Caesar's trencher". Their quarrels and reproaches are terrestrial – there is violence and bitterness, but their passion burns too fiercely to be extinguished by their sensuality.

It is tempting to dwell at length on Shakespeare's supreme creation — Cleopatra herself. How well Shakespeare understood human nature and those attributes of femininity which play havoc with men's reason! Her passionate intensity vitalises the play and she dominates throughout. She is a amoral, loose, "cunning past men's thought", reproachful, amorous, mundane, sublime and after her own fashion falsely true to Antony. Equally charming when she slaps the messenger for bringing bad news, when she taunts Antony or when she wheedles the information about Octavia that she would like to hear. She is a flirt to the very end — she even flirts with death, seen as "a lover's pinch, Which hurts and is desired". In Cleopatra the sensual and immortal become one, for Death is an apotheosis, an exalted sphere whence the lovers can look down and mock the luck of Caesar. Her immortal longings make Cleopatra transcend the world of puny mortals. She may be an "incorrigible exhibitionist", as a critic put it, but the dignity and sublimity of her leave-taking frustrate the indignity that Caesar had planned for her:

Give me my robe, put on my crown — I have
 Immortal longings in me. Now no more
 The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.
 Methinks I hear
 Antony call; I see him rouse himself
 To praise my noble act. I hear him mock
 The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men
 To excuse their after wrath . . .

(V.ii. 277–84)

And what a superb touch on Shakespeare's part to make her want to rush to the curled Antony, who will make demand of her servant Iras if she should reach him first. She is the divine Cleopatra to the very end, even when she performs a truly Roman deed by taking her life.

There is a point I wish to make about Shakespeare's attitude or dramatic stance in this play. In his brilliant study of Western drama entitled *The Birth of Tragedy*, the philosopher Nietzsche focused on the question of moral consciousness in relation to tragedy, especially the tension which Nietzsche thought existed between the equilibrium of moral order which underlies the tragedy and the blind dynamic urge to destroy that order and create afresh. The term Apollonian stands for the "rapt repose" in the presence of a visionary world — the world of desired structure and order. On the other hand, counteracting this force is a power equal and opposite which is inherent in the finer Greek tragedies, an element which Nietzsche calls the Dionysian strain — the artist shrugs off moral strictures and abandons himself to voluptuous creativity, thereby undermining this notion of order and

clarity by constructing and destroying. In Shakespearean tragedy the audience is given its moral bearings by the end of the first Act. In *Othello* and *Macbeth* the distinction between moral good and evil is clear-cut. Iago's manipulation of Othello is vile and Macbeth's murder of Duncan is a damnable act. But in *Antony and Cleopatra* the dramatist obviously does not mean the audience to share Philo's moral strictures on Antony, roundly expressed at the beginning of the play, that he has in effect been transformed into a "strumpet's fool". The Dionysian forces in the play seem to outweigh the Apollonian elements of clarity and moderation. There is a substratum of repressed anarchical forces which erupt in the form of fine poetry enhancing the carefree and amoral world of the lovers and indirectly accentuating the moral stuffiness of all things Roman. Perhaps as a dramatist Shakespeare may well have felt this tension within himself – and in this play he resists the tendency to allow moral attitudes to strait-jacket, as it were, the drift of the play. Shakespeare, I would suggest, was far too great a dramatist to allow an inhibiting moral structure to curb the autonomy of his artistic creativeness. In this sense, *Antony and Cleopatra* could be regarded as the most Dionysian of Shakespeare's plays.

IL-MALTI

Kopji tas-snin mgħoddija għall-bejgħ

Prezz: Numru wiehed – 25c
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| 1939: Marzu, Settembru | 1965: Marzu; Gunju; Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) |
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| 1945: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1967: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru |
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| 1947: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1969: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru |
| 1948: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1970: Marzu; Gunju; Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) |
| 1949: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1971: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru |
| 1950: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1972: Marzu Gunju (Numru Speċjali N. Cremona) Settembru; Diċembru |
| 1951: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1973: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru |
| 1952: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1974: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru |
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| 1954: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1976: Marzu; Gunju; |
| 1955: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1977: Marzu; Gunju; Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) |
| 1956: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | 1978: Marzu; Gunju; Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) (Numru wiehed biss) |
| 1957: Marzu; Gunju; Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) | 1979: Marzu; Gunju; flimkien; Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) |
| 1958: Marzu; Gunju; Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) | 1980: Jannar; Diċembru (Numru wiehed biss) |
| 1959: Marzu; Gunju; Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) | 1981: Jannar; Diċembru (Numru Speċjali G. Galea) |
| 1960: Marzu; Gunju; Sett. (flimkien); Diċ. | 1984: Jannar; Gunju (Numru Speċjali Zieda mat Tagħrif) |
| 1961: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | |
| 1962: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | |
| 1963: Marzu; Gunju (Numru Speċjali R. Briffa); Sett. Diċ. (flimkien) | |
| 1964: Marzu; Gunju; Settembru; Diċembru | |

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