

# THE DUQUE DE RIVAS, JOHN HOOKHAM FRÈRE AND THE TRIBUTE TO MALTA IN *EL MORO EXPOSITO*\*

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The sojourn in Malta of Angel de Saavedra, later to become Duque de Rivas, in the years 1825 to 1830 is of considerable interest to literary historians and connoisseurs of Melitensia. It was indeed in Malta that Rivas composed his poem *El Faro de Malta*, a lyric poem which is claimed to be one of the finest poems he ever wrote for its depth of feeling and intensity of utterance. One aspect, however, of Rivas's stay in Malta has been strangely neglected. I refer to the interesting relationship between Saavedra and the scholar and diplomatist John Hookham Frere, who was to become Saavedra's friend and literary adviser.<sup>(1)</sup> Most of the details of this phase of Saavedra's life are recorded in three main sources: the *Memorias* of his close friend and companion in misfortune (*compañero en desventura*) Antonio Alcalá Galiano;<sup>(2)</sup> the life of Saavedra as it appears in the preface to the *Obras*, by Nicomedes Pastor Díaz who claimed to have received first-hand information from Saavedra's daughter, the Marquesa de Heredia;<sup>(3)</sup> and the critical study by the French Hispanist, Gabriel Boussagol who corrected and modified some of the assertions made by Díaz.<sup>(4)</sup> In this study I shall focus on the circumstances which compelled Saavedra to seek refuge in Malta as well as the outcome of his literary friendship with John Hookham Frere the composition of *El Moro Exposito*, the verse romance which brought him fame in 1834.

## Saavedra : The Exile

Saavedra, a liberal by conviction, was compelled to live in exile during the last decade of the repressive regime of Ferdinand VII of Spain. When Ferdinand was restored to the monarchy by the joint intervention of Russia, Prussia, Austria and France in 1823 all prominent liberals were hunted down and either put to death or cast into prison. Ferdinand's tyrannical rule suppressed all *exaltados* or progressives, and Saavedra, hounded by fanatical supporters of the King, styling themselves 'The Society of the Exterminating Angel', was compelled to flee for his life. By edict of 11 June 1824, pronounced by the Audiencia de Sevilla, he was sentenced to death.

\*From a Public Lecture delivered at the Library, University Building, Valletta, on 18 November 1987 under the auspices of the University of Malta.

1. Angel de Saavedra (Cordoba 1791 - Madrid 1865) second son of the Duque de Rivas succeeded to the title after the death of his elder brother Juan Remigo in May 1834. He was made Caballero de la Orden de Malta at the age of six.
2. *Memorias de D.A. Alcalá Galiano* publicado por su hijo. 2 vols. Madrid 1886.
3. *Obras Completas del Duque de Rivas*, Madrid, 1894.
4. Gabriel Boussagol, *Angel de Saavedra: sa vie, son oeuvre poetique*, Toulouse, 1926.

From Cadiz, Saavedra fled to Gibraltar and then to London where Spanish emigres were welcomed. As he himself wrote 'I fled, a fugitive and proscribed from that country for whose independence I shed my blood, for whose liberty I have forfeited my life'.<sup>(5)</sup> For a period of seven months Saavedra lived in London in financial straits until January 1825. His health was impaired by the rigorous English climate and he proposed to travel South.

He returned to Gibraltar where he married Dona Encarnación de Cueto y Ortega, the sister of the Marques de Valmar. In June 1825 he made arrangements to take his wife on a visit to the Papal States. In June he set sail for Rome. The Authorities of Rome, however, refused to ratify his passport documents and, on applying to the Papal Secretariat, he was advised by Cardinal Somaglia not to linger in Rome, adding that Saavedra would put himself at risk (*grave dispiacenze*) if he set foot in the Papal States. Seeking to evade capture by the Tuscan guards, Saavedra made use of letters of recommendation given to him by his high-ranking friends in Gibraltar and enlisted the help of a Mr Falconer, the British Consul in Rome, who urged him to seek refuge in Malta, where he would come under the protection of the British flag. In the last week of August 1825 Saavedra and his wife boarded the schooner *Assunta* (156 tons) which was skippered by the Maltese Salvatore Cammilleri and which sailed out of Livorno bound for Malta.

### El Faro de Malta

Most of the details of the fateful voyage to Malta are given by Pastor Diaz.<sup>(6)</sup> On board the *Assunta*, apart from Saavedra and his wife were two Italians, Leonardo Venturi from Florence, a merchant, and Aniello Morano from Tuscany, a sailor, as well as the crew consisting of six Maltese *viejos*. According to Rivas's own account, the schooner was ill-equipped and the crew recalcitrant and indisciplined. In fact, Rivas observed that it was difficult to tell the skipper from the rest of the crew. On the fifth day of the voyage, a storm broke loose as they approached the Sicilian coast and the day was suddenly covered in darkness. The schooner narrowly missed a reef and the heavy breakers swept away part of the ship's kitchen, including the hen-coops. The upper-works of the schooner were also wrenched off. When the storm increased in fury, the crew, paralysed with fear, huddled together in the prow, chanting the *Salve Regina*. Saavedra records that he could not persuade them to return to their posts except by threats and blows (*amenazas y golpes*). For hours on end he clung to the rudder in a desperate bid to help the captain steer the ship, until he fainted from sheer exhaustion. Four days later, in the early hours of the morning of Sunday, 4 September 1825, the battered *Assunta* reached the Grand Harbour.

The ordeal of the voyage was still fresh in Saavedra's memory when, two years later, he composed the lyric *El Faro de Malta*, in which he recorded his encounter

5. Discurso de Recepción leído en la Real Academia Española la tarde de 29 de Octubre de 1824.

6. *Obras completas de don Angel de Saavedra*. 1894. Vol. I, 57-8.

with death. Personal experience is here sublimated into sheer poetry as the lighthouse towering over St. Elmo is metamorphosed into a symbol of the torch of reason prevailing over the fury of the passions. The image of the lighthouse with its halo of effulgent rays, is reminiscent, to the nostalgic Saavedra, of the gilded statue of the Archangel Raphael towering above the mezquita-cathedral of his native Cordoba:

Fuiste a nuestros ojos la aureola  
orna la frente de la santa imagen  
que busca afanoso peregrino  
salud y el consuelo.

And you were in our sight an aureole  
decking the forehead of the blessed statue  
before which the fretful pilgrim seeks  
health and consolation.

### El Moro Exposito

During his stay in Malta Saavedra was befriended by John Hookham Frere who had taken up residence on the island as a consequence of his wife's ill-health. Frere earlier in 1808 had been accredited as British Minister Plenipotentiary to Ferdinand VII, who at the time was represented by the Central Junta. Frere must have sympathized with this Spanish *hidalgo* who had been forced into exile by a despotic monarch and who had found himself in financial straits. Besides, they had lived through similar experiences. Saavedra had served with the Royal Guards in the Escorial and when his regiment broke up, he joined Palafox at Zaragoza and later took part in the battle of Talavera (1809). In the autumn of the same year, Saavedra was involved in a cavalry skirmish some thirty miles south of Madrid. He was severely wounded and left behind for dead. He was eventually revived by a passing soldier who had heard his moans. In a poem which he wrote in the hospital at Baeza, Saavedra recorded the incident in verses which earned him fame at the time and which were circulated in manuscript by his friends. The opening lines in particular were quoted as a rousing instance of Spanish patriotism in defiance of the French occupation:

Con once heridas mortales  
hecha pedazos la espada  
el caballo sin aliento  
y perdida la batalla...

With eleven mortal wounds,  
my sword in pieces,  
my horse without breath,  
and the battle lost...

There is a possibility that the poem may have come to Frere's notice. Frere's own interest in Spanish literature dates back to 1807 when he applied himself to the task of translating *El Poema del Cid*. The excellence of this translation had so impressed Robert Southey that he included it in the Appendix to the *Chronicle of the Cid*.<sup>(8)</sup> Saavedra respected Frere as a scholar and man of letters who was *au fait* with English and Spanish literature and who was a personal friend of some of the leading British writers of the day -- writers of the calibre of Coleridge, Sir Walter Scott, Byron and the Hispanist Southey. Frere's influence on Saavedra was undoubtedly a profound one. He encouraged Saavedra to complete the poem (verse-romance) *Florinda* which

7. G. Calabritto, 'Il Duca di Rivas', *Malta Letteraria*, (Nov. 1931) p.321. J.J. Sammut 'El Faro de Malta by the Duque de Rivas and his exile in Malta', *Bulletin of the Culture Institute* (June-July 1955), p.11.

8. B. Frere, *The Works of the Rt. Hon. John Hookham Frere*, (London, 1874), Vol. I, p.175.

was begun on board the British brigantine *Aeschylus* in January 1825 en route to Gibraltar and which somehow survived the stormy passage to Malta. Frere's insistence on the necessity of the contemporary poet to tap the historical resources of his country was decisive. He reassured Saavedra that the old Spanish *leyendas* and *romances* could be revitalized and given a contemporary flavour as Scott, Byron and Southey had done in their verse tales of chivalry. Frere in fact gave the Spanish poet editions of Scott and Byron including a copy of Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Under the tutelage of the learned Frere, Saavedra conceived the idea of composing a romance in verse on one of the oldest themes in Spanish literature -- the exotic legend of the seven sons of Lara and the revenge of Mudarra, the *Moro Exposito* or 'foundling Moor'. It is set in Burgos in the tenth century and is concerned with the feud between Rodrigo (Rui) Velazquez and Gonzalo Gustios de Lara whose seven sons are brutally slain in an ambush carefully prepared by Dona Lambra, wife of Rui Velazquez. The avenger Mudarra is none other than Gonzalo Gustios de Lara's son by Almanzor's sister. Rivas studied his sources diligently and modernized the character of his hero Mudarra, who in the old tales was a 'semi-barbaric, skull-splitting youth, all muscle and passions'.<sup>(9)</sup> The poem itself, which is elaborately contrived, extends to some 15,000 lines. The final Cantos were in fact completed in Tours after Saavedra's departure from Malta. *El Moro Exposito* was eventually published in Paris in 1834 bearing the full title *El Moro Exposito, o Cordoba y Burgos en el Siglo decimo, leyenda en dos romances...* Rivas claimed to have re-created a chapter of Castilian legendary lore and Alcala Galiano, in the preface, stated that the poet 'has pointed out a path untrodden until now by his compatriots'. Rivas, mindful of his debt to Frere, attached a dedication to his friend in the form of a letter in which he publicly acknowledged the guidance and assistance he had received from Frere. This letter, written in Saavedra's brand of English, shows the extent of the poet's gratitude and deserves to be quoted:

Your friendship has cheered me in the gloomiest (sic) days of my exile. Your extensive knowledge and excellent literary taste has made that friendship no less useful than it was pleasing to me. Your love of my own dear country has been combined, in my case, with the feeling of concern in my misfortunes and interest for my improvement, which I am proud of having excited in you, and the effects of which I have felt and do still feel. I fear, I repeat, that I have not profited by your benefits as I ought -- certainly not to the full extent of my wishes. Yet, whatever improvement there is in my poetical taste, it is owing to you, and will, I am sure, meet with your approbation and encouragement. At the same time, however, that I claim and rely on your benignity I invoke your justice. By passing sentence upon my faults, you will contribute to my future amendment. To judge of my labours, no one is better qualified than you are; with your well known classical erudition and acquaintance with the principles and beauties of general poetry, you combine a very remarkable and intimate knowledge of the language and literature of Spain -- such, indeed, as few Spaniards can boast. And as it usually happens, you are not only deeply skilled in, but likewise partially fond of our Castilian legendary lore. From all the circumstances, you are no less the natural judge than patron of my *Castilian foundling*.

9. E. Allison Peers, *A History of the Romantic Movement in Spain* (London, 1964), Vol.I, p.166.



Angel de Saavedra, Duque de Rivas, who spent part of his exile in Malta between 1825 and 1830. His *El Moro Exposito* was dedicated to Frère.



John Hookham Frère who was respected by Saavedra for his 'extensive knowledge and excellent literary taste'.

Saavedra generously acknowledges the fact that, had it not been for Frere's encouragement and persistence, his 'conversion' from lyric to narrative Romantic poet might never have taken place. Frere's impressive knowledge of Spanish literature had been the decisive factor. Frere, in Saavedra's view, was a worthy godfather (*padrino*) to his *Moro Exposito*. It is important, however, to realize that Frere's influence was beneficial in that it encouraged a tendency within the Spanish poet which was already evident in *Florinda*, for Saavedra was predisposed to Romanticism even before he set foot in Malta. The narrative *Florinda* was an attempt to steer away from the 'intolerably frigid pastorals and bombastic odes'.<sup>(10)</sup> Frere was quick to realize that Saavedra displayed a flair for narrative and leisurely romantic evocations of past history and legend. He obviously had the gift of recreating the past by giving it a contemporary flavour. Frere, accordingly, supplied Saavedra with English models to imitate -- poets of the calibre of Scott, Southey and Byron whose romantic evocations of the past had earned them considerable popularity. In the thread of the narrative proper and in most of the details of his 'foundling Moor', Saavedra followed his Spanish sources, carefully studying the different versions of the *leyendas* of the Seven Sons of Lara. The theme itself was especially congenial to him in that it afforded him the opportunity to describe the atmosphere of his native Cordoba and to indulge his artistic flair for effects of colour and shade. The subject also provided an excellent opportunity for the outpouring of nostalgic sentiment in connection with the theme of exile. Professor Allison Peers has drawn the attention of scholars to the fact that in the account of the wedding jousts in the later Cantos of the *Moro Exposito*, Saavedra drew heavily on Scott's *Ivanhoe*, for the two accounts are constructed on 'practically identical lines',<sup>(11)</sup> even after we make allowances for the conventions of the historical romance. There are similarities in the treatment of the 'villain' which go beyond mere convention. Saavedra modelled his Rui-Velazquez on Scott's Bois-Guilbert especially in his account of the former's behaviour in the tournament scene. Saavedra's Kerima has striking similarities with Scott's Rebecca in that they are both non-Christians in a Christian environment, and they both come to the aid of the hero with their supernatural healing powers. Both in the end are compelled to renounce the man they love. Professor Peers also observes that there is a marked change in the way Saavedra handles the setting in this poem. In Peers's words Saavedra's sunsets 'are no longer creations of a few curt words, but realities distinct and individual, sometimes less varied and brilliant, sometimes more, but never the same'. There is much truth in this. Saavedra throughout the *Moro Exposito* indulges in word painting and obviously experiments with visual effects. What Professor Peers in his otherwise excellent study may not have realized is that during the actual composition of the opening Cantos of the poem Saavedra had seriously devoted himself to painting and that he was at the time taking lessons from the artist Hyzler.

I now wish to focus on a particular aspect of *El Moro Exposito* which seems to me to be of central importance even though the passage in question forms part of

10 Id., *Rivas and Romanticism in Spain*, (Liverpool, 1923), p.40.

11 Ibid., p.95.

a digression in the poem. I refer to Saavedra's account of the trials and tribulations of Nuno, the former tutor of the *Infantes* whose misfortune eventually brings him to the island of Malta. This episode occurs in the Sixth Canto where Nuno is taken prisoner by the Saracens, and it affords Saavedra a convenient pretext to pay tribute to the island and all those who rallied round him in his hour of need. The sheer bulk of the poem may well be the reason why this important tribute has passed unnoticed by scholars. And yet it is here that Saavedra actually interrupts the narrative to dilate on his own experiences on the island. I shall now give the text with my free translation alongside:

Arrebatado yo también, oh Malta!,  
por las borrascas de la suerte impía,  
harto, aunque joven, de encontrar a Europa  
poblada de traiciones y perfidias,

huyendo de mi patria y de la tierra,  
tumba de gloria y de grandeza antigua,  
que el Arno, como un huérfano el sepulcro  
de sus padres, con flores entapiza;

sin más bien que mi amor, en rota nave,  
del viento y mar luchando con las iras,  
a ti llegué, y en tus doradas rocas  
vi de mi juventud volar los días (I).

Mas no hallé, como Nuno, en ti cadenas  
ni sarracenos bárbaros: delicias,  
obsequios, compasión, tiernos amigos,  
alivio grato de las penas mías,

venturoso, encontré. Tu ardiente suelo,  
ya florido jardín por las fatigas  
del diestro agricultor, tus altas torres,  
que períodos de gloria testifican,

y tus buenos y honrados habitantes  
bajo el dominio hallé de la más rica,  
libre, ilustrada, noble y poderosa  
nación, que el sol desde el Zodiaco admira.

Allí me recibiste tú, y me honraste,  
oh venerable anciano, que las Indias  
venturosas hiciste, Hastings ilustre!...  
Mas, ay!, que de dolor pronto la isla

vi cubierta y de luto. Airada muerte  
a su amor te robó..., tremendo día!  
Con el pueblo lloroso, hasta la tumba  
yo acompañé, lloroso, tus cenizas.

Woodford, Frère, Ponsonby, Zammit, Stilon,

I too, O Malta, was snatched  
by the storms of inclement fortune  
weary, though a youth, to find Europe  
teeming with treason and treachery,

fleeing my country, and the land  
that tomb of glory and ancient grandeur  
which the Arno, like an orphan,  
spreads over the sepulchre of its parents.

With nothing else save my love, in a rotten ship,  
fighting against the anger of wind and sea,  
I reached you, and on your golden rocks  
I saw my youthful days fly past.

In you I did not find chains, like Nuno,  
not barbaric saracens; instead, delights  
courtesy, compassion, dear friends  
and grateful relief from my sorrows

fortunately I found. Your burning earth,  
now a flourishing garden, through the toil  
of the able farmer, your high towers  
a witness to the eras of glory.

Your great and honourable ancestors  
under the rule of the richest  
free, illustrious, noble and mighty  
nation, bathed by the sun in the Zodiac.

There you received me and I was honoured,  
O venerable old man who made the Indians  
fortunate  
illustrious Hastings! but sorrow quickly  
engulfs the isle in mourning.

Cruel death robbed them of love...  
terrible day, a people in tears,  
I accompanied your ashes  
to the tomb, weeping.

Woodford, Frère, Ponsonby, Zammit, Stilon,

y tú que a Sancio tan de cerca imitas,  
 Hyzler, vuestra amistad, dulce consuelo  
 de todos mis afanes, está viva

and you who imitate Sanzio so closely  
 Hyzler, your friendship, sweet consolation  
 of all my anguish, still alive

en mi alma toda, y lo estará por siempre.  
 Si de llegar a vos logra la dicha  
 esta historia, empezada entre vosotros,  
 continuada del Sena en las orillas,

in my soul, and will be so for ever.  
 If this happy story reaches you  
 begun as it was among you  
 and continue on the banks of the Seine,

y que do tendrá fin el Cielo sabe (I),  
 aquestos versos de mostráros sirvan  
 que el bálsamo que disteis a mis penas  
 eterno vive en la memoria mía.

but Heaven knows where it will end,  
 these verses will serve to show  
 that the balm you spread on my sorrow  
 lives for ever in memory.

Y tú, risueña y deliciosa roca,  
 asilo encantador, mansión tranquila,  
 tú eres la patria de mis tiernos hijos,  
 y podrás serlo para mí adoptiva.

And you pleasant, delightful rock  
 enchanting asylum, peaceful mansion,  
 you the fatherland of my dear children,  
 and could be my adopted country.

Ay! Si el Destino inexorable y duro  
 (tanto rigor el Cielo no permita)  
 me robase del todo la esperanza  
 de hollar del Betis la region florida

Alas! if the inexorable and harsh destiny  
 (but the heavens will not allow such severity)  
 does not afford me the hope  
 of finding the florid region of Betis

y de aún gozar en sus frondosos bosques  
 gallarda sierra y fértiles campiñas,  
 dulce vejez, al punto, al punto  
 en ti, oh Malta!, el sepulcro buscaría

where I still might enjoy the leafy woods,  
 the noble mountains and fertile fields,  
 in my sweet old age, I shall in time  
 make you my sepulchre, O Malta.

The digression falls naturally into three parts -- the first restates the theme of exile, the second is concerned with expressing gratitude to all his friends who rallied round him, and the third part states the poet's desire to be buried in Malta in the event of his not being able to return to his country. It would be feasible at this stage to add an explanatory note about each of the persons mentioned by name.

### *Hyzler*

The Hyzler mentioned with obvious affection must have been Giuseppe, not Vincenzo.<sup>(12)</sup> When Rivas arrived in Malta in 1825, Giuseppe was thirty-eight and Vincenzo a boy of twelve. Giuseppe Hyzler who was born in Malta on 5 October 1787 (Porto Salvo Valletta), had already established himself as one of the leading Maltese artists. He had returned from his studies in Rome in August 1822. Rivas's eulogy of Hyzler in which he compares him to Raphael (especially in his close imitation of the great Italian Master) confirms the notion that Giuseppe belonged to the Nazarener school headed by Frederich Overbeck and characterized by ascetic idealism.<sup>(13)</sup>

12. Paul Cassar, 'Hookham Frère in Malta', *Melita Historica*, vol. IX, no. 1, p.58 mentions Vincenzo Hyzler as Saavedra's art tutor.

13. I am indebted to Mr Dominic Cutajar, Curator of St John's Museum, who kindly confirmed this and who supplied me with a draft copy of an unpublished article on Giuseppe Hyzler.



**Hastings**

General Francis Rawdon, Marquis of Hastings G.C., G.C.B. accepted the post of Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Malta, on 22 March 1824. He had previously been Governor-General in India (1818-1819) where he had introduced educational and fiscal reforms. He distinguished himself as a skilful soldier and able administrator. Hastings died in board HMS *Revenge* which was anchored in Baia Bay, off Naples, on 28 November 1826. His remains were brought over to Malta and buried in St John Bastion, now Hastings Garden. Saavedra was present at the funeral ceremony.

**Woodford**

Sir Alexander George Woodford, Lieutenant Governor at Malta from 1825 to 1827. He took part in the Peninsular campaign and was present at the Siege of Cadiz (1811), at Ciudad Rodrigo (1812), at Salamanca (1812) and commanded the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards at the battle of Vittoria (June 1813) and the siege of San Sebastian (August 1813). It is not difficult to see why Woodford must have gone out of his way to help the Spanish nobleman who had fought on the same side.

**Ponsonby**

Sir Frederick Cavendish Ponsonby, second son of the Earl of Bessborough was Lieutenant Governor of Malta from December 1826 to May 1835. Like Woodford he distinguished himself in the Peninsular War especially at the battle of Talavera. He obtained command of the 12th light Dragoons and led his regiment in many of the campaigns. He was actively engaged at the battle of Salamanca (July 1812) and Vittoria (1813) at the siege of Burgos. He was severely wounded later in a light cavalry brigade charge at Waterloo where he fell from his horse and bled all night on the field. When Rivas eventually left Malta in March 1830, Ponsonby had placed his yacht *Lady Emily* at his disposal and it was on this yacht that Saavedra and his family actually sailed for Marseilles.

**Zammit**

The actual identity of this person is difficult to establish. The probability is that he was Abate Giuseppe Zammit (1802-90) who was later given the sobriquet 'Brighella' after the title of the Journal that he founded. He had achieved some fame as a Latin epigrammatist and he was well known for his classical scholarship. He knew John Hookham Frère personally and when Sir Walter Scott visited Malta between November and December 1831, he composed two Latin odes in his honour. One of them was in fact dedicated to Frère. Another epigram with Frère as its subject reads as follows:

Cur rerum ignari ad officia evehuntur,  
et docti Frere semper ab omni munere vacant?<sup>(14)</sup>

14. 'Why are unworthy men given office, when the learned Frère is given none' -- this is a free rendering. G. Zammit, *Carmina et Inscriptiones*, (Malta, 1864), p.12.

Zammit was in his late twenties when Saavedra was on the island and seems plausible that he may have met the Spanish poet through Frère.

Another possibility concerning the identity of Zammit is that he was a certain Jorge Zammit Romero who was His Majesty's Vice Consul at the time and who later in 1861 published a treatise on Malta during the times of the Phoenicians entitled *Ricerche Storiche-Critiche sul dominio dei Fenici ed Egiziani in Malta*.

### Stilon

Dr Giuseppe Maria Stilon (1785-1848) became Frère's physician and friend. Of Italian origin he studied medicine at Naples. According to Dr Paul Cassar, Stilon practised medicine in Calabria at the time when southern Italy was overrun by the French.<sup>(15)</sup> He was pressed into French service but captured by the British at the battle of Maida. He later reached England where he eventually gained his freedom and joined the British naval service. He was later appointed Surgeon to the Dockyard and Naval Hospital (Bichi) at Malta. He also obtained a doctorate in Medicine from the University of Malta. When he retired from the Navy he entered private practice. It is most likely that Dr Stilon met Saavedra through Frère and it is probable that he gave Saavedra medical advice and assistance, and he may well have been the family doctor. Incidentally Saavedra's children Octavia, Enrique and Malvina were born in Malta. Dr Stilon also published a booklet entitled *Sul colera morbo* (Malta 1839), which deals with the cholera epidemic of 1837.

The poem *A Los Excelentísimos Señores marqueses de Santa Cruz* is also of considerable importance in that it contains a direct reference to Malta. It was written by Saavedra in Malta, in July 1829, on the occasion of the wedding of the marquis's third daughter Fernanda de Silva y Giron. These verses were sent by Saavedra to the Santa Cruz family as a kind of recompense for his unavoidable absence - the voice of an exile cannot be heard during the nuptial celebrations. Instead, these verses, the poet argues, will resound with their noble sentiments and good wishes. The last three stanzas are of especial interest. In an elaborate conceit the poet says that he is aware of a distant rumbling which becomes gradually distinct. He surmises that this may be the British soldiers or the Russian sailors as they prepare to leave the Grand Harbour and sail to the rescue of Greece threatened by the voracious Turk. This is a direct allusion to the battle of Navarino which took place two years previously in 1827, when Saavedra must have observed the fleet as it left Malta under the command of Admiral Hayden. But the poet is mistaken. This resounding echo, the poet realizes, emanates from Valletta as the old knights of Castille and Aragon bestir themselves in their sepulchres in honour of this auspicious occasion, as they did in former days of glory when, they followed La Valette and quelled the fury of the threatening Turk ('al Turco furibondo'). I shall now quote the operative lines:

15. Paul Cassar, 'Hookham Frère in Malta', p.63. I am indebted to Dr Cassar's note on Stilon. Dr. Agius Vadalà, in his *Giuseppe Maria Stilon: A Profile* (1984), states that Stilon rented a house at No.32 Strada San Giovanni, Valletta, where he set up a pharmacy and where he welcomed Italian refugees.

De los sepulcros nace, que entre tanto  
sepulcro de famosos campeones  
de todas las católicas naciones,  
héroes hispanos guardan en su seno;  
y en cuyas letras, que la edad no empaña,  
nombres de horror al torvo sarraceno  
nombres de gloria a la guerrera España  
se ven, Silvas, y Caros, y Bazanes,  
y Borjas, y Girones,  
Pimenteles, Quiñones,  
y Osorios, y Pachecos, y Guzmanes.  
De éstos, de éstos las sombras conmovidas  
al eco de mi voz se alzan gloriosas,  
de Fernanda las dichas celebrando;  
y ledas presagiando  
héroes que con sus hechos rivalicen  
y los insignes nombres eternicen.

From the sepulchres, among the many  
famous champions, there rise forth  
from all the Catholic nations  
the Spanish heroes lying there.  
In letters untarnished by age  
names of awe to the fierce Saracen  
names of glory to warlike Spain  
are seen... Silvas, Caros and Bazanes  
Borias and Girones  
Pimenteles and Quinones  
Osorios, Pachecos and Guzmanes.  
The shades of these, moved by my voice  
arise gloriously  
to celebrate the happiness of Fernanda  
in expectation of joy  
heroes who compete in deeds of valour  
and immortalize their illustrious names.

Significantly, Saavedra in this part of the poem actually wrote 'nombres de gloria... se ven (names of glory... are seen) which would suggest that the poet was actually gazing at the names of these illustrious Spaniards he mentions. These verses, I would suggest, may have been inspired by a visit Saavedra must have made to the Conventual Church of St John in Valletta. It is interesting to note that a memorial marble tablet in the pavement of the chapel of St James in the Langue of Castille and Portugal commemorates the death of the poet's ancestor Fra Don Francisco de Saavedra who died in 1622.

During his stay in Malta Saavedra wrote the tragedy *Arias Gonzalo* and the comedy *Tanto Vales cuanto tienes*. He also composed the lyric *A Mi Esposa* which he affectionately dedicated to his wife Encarnacion, and in which he romantically expressed her virtues:

Flores, azucares, oro  
Te presento como emblemas  
De calidades supremas  
Qye en ti, amada sposa, adoro...

Flowers, sweets, gold,  
I offer you as emblems  
of the excellent qualities,  
dear wife, which I adore in you...

Taking advantage of an offer of 'safe asylum' in France proclaimed by the liberal Martignac, Saavedra and his family set sail for Marseilles on 24 March 1830 on board Ponsonby's yacht, *Lady Emily*.<sup>(16)</sup> He found lodgings in Orleans and later in Paris where he finished the poem *El Moro Exposito* and where he devoted himself to painting. He eventually returned to Spain, to his beloved Cordoba and became Head of Government in 1854. When he died in Madrid in 1865, Rivas was acclaimed as the leading exponent of Spanish Romanticism.

16. *The Malta Government Gazette* (17 March 1830).

**Appendix****The Lighthouse of Malta (a free translation)**

A sad night enshrouds the vast world  
a raging hurricane, troubled clouds  
and an impalpable darkness confuse  
heaven, sea and earth:

and you arise invisible, displaying  
on your brow a crown of fire,  
like the king of chaos, reflecting and shining  
with the light of peace and life.

In vain the hoarse sea raises its mountains  
to crash at your feet, as it bellows  
swelling with white foam, conceals and effaces  
the shelter of the harbour.

You with a voice of fire, "here it is", you say  
with voiceless speech to the timid pilot,  
who adores you like some benevolent god  
fixing his eyes upon you.

The peaceful night displays its rich mantle  
which amorous zephyr unfolds  
embroidered with stars and eyes  
through which the moon revolves

and then you, attired in nebulous vapour,  
reveals the vague contours  
your colossal body and your diadem  
glimmering on a par with the stars.

The sea sleeps peacefully, deceitfully concealing  
treacherous rocks and arid reefs  
false lures they are, these distant lights  
deceiving the ships.

But you with your splendour erasing all,  
you whose motionless stance signifies  
a monarch's throne, a guide  
that warns them of ambush,

Likewise the torch of reason  
in the midst of the fury of passion  
or the treacherous flattery of fortune  
before the eyes of the soul.

Since the merciful heavens granted me refuge  
in the barren land where you preside

in which I found lodgings,  
out of the clutches of wrathful fate.

I never, never look for sorrows  
sweet oblivion of dreams in embrace  
without greeting you, fixing my gaze  
on your splendid brow.

How many, from the bosom of the sea  
will, like me, return... After long absence  
some will return to their beloved land,  
children and wife.

Others refugees, persecuted and poor  
who seek asylum in any distant land  
and to those who find it your light  
is a hospitable star.

Its gleam serves as the North to vessels  
coming from my land, although evening after evening,  
they bring fresh bitterness and lines  
written with tears

When the first time you lighted  
my afflicted eyes, what blissful palpitation was it  
to my breast, drowned as it was  
in utter bitterness.

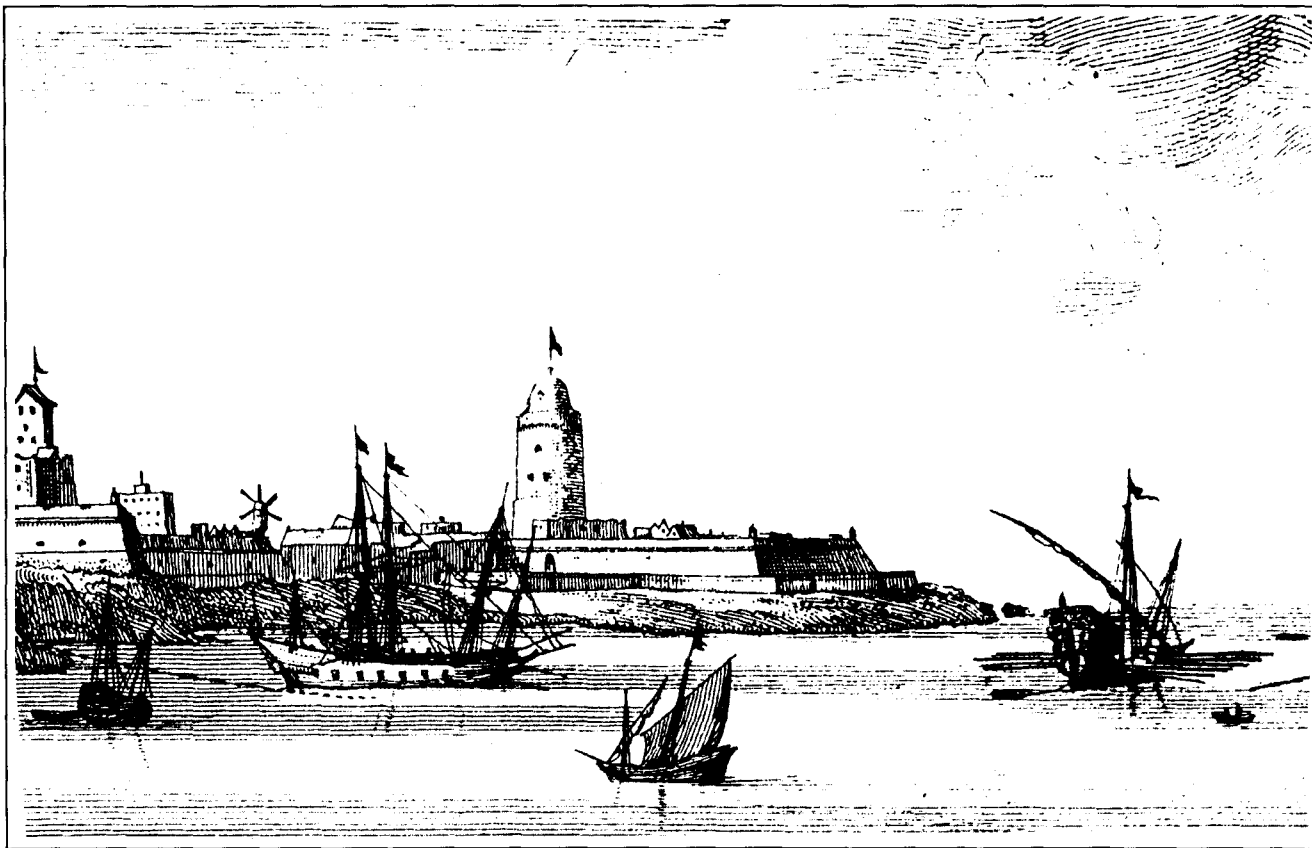
From the inhospitable shores of dying Latium  
confronted by wind and sea  
amid the hostile sandbanks  
I glimpsed your light divine.

And the sailors saw it too  
and forgetting their vows and supplications  
which faded into the deaf darkness  
"Malta, Malta," all exclaimed.

And you were in our sight an aureole  
Which decked the forehead of the blessed statue,  
before which the fretful pilgrim seeks  
health and consolation.

Never will I forget you, never. Nor will  
your splendour fade, king of the night,  
I cannot forget your exalted peak  
And your benevolent flame.

That flame, those flashes of light  
hurled by the gilded Archangel as they reflect  
the sun, who crowns  
the tower of Cordoba.



The Lighthouse of Malta: to Saavedra it became a symbol of reason 'in the midst of the fury of passion'. (From an engraving after a drawing by Jan Peters).