Journal of the Faculty of Arts

THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

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JOURNAL OF THE FACULTY OF ARTS

Royal University of Malta

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NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW PLANNING

THE University of Malta is a small University from the point of view of size, staff and student population. But the smallness is more physical than moral. The advantage is continued personal contact with our students and no student unrest. A University that has recently celebrated its bicentenary can take its pride of place among larger and wealthier, so far anyhow but much younger, Universities such as are those in the U.S.A. and in the British Commonwealth with the exception of the older U.K. Universities.

Our University has also an older tradition than several of the newly built U.K. Redbrick Universities which have yet to create their own tradition for the future out of the debris of our fussy technological era. We are not writing this in a boasting mood or to distract attention from our physical smallness; we simply want to stress the importance of the role that our University with its long tradition and well-established association with European Universities, can play in the development of Mediterranean civilization not in isolation, but in collaboration with the Universities of other Mediterranean countries with which we share the heritage of common civilization based on Roman Law and Christianity. In a previous leader we wrote about the role of the University of Malta as a social and cultural bridge between Europe and Africa. No other institution could satisfy the role of Euro-African studies better than Malta.

Our University will not only keep, but possibly also strengthen, our connection with the British academic world whose traditions have influenced our University set-up and orientation in many ways.

There is a paradox in Anglo-Maltese University traditions. While the new University at *Tal-Qroqq* is what one might describe as the gift of the British tax-payer to the people of Malta G.C., academic contacts and collaboration of a personal nature at the higher levels, are by far much less significant than one could have expected them to be after 150 years

of British rule. One important instance of collaboration between our University and a British University is the Dialectal Survey which is being conducted in Malta jointly by the Head of the Department of Maltese and Oriental Languages, who is also the editor of this review, and Dr. J.B. Isserlin, who is the Head of the Department of Semitic Languages and Literature of the University at Leeds.

We have now started looking towards Europe and especially the Mediterranean countries more closely. Last year saw the beginning of academic collaboration between the University of Malta and that of Palermo. As a result of this new experiment, professors from the University of Palermo lectured in the Departments of Maltese, History and Classics and the Heads of these Departments gave public lectures in the University of Palermo. That was the beginning, and a very good one too. But is it going to be another flash in the pan? We hope not. Indeed, we wish to see the net cast even wider, not only in Sicily but also in Italy and other Mediterranean countries, France, for instance. This is not the wild dream of an unrealistic academic; it is a very real opportunity which should engage the attention of our University authorities.

We can go much farther together, staff and administration, if we shall all start thinking 'bigger' and agree more readily to obvious reforms and improvements in conditions of work without recourse to those subtle delay tactics which hold up progress, undermine mutual confidence and waste everybody's time, than we have done so in the past. With our surplus energy so needed for the extra work continually sapped and exhausted by tedious and repetitive, too long Committee meetings, there is often very little more time and energy left for large-scale planning.

Time is always an important factor for planning and building. Success or failure is a matter of taking seriously to heart the warning of the Lating saying that *Praetor non curat de minimis.* A mind too long garruously engaged in trifles becomes inevitably trivial. Let us think 'bigger' and move forward together to wider social and academic horizons. Let's get our pants off the sticky chairs of the fussy Committee rooms!

THE EDITOR

AN ARAB HUMORIST
AL-JĀHIZ AND 'THE BOOK OF MISERS'

By DAVID R. MARSHALL

BEFORE the advent of Islam and the subsequent collection into one volume of those formal utterances which Muhammad accepted as being divinely inspired, the Koran, there was no prose literature in Arabic. Poetry, however, – and poetry of a high standard – had made its appearance by the 5th century of our era, and, apart from a temporary setback during the early days of Islam when poets came into a certain disrepute since they were regarded as being inspired by jinn, it was to progress steadily, finding new themes and new styles.

Although for some time the Koran remained the sole example of Arabic prose literature, it was soon to be followed by other prose literature, and its influence on this latter was to be tremendous. It was due to the flexibility given to it by the Koran that 'Arabīya (High Arabic) could be quickly developed and adapted to different literary needs.

The earliest succeeding prose works were all of a factual nature, almost entirely connected with religion, in the form of commentaries on the Koran, and its ancillary disciplines of jurisprudence and the science of Tradition, the latter two leading to the study of history. Unfortunately, not a great deal of this early prose literature remains, partly because the Arabic script of that time was deficient and oral transmission was still a dominant habit, and there may also have been a certain reluctance to putting into writing anything except the Koran.

But prose was still in its infancy as a literary medium, and it was not until the 8th century that it matured. Foreign influences, especially that of Hellenism, came to play their part under the cosmopolitan empire of the Abbasids, and Arabic literature suddenly came quickly to its Golden Age. A clear, precise and fluent Arabic literary prose developed, and this was the final product of the coalescing of the activities of the different schools of scholarship – of the secretaries, philologists, lawyers and Traditionists. Their various amalgamated products laid the foundations of a discursive and argumentative prose.

During the early Abbasid period, the greater part of the large amount of literature produced had a religious significance, much of it centring on the various religious controversies of the time. That part of the literature, however, that was purely secular was faced, at the beginning of the 9th century, with a problem. How could the Arabic humanities be brought out

of their isolated position into a more positive relation with the public interests and issues of the day, and so challenge the pretensions of the secretarial school?

It was at this point that Jāhiz lived and wrote, and his writings started to resolve this problem, although its final solution was found by his later contemporaries. Born in Basra in the 770's, he died, more than 90 years old, in 869. Jāhiz deserves to be much more widely appreciated than he is. Known very little outside the Arab world and Orientalist circles, he deserves to take his place among the great writers of humanity. Rising from very humble origins, he became an avid student and reader. A man of vast learning, endowed more than usual as an acute observer among a race renowned for their intellectual curiosity and innate powers of observation, a gifted writer drawing on a seemingly boundless reservoir of erudition, he left, in addition to more than one hundred shorter works on a variety of topics, three large works, 'The Book of Animals', 'The Book of Exposition and Demonstration' and 'The Book of Misers'. It is with this last work that we are at the moment concerned.

Before we look at possible motives which may have prompted Jāhiz to write this book, and before we examine it more critically, let us first get a general impression of its nature and contents from the words of Jāhiz himself. In his introductory remarks, he shows us immediately his acute powers of perception and of analysis of character, and more than a hint of sympathy. How well he has his subjects weighed up! He explains why misers call avarice 'parsimony' and meanness 'economy', why they are against giving to charity, which they regard as synonymous with squandering, why they also consider generosity as squandering, and altruism as stupidity. Why do misers renounce praise and care little for those who blame them? Why do they despise him who is happy to be praised and rejoices at giving, while they admire him who neither seeks praise nor turns away from blame? Why do misers argue in favour of a life of abstinence over one of ease, and one of bitterness over one of sweetness? How is it that misers do not feel ashamed of shunning the good things of life in their own possessions, while they dote on them in others'? They rush into miserliness and choose what the name of being a miser involves, despite their sense of shame at the name. They love to acquire money, and yet they shun spending it. They act, although they are rich, as if they are afraid that their riches will pass away, and not as if they hope they will last. They increase their amount of fear and decrease their amount of hope, despite lasting security and perfect health, for healthy people are far more numerous than sick people, and good luck is no less rare than bad luck.

How, Jāhiz continues, can someone who is dedicated to distress claim

happiness, or how can someone who begins by deceiving people in private profess to give sincere advice in public? Misers argue despite the strength of their own reason, to defend something which the whole world unites in condemning, and they are proud of it. How can misers possibly be intelligent while making excuses for their avarice and hastening to argue in defence of it, using far-fetched views and subtle meanings, and yet not to be intelligent with regard to their obvious turpitude, the ugliness and humiliation of the title of miser, and the damage it does to those who merit it?

Then in a further series of questions which he puts, Jāhiz shows us the really acute observer – one almost feels tempted to say the psychologist – at work. Some misers merely feign ignorance and stupidity, in adopting an attitude of being simple, and arguing in defence of their avarice. In doing this, they use very tight reasoning, carefully chosen words, and they hit the nail right on the head. Surely, then, says Jāhiz, doesn't the very competence of their arguments and explanations give the lie to their feigned ignorance? How can misers avoid the truth and deny all the evidence, and yet, side by side with great stupidity, there is really a surprising intelligence?

These, then, are the topics with which the book deals, but one must by no means imagine that they are answered in any dull or uninteresting way. They are freely illustrated with anecdotes, both humorous and satirical, drawn with a masterly touch whose immediate impression on the reader is twofold. Any fear that the stories might be dull or boring is immediately dispelled by their atmosphere. It seems to this writer that, behind the stories, one can almost see Jāhiz with his tongue in his cheek, laughing wryly, and thoroughly enjoying describing his subjects and their antics. The second immediate impression the stories make is that one cannot but like these misers: one would expect to feel annoyance or infuriation with them, and yet the reader feels himself warming to them. One may feel tempted to ask, 'If Jāhiz had drawn his characters properly and faithfully, should we not be made to dislike these contemptible men violently?' But is not the purpose of the book primarily to amuse (a point referred to below), and how could it do so if it made the reader feel revulsion towards its heroes? Why should not a certain licence be allowed?

How does Jāhiz depict his subjects? Let it be stressed immediately that these misers are genuine people, not fictional figures, but the real, living people of Basra, the home town of Jāhiz, and Khurasan. He depicts them precisely and vividly, keeping a careful and pleasing balance between scorn for their faults and mocking them, the serious and the laughing and criticism and merriment. He depicts them not merely objectively, but subjectively by showing us the devious inner workings of their minds,

their views, their worries and hopes, and their deepest secrets. He gives us rounded characters with personalities at whom we must laugh, but whom we cannot dislike because, for all their faults, they do not leave any bad impression upon us. Thanks to the subjective writing of Jāhiz, these people are capable of stepping out of the pages of the book, and we would welcome meeting them!

A further question which must be asked is what motives prompted Jāhiz to pick such a theme and write 'The Book of Misers'? Tāhā al-Hājirī has argued that it was probably intended to stigmatize the avarice of non-Arabs as opposed to the generosity of the Arabs but, as often happens when Jāhiz lets his verve run away with him, the original intention is soon forgotten, and the most pertinent arguments are furnished to the opponents whom one wished to reduce to silence.

This is indeed very pertinent, but could there not also be a simpler explanation and more direct motive? Bearing in mind the fact that the purpose of the book is primarily to amuse and to give straightforward enjoyment, could not the motive be one which could surely apply to any humorist of any nation, and that is to poke fun at distinctive national characteristics, and especially to poke fun at those in whom they are lacking? Since generosity was so highly prized a virtue among the Arabs, it was almost inevitable that a humorist, such as Jāhiz, should let loose his wit and satire on its opposite, the theme of miserliness and misers.

So much, then, for an appreciation of Jāhiz and 'The Book of Misers'. Below are a number of selected stories which will illustrate the foregoing remarks. They have been translated freely and slightly adapted in places in an attempt to keep closely to the spirit of the original, and thus do more justice to it than would a too close translation.

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THE BOOK OF MISERS

You Lose Either Way

Misers can be found in any town, in any country, but it is said that the inhabitants of Merv are exceptionally greedy and mean. There was, however, one particular man in Merv who stood out above the others for his avarice. When some visitor paid a call on him, he would say to this visitor, 'Have you had lunch yet?' If the visitor replied that he had already had lunch, the miser would say, 'What a pity. If you had not, I would have given you a really superb meal'. If, on the other hand, the visitor were to reply that he had not, in fact, eaten yet, his host would say, 'It's a pity, because if you had, I could have given you some excellent wine to drink after your lunch'.

Whatever he might say, the poor visitor would get neither one thing nor the other!

The Mean Child

Ahmad Ibn Rashid was once staying with a certain sheikh in Merv. As he sat under a large tree in the garden, one of the sheikh's little children was playing in front of him. Partly in fun and partly out of curiosity, Ahmad asked the child to let him have a piece of the bread it was eating.

'You wouldn't like it', said the little boy, 'it's bitter'.

'Alright then, never mind', said Ahmad, 'let me have a drink of your water instead'.

'You wouldn't like that either', was the child's reply. 'It's salty'.

Ahmad asked him for one thing and another, but each time the child's immediate answer was, 'You wouldn't like it. It's too so-and-so', or 'It's too this-or-that'. Ahmad asked the child for all sorts of things, each of which he refused him, making it appear that Ahmad wouldn't really like it because it wasn't very nice.

In the end, Ahmad just gave up trying to get anything from the child and had to laugh.

The Blindfold

Several Khurasanians were sharing the same apartment. They did without lighting the lamp as long as they possibly could, but then, when it became too dark to see without it, they all contributed some money towards the cost of buying some oil. One of them, however, refused to pay his share of the cost and would not give anything. When the lamp was lit, therefore, the others fastened a handkerchief over his eyes to blindfold

him, and it was not until they put out the lamp to go to sleep that they would uncover his eyes.

Two's Company

Two Khurasanians were making a journey in company together. Shortly after the beginning of the journey one of them said to the other, 'Why don't we take our meals together? It is pleasing to God that people should assemble together, and He blesses them. And isn't it a well known saying that "Food for two suffices for three"?'

His companion replied acidly, 'If it weren't for the fact that I know you are a much bigger eater than I am, I would regard your words as genuine advice and a sincere suggestion. But as you eat more than I do, I have my doubts about your motives in suggesting we eat together'.

The next day the former made the same suggestion once again. Still doubting his sincerity, his reticent fellow traveller replied, ' 'Abdullah, you have a loaf, and I too have a loaf. Unless you had some evil designs you would not be so greedy as to want to share my meal. Aren't you satisfied with enjoying my company and my conversation? But supposing we took just one plate, and each of us put his own loaf in front of him. Unless I am very much mistaken, I have no doubt that when you had eaten all your own loaf and half of mine, you would indeed find it blessed, as you said earlier. The only thing is that I am the one who will receive God's blessing, and not you!'

A Simple Question

Abu 'Abdullah was the most charming man you could ever wish to meet, but at the same time, unfortunately, he could also be the most miserly and the most blatant hypocrite. One day he was introduced to a certain Tahir Ibn Al-Husain, whom he already knew in Khurasan as he was famous for his knowledge of dogmatic theology. Tahir asked Abu 'Abdullah how long he had lived in Iraq. 'I have lived here for twenty years,' he replied, 'and I have fasted for no less than forty years'.

Tahir laughed and said, 'My friend, I asked you only one question, but you have given me the answer to two!'

The Miser of Merv

A certain man from Merv frequently used to travel in other countries, either on pilgrimage or in connection with his business affairs. Whenever he was travelling in Iraq, he would stay at the house of a certain Iraqi friend. This Iraqi was extremely kind; he always made the Mervian very

welcome, showed him great hospitality, saw that he lacked nothing, and always supplied him with provisions for his journey when he left. The Mervian for his part often said to the Iraqi, 'How I wish I could entertain you in Merv some time, so that I could return all the kindness you have shown me, and repay you for having always made me so welcome. Here, in Iraq, I am accepting all your kindness, without being able to do anything for you in return'. Of course, the Mervian did not mean that he said about entertaining the Iraqi: he was a mean, selfish miser, but since he was quite sure the occasion would never arise when he would have to return the Iraqi's kindness, he at least felt safe in making fervent, although insincere, invitations and protestations.

Now it so happened that, some considerable time afterwards, the Iraqi had, in fact, to visit Merv on some matter of importance. He was not at all looking forward to the hardships of the journey and had great doubts and misgivings about being in a foreign country. However, these worries were alleviated to a certain extent by the pleasing prospect of meeting his Mervian friend again, and knowing that at least he would not be completely among strangers.

When he arrived in Merv he went straight to his friend's house in his travelling clothes, his veil, turban, cap and his cloak, to leave his luggage there and unpack; for he knew that, with them being true friends, the Mervian would gladly let him stay there. The Iraqi found his friend sitting among a group of his companions, and he went over to him and embraced him. The Iraqi was very surprised when his friend did not recognise him and did not ask him how he was. It was as if he had never seen him before. So he said to himself, 'Perhaps he doesn't recognise me because of my veil'. He therefore took it off and began to question his Mervian friend for his news, but still there was no sign of recognition on the latter's face. 'Is it because of my turban that he doesn't recognise me?' thought the Iraqi. So he took off his turban as well, then told the Mervian who he was, and began to ask him for his news once again. To the Iraqi's great astonishment, the Mervian still did not seem to recognise him. So, wondering if it might be on account of the cap which he was wearing, the Iraqi took off his cap as well.

The Mervian, of course, being so mean and miserly, had deliberately pretended not to know his Iraqi friend, even though he had, in fact, recognised him the moment he entered. Finally, realising that, with his friend's face now fully visible, he could no longer feign any ignorance of who the Iraqi was, he said in selfish annoyance, 'You would even be prepared to take off your skin in order to make me recognise you, wouldn't you?'

Free Polish

On one occasion Abu Ishaq was invited by one of his neighbours to share a meal with him. There were a number of other guests there, sitting round the table, sharing the frugal meal of dates and cooking butter. While one of the people there was eating, Abu Ishaq noticed him letting the butter fall drop by drop on to the table. As the man was rather overdoing it and his behaviour was really bad mannered, Abu Ishaq quietly asked the man sitting next to him, 'Why is that man wasting someone else's butter, displaying very bad manners, and taking more than his share?'

'You don't know the reason?', asked his neighbour, to which Abu Ishaq replied that he hadn't the faintest idea.

'Well', said the other, 'this table actually belongs to that man. He once beat his wife because he caught her washing the table with hot water. He thought this was sheer extravagance, and asked her why she didn't just wipe it. But he is so mean that he is deliberately spilling butter on it so that, when he gets the table back home, he can use this grease as a polish and so save his money!'

A Lie for a Lie

One day the governor of the province of Fars, a man named Khalid, was in his office very busy with his accounts and his affairs. In order not to be disturbed he had concealed himself as much as possible. However, a poet had obtained entrance to his office and suddenly appeared before Khalid, reciting a poem in his honour in which he eulogised Khalid and sang his praises.

When the poet had finished, Khalid congratulated him and said to him, 'Well done!' Then he turned to his clerk and told him to give the poet 10,000 dirhams. The poet was so pleased that he went into raptures. When Khalid saw the effect on the poet of the prospect of 10,000 dirhams, he said, 'I can see that what I said has certainly moved you and made you very happy'. Then, turning to his clerk, he said, 'Make it 20,000'. The delighted poet almost jumped out of his skin for joy. And when Khalid saw that his happiness had doubled, he said, 'I see that your joy doubles as what I say doubles. Clerk – give him 40,000!' The poet was just about beside himself with joy.

After a little while the ecstatic poet calmed down and came back to his senses. 'Oh Sir', he said to Khalid, 'may I be made your ransom: what a generous man you are! I know that, as each time you saw how my joy had increased, so you have increased your gift to me. But to accept this from you would only be with a lack of sufficient thanks'. He thanked

Khalid profusely, bowed deeply, and went out of the office.

When the poet had left, the clerk, bewildered by his master's behaviour, came over to Khalid and exclaimed, 'Good heavens! This man would have been satisfied with a gift of 40 dirhams, and yet you go and give him 40,000!'

Khalid replied, 'You stupid fellow. Do you actually want to give him anything?'

'What are we going to do then?' the bewildered clerk asked.

'You idiot', Khalid told him. 'This poet fellow simply pleased me with words, so I likewise pleased him with words. When he pretended that I was more beautiful than the moon, stronger than a lion, that my tongue was more cutting than a sword and my orders more penetrating than spears, did he put into my hand any single tangible thing which I could possibly take home with me? Don't I know that he was simply lying? But nevertheless he made me happy when he lied to me. I likewise made him happy with my words, and ordered rewards for him – though that was a lie as well. Thus it will be a lie for a lie, and hollow words for hollow words. As for returning and paying for a lie by truth, and rewarding hollow words by deeds, this is something I would never be stupid enough to do!'

Dinner or Dinar?

One day some of his friends had been forced, against their wishes, to have a meal with a certain man. They did not want to go at all, but simply had to put up with it and make the best of a bad job. The host thought that they were aware of his extreme meanness where providing food was concerned; in fact, this idea was quite firmly embedded in his mind, and he was sure people talked about this behind his back.

So, when his friends were invited to have a meal, he deliberately placed before them a large number of dishes and, to show that he wanted his guests to do justice to the meal, he said, 'Whoever stops eating first, we shall compel him to pay a fine of one dinar'. The crafty fellow was sure that one of the guests would prefer to pay the dinar rather than carry on eating, and in this way, he hoped, deep down, that he would be in pocket after all!

The Comic Miser

As a miser, Abu Ja'afar at-Tarsusi had no equal, and his miserliness was taken to almost comical extremes. One day, he was visiting some friends who treated him very well and kindly and generally made a fuss of him. On this particular occasion they put a very fragrant and very expensive perfume on his moustache and beard. A little later, unfortunately,

his upper lip started to itch. In order to scratch it, he put his finger into his mouth and scratched it from the inside because he was afraid that if he scratched it from the outside, some of the perfume might rub off on to his finger and he might lose it!

THE RUDE HOST

Sometimes, when Mohammad ibn al-Mu'ammal was at home, one of his friends might call to see him. If he already had one or two guests, in order to preserve the food on his table, he would use various tricks and ruses.

When an unexpected guest arrived on some occasion when Mohammad already had a visitor or two, it really grieved him to have to offer a meal to this third person. So, as soon as this latter had come in and taken off his sandals, Mohammad called to his servant in a loud voice and in a tone that was an insult to the new arrival and would make him feel uncomfortable,

'Mubashshir, bring so-and-so something to eat! Find something for him!' Mohammad was counting on his friend's feeling of discomfort or his anger, or even his scorn, hoping that he would say, 'It's alright – I have eaten already'.

If the latter were unfortunate enough to be timid and nervous and said, 'It's alright – I have eaten already', Mohammad was liable to tease him. He knew that not only had he come out of it well, but he had the poor fellow right where he wanted him, and indeed had got him in his pocket. However, he did not stop there: he was not satisfied until he had pushed his cruelty farther and asked, 'What did you have for lunch?' Consequently the poor wretch had no choice but to tell a lie or to dodge the question.

Mohammad used to play another trick on his guests when they were actually seated round the table. As soon as the meal was served, Mohammad would turn either to the most timid person present, or alternatively to the biggest eater, and would ask him to tell some lengthy story or to recite some long incident, making sure that the story-teller needed to make ample use of his hands or of his head while talking, and this would therefore prevent him from eating. This dealt with one of the guests.

As for the others, Mohammad used another trick to limit the amount they ate. Once they had eaten a little – needless to say, only a very small quantity – Mohammad would appear languid and preoccupied, and he would pick at his food as if he had had enough. He would pick a bit from here and a bit from there, each time holding his hand up between mouthfuls. Invariably one of the guests would stop eating and he too would hold his hand in the air, and often Mohammad's gesture was im-

itated by all the guests.

Then when Mohammad knew that his trick had worked and the guests had got up from the table and returned to their easy chairs, he began to eat in earnest, like someone starved.

False Hopes

Ath-Thauri used to lend money on a large scale, and had a deceitful trick in order to get more customers. It was well known that he had no heir. He would joke with some of his clients and would say at the moment when they were actually witnessing and signing the transaction, 'You know, of course, that I have no heir. If I die, it might give you a pleasant surprise to know who might get my money...' Many people were keen to do business with him for this reason, fondly hoping that they might be the lucky ones in the event of his death.

Double Value

One day Ath-Thauri was sitting among a group of men in the mosque. They used to meet quite regularly and were widely famous for their discussions. One of the wealthiest men there was expressing his views on how to be thrifty and economical, and Ath-Thauri was listening to him intently. 'Double everything you have', the man was saying, 'and it will last longer. Not for nothing has God made the life hereafter eternal, while the life of this world is but transient'. And Ath-Thauri listened still more intently as the man went on to say, 'Perhaps you have seen a single doubled upper-garment does just as well as four shirts, and a single turban does just as well as four veils. This is caused simply by the assistance of the doubling of the folds. Double a screen of woven reeds, double the curtains, double the carpets and double the meal with a cold drink'.

'Aha', said Ath-Thauri, 'I have been trying to follow your argument, but I haven't understood a word of what you have been saying except for this last one!'

Profitable Fever

One day Ath-Thauri was seized with fever, and his family and servant also fell victim to it. On account of the intensity of the fever they did not feel at all like eating, and consequently they needed no bread. During the days that they were ill, Ath-Thauri saved a measure of flour. This fact pleased him considerably, and the mean, callous miser remarked, 'If I were to live at Suq al-Ahwaz, Natat Khaibar, Wadi l-Juhfa or some other such place where fever persists, then I would hope to save a hundred dinars a year'.

He wouldn't have cared if his family had had fever all the time, provided that he could save their ration of flour.

You Just Can't Win

Tammām ibn Ja'afar was as mean as could be where food was concerned, and was one of the most niggardly misers you could ever find. He used to attack those who ate his food with all kinds of abuse and scathing remarks, and sometimes he would even pretend it was lawful to put some unfortunate guest to death, thus making him feel very uncomfortable.

If, in the course of conversation, some guest were to say quite casually, 'There is nobody on earth a better walker or faster runner than I am', Tammām would reply, 'You certainly should be one of the best. As it is the stomach which gives strength to the legs, you should be energetic, considering that you eat enough for ten men'.

Supposing, however, the guest were to make exactly the opposite remark, and said, 'I hardly walk at all because I'm so weak: I get short of breath after only a hundred yards'. To this, Tammām would reply, 'How can you possibly manage to walk when you have put in your stomach such a large amount it would need half a dozen porters to carry it? Aren't people fit only when they eat light meals? And what is worse, with a stomach the size of yours, how can you possibly manage to kneel down and prostrate yourself when it comes to praying?'

Let us imagine that another guest complained of toothache and said to Tammām, 'I couldn't sleep a wink last night because of the pain I was suffering'. Far from expressing any sympathy, Tammām would reply icily, 'I'm surprised you had toothache in only one tooth and not in the whole lot! It's a wonder, in fact, that you have any teeth at all left. Can you really expect any teeth to do as much chewing and grinding as you make yours do? Even a mill or the toughest pestle would be worn out if they had to do that much work'.

Imagine, however, that the guest had a perfect set of teeth, white and firm, and were to remark, 'Never once have I suffered from toothache, nor have I a single loose tooth'. Would Tammām be short of an answer? – far from it! 'That doesn't surprise me at all', he would say. 'Your body becomes strong when you take exercise and work hard, but becomes weak and feeble if you are idle for too long. It's exactly the same with your teeth – and with the amount of work you make yours do, eating so much, they certainly should be strong and healthy. But although your teeth may be alright, what about your stomach – doesn't it ache instead?'

In the very hot weather a guest whom Tammām had invited to share a meal with him (and needless to say it was a very meagre meal) had drunk

a lot of water with his food. 'I drink an awful lot of water', remarked the guest, 'I doubt if anybody in the world can drink more than I do'. Tammām, of course, would never make a rude remark when being entertained by somebody else, but only when he himself was the host, and on this occasion also his cruel, biting tongue had a ready answer. Now it is a well-known fact that many substances absorb a large amount of water: a bucket of clay, for example, will absorb almost its own volume of water. So, when the guest made mention of the large amount of water he drank, Tammām said, 'The earth and clay need water to moisten them. And isn't it a fact that they need water in proportion to their own amount? Even if you drank all the water in the River Euphrates I shouldn't think it would be enough, when I see the tremendous amount you have eaten'.

But what if the guest had drunk nothing with his meal, and had remarked, 'I haven't drunk a single drop of water today, and I had only about a cupful yesterday. I shouldn't think anybody drinks less than I do'. What would Tammām's scathing comment have been? 'You drink almost nothing because, with the amount you eat, you don't leave any room in your stomach for water. Anyone would think your stomach was a casque with buried treasure in it, specially sealed so that no water can get to it. If you don't drink at table, you don't realise how much you have eaten'.

On another occasion, Tammām had a very weary guest with him, having had a disturbed night's sleep the previous night. 'I didn't sleep a wink last night', he said with a yawn, 'and I'm just dying of tiredness'. 'How can you expect to sleep with your stomach so full?' asked Tammām nastily. 'With the amount you eat you probably have to get up in the middle of the night, so how can you hope to have a good night's sleep?'

But what if the person were a very sound sleeper, and had remarked, 'As soon as I put my head on the pillow I sleep like a log until the morning', would Tammām have been beaten for an answer then? Of course not: he would say, 'No wonder you sleep so soundly. That is because food is an intoxicant and makes your whole body relax. The food you eat is just like a drug. And with the amount you eat, you should be able to sleep all day as well as all night!'

Finally, one of the guests who had had more than his fair share of abuse from Tammām decided that, when next invited for a meal, he would not give Tammām chance to make any rude comments about what he ate – he would eat nothing at all! The opportunity duly presented itself, and the guest declined to eat, saying, 'Today I don't want anything at all to eat, thank you'. But if he thought this would prevent Tammām from making any rude comments, he was to be sadly disappointed. Tammām still managed to get the last word – and as usual, a biting word at that. 'I should

think you don't want anything to eat', he said, 'when you probably ate enough for ten people yesterday'.

The Funny Miser

Abu' l-Qumāqim was a renowned miser, but yet one could not help but like him because his meanness was so funny, as can be seen by some of the things he used to say. Here are some of them.

'The first basis of thrift and economy is that I should omit to give back to you what I have in my hands or what I may have borrowed, even though it may be yours. If what I have in my hands actually belongs to me, then it is mine. And if somebody else puts something into my hands, then I deserve it more than the person who put it in my hands. In effect, whoever hands something of his over to somebody else, without good reason, gives it to that person. So, when anybody hands you anything – keep it!'

On one occasion a woman said to him, 'Abu' l-Qumāqim, I have a gentleman coming to see me today, so I want to make a good impression on him and look attractive. He is due any minute now, and I am still not ready yet: I still have to make myself smart. Will you take this loaf of bread, please, and buy me some myrtle in exchange, and here is some money for some oil. Your kindness will be repaid. Perhaps, when this man meets me, God will kindle in his heart some love for me and, thanks to you for doing this bit of shopping, he may then provide for me. Goodness only knows what a pitiful state I am in, and I have had just about as much as I can stand.' So Abu' l-Qumāqim took the bread and the money, and then kept them for himself.

When the woman saw him several days later, she said with tears in her eyes, 'You should be ashamed of yourself. Don't you feel any pity for me for the way you treated me and let me down?'

Abu' l-Qumāqim replied, 'Calm down, and let me explain. Unfortunately I lost the money and, out of sheer grief, I ate the bread'.

There was another woman with whom Abu' l-Qumāqim was very much in love. He courted and followed her all the time, with tears in his eyes, until at length she took pity on him. She was very rich, while he was correspondingly poor. One day he asked her for some stew, because, he said, she was really good at preparing it. Then, several days later, he begged and begged her to prepare him some sheep's heads. Yet a further few days later he asked her for some date curd. And then, not long afterwards, he made yet a further request – how he wished she would make him some broth, which he loved.

At length the woman said in exasperation, 'I have often seen a man's love fill his heart, his liver, and indeed his whole inside. Your love gets

no farther than your stomach!'

When Abu' l-Qumāqim eventually decided to get married, he pressed his future wife's family for information about their means and their wealth, and wanted to know how much her dowry would be. They gave him the information he requested, and then they said to him, 'We have told you of her means. Now, what about you – what are your means?'

'Why bother to ask such a question', replied Abu' l-Qumāqim. 'My wealth doesn't matter. Her money is enough for both of us!'

Isma'īl's Pillow

One night, al-Makki was invited to stay with Isma'il, and he relates this amusing little story.

I once spent the night with Isma'īl. He invited me, I know, simply because he knew that I had had dinner elsewhere, and consequently he wouldn't have to give me a meal, and because I also had with me a jar of wine. In the course of the evening, he drank the larger part of this. It was already very late before I went to bed, and I was tired out: I was far from comfortable, because I had to use the carpet as a mattress and my hand as a pillow. There was, however, one pillow in the room, which Isma'īl picked up and threw to me. I refused it and threw it back to him, until each of us ended by refusing it and giving it to the other. Isma'īl said, 'Come on, you have the pillow: I've got some more'. So I took it and put it under my cheek. But, not being used to this position, and having a very hard bed in the form of the carpet on the hard floor, I couldn't sleep.

Isma'īl, however, thought I was in fact asleep, so he crept over to me on tiptoe and gently pulled the pillow out from under my head. When I saw him going back to his place with it I started to laugh, and said, 'But you said you didn't want it'.

Isma'īl replied, 'I only came over to make you comfortable. But when I saw that I had the pillow in my hand, I had forgotten that I came over for. It's wine, you know – it makes you lose your memory!'

A Ruinous Horse

A man from Medina once left his horse with someone for him to look after it in his stable. Waking up in the middle of the night, the latter found the horse busy eating. The man went off to sleep again, but woke a couple of hours later to find the horse still eating. Calling his servant, he pointed to the horse, and, gesticulating wildly, he said, 'Sell it, give

it away, send it back to its owner, slaughter it, or do anything you like with it! When I am asleep, why doesn't it sleep as well? It simply stays awake and eats. It is just working its way through my fortune and the crafty beast is intent on ruining me completely!'

MUGHIRA'S DATES

Al-Mughira was eating some dates with some of his friends, and they were throwing the stones into a basin. Suddenly the light went out, and they were cast into darkness. At one point soon afterwards, al-Mughira heard two date-stones fall into the basin together. 'Alright', he said, 'who is the greedy person eating two dates at once?'

THE DISTRUSTFUL MASTER

A servant brought Khalid ibn Safwan a tray of plums, which had come either from his garden, or as a present from someone. When the servant put them before him, Khalid said, 'If it weren't for the fact that I know you have already eaten some, I would give you one'.

THE EVIL EYE

One day I was on a small river boat with a fellow from Ahwaz. I was at the stern of the boat, and he was in the bows. When it came to lunch-time he uncovered a small basket which he had with him and took out a chicken and some fresh peaches. He began to eat, all the time talking to me, but without inviting me to join him. There were no other passengers on the ship apart from the two of us. He saw me looking sometimes at him and sometimes at the food in front of him, and he imagined that I would have loved to share his food but found him very slow in inviting me to do so.

'Why are you looking at me like that?' he asked. 'Whoever has food with him eats as I am doing, and whoever does not have food with him stares as you are doing'.

A moment later our eyes met. 'Here, steady on', he said, 'I am a man who eats well, and everything that I eat is good. I am frightened that you have an evil eye. An evil eye like yours causes trouble quickly, so don't stare at me – look the other way'.

This annoyed me because it really was more than any man can take. So

I leapt upon him, grabbed his beard with one hand and got hold of the chicken with the other, and proceeded to beat him over the head with it, with bits flying all over the place, until it finally fell to pieces in my hand. When I had finished he changed places with me, wiped his face and his beard, then turned to me and said, 'I was certainly right when I said that you had an evil eye, and that you were going to cast it on me'.

'What has this got to do with the evil eye?' I asked him.

He replied, 'The evil eye always results in some discomfort. Your eye has brought a considerable discomfort on me!'

At this remark I laughed as I had never laughed before, and from then on we started chatting just as if he had not said anything unkind to me, and as if I hadn't been too hasty and severe in my actions.

The only trouble was that, in the end, neither of us got any chicken to eat!

Innocent Blame

One day Hassan was at the house of Ibn Abi Karima, who saw Hassan washing himself from an earthenware jug, of the type used for holding fresh, drinking water. Considering it extremely wasteful to use fresh water for washing, Ibn Abi Karima said to him, 'Good heavens. You are using fresh water to get washed with when there is a well beside you'.

'But I'm not using fresh water', protested Hassan. 'It is water from the well I have here'.

'In that case, then', replied Ibn Abi Karima, 'you are spoiling the jug by putting salt water in it'.

Poor Hassan. If he didn't get the blame for one thing, he got it for another!

A Common Saying

There was a very common Arabic saying which, people used to say laughingly, could come from nowhere but Merv: 'He looks at me askance, as if I had eaten two parts of my own food and had only given him one part.'

Short Measure

One day, as Zubaida ibn Humaid had no money on him and needed some cash to pay a labourer, he borrowed two pounds and a few shillings from a greengrocer who was selling his goods at the door of his house.

When, after six months, Zubaida decided it was time to repay the debt, he gave the greengrocer two pounds in cash, and paid the few

shillings in kind with three measures of barley. The greengrocer was very angry at this, and shouted at Zubaida, 'Good heavens! You have hundreds of pounds, but as for me, I'm just a poor greengrocer who is lucky if he can scrape together a hundred shillings. I have to slave away all day long, all for a few coppers. A camel-driver and a labourer come calling at your door, and look what happens: you have no money on you, your secretary is away, and so I paid them in cash for you with two pounds and the equivalent of four measures of barley. Now, six months later, you have the cheek to pay me back two pounds and only three measures. What a nerve you have!'

'You stupid fellow,' replied Zubaida. 'You lent me this money in summer, but I am repaying it to you in winter, and three moist grains in winter are heavier than four dry grains in summer. If you ask me, you are still doing well out of it!'

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

'How do you feel about people saying, "'Abd Allah is a miser?"' a friend asked him once.

'Heaven preserve me from ever losing that title,' he replied.

'Why? What do you mean?'

'One is never called a miser unless one is very rich. Give me a fortune, and you can call me whatever name you wish.'

'But at the same time, you don't call anyone generous unless he is rich,' replied his friend. 'To be called generous is surely much better. It combines praise with wealth. To be called a miser, on the other hand, combines wealth with blame. You have chosen the viler and lower of the two.'

'But there is a distinct difference between them,' insisted 'Abd Allah.

'What?' asked his friend.

'When people say that someone is a miser,' replied the other, 'this proves that his wealth remains in his possession. But when they say that someone is generous, this shows that his wealth leaves his possession. The name of miser thus combines the idea of preservation with blame, while the title of generous implies squandering with praise. Wealth is bright and useful, it makes those who have it respected and powerful: praise, on the other hand, is just wind and mockery, and paying any attention to it is just weakness and stupidity. When a man's stomach craves for food, when he has no clothes to wear, when his family suffer deprivations, and those who used to envy him now gloat over his affliction, what use is praise then? Give me the blame of being a miser any day – as long as I have the wealth to go with it.'

The Inconsiderate Miser

Abu Qutba's wealth amounted to several thousand dinars and, making this money work for him, he managed to live comfortably on the interest he got from this capital. Yet despite all this money he possessed, he was so miserly that he used to leave the task of cleaning out his sewer until some day when it was raining very heavily. Consequently the rain water was just pouring down the gutters in a stream, and thus he needed to hire only a single man to do the job. The workman cleaned the refuse out of the sewer and tipped it into the street, where the rushing current of water swept it away and carried it into the canal. There was a distance of only a couple of hundred yards between his sewer and the canal: but in order to save a couple of dirhams in wages, he was prepared to wait a month or two for rain even at the risk of the dirt from the sewer overflowing into the street and causing inconvenience to the neighbours.

A Crafty Excuse

There were once three brothers, Abu Qutba, at-Tiyal and Baru. One of them was making the pilgrimage on behalf of Hamza, a famous warrior. He said, 'Unfortunately he was killed in battle before he could make the pilgrimage, so I am doing it for him.' The second of the brothers offered up a sacrifice on behalf of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. He said his reason for doing so was that they had gone against the law of the Prophet by neglecting the sacrifice. The third of the brothers broke the fast for the beautiful Ayesha on the three days following the feast of the sacrifice. 'She committed a sin,' he explained, while defending his action, 'by fasting on a feast day, and one must not do this. There are some people who fast for their father or their mother: as for me, I am breaking the fast for Ayesha to make up for her fasting when she should not have done so.' He hoped that this excuse would ease his conscience, and let him eat and enjoy his food instead of having to fast!

Keeping a Promise

Ibn Judhām ash-Shabbī and I used to attend meetings together, and sometimes, as we returned from them, he would stop by at my house for a while. He would usually have a meal with me, and would wait until the mid-day heat was past and the temperature was cooler. I knew him to be both extremely mean and very rich. Time and again he insisted that I should visit him in return, but each time I declined. In the end he said, 'For heaven's sake! Do you think that I am one of those who just gives you an invitation without really meaning it, and that you would be putting me to some trouble? Far from it! Some pieces of dry bread, some honey

and some berry juice will be all we will have – nothing special.' I suspected that he wanted to deceive me, trying to make it look as if it really was no trouble at all to him if I accepted his invitation, so I remarked, 'You are like the man who says to his servant, "Bring me some bread to eat, and give five dates to the beggar"'. My words had a double meaning, for I didn't think that anyone could invite someone of my standing all the way from al-Hurabiyya to al-Bātina, only to give him bread and honey for his meal.

When I eventually did go to his home, I was somewhat surprised and taken aback to see that he did give me just what he had promised – bread and honey, and nothing more. As we were eating, it so happened that a beggar stopped by his door. He was a poor, thin wretch who said in a feeble voice, 'Give me some of the food you are eating, and God will give you the food of Paradise.'

'May you be blessed,' replied ibn-Judhām.

The beggar again asked for food, and ibn Judham gave him the same reply.

For a third time the beggar made his request, to which ibn Judhām retorted in a curt voice, 'Be off with you, you miserable creature. You have had your reply. I have given you my blessing: how much more do you want?'

'Good heavens,' replied the beggar, 'never before have I seen someone actually seated at the table with the food before him ever refuse to give a mouthful to a poor beggar.'

'Be off with you, I said', shouted ibn Judhām angrily, 'or else I'll come out there and I swear I'll break every bone in your body.'

'Here's a sad state of affairs,' grumbled the beggar. 'God forbids it for a beggar to be driven away, and yet you swear you are going to break his bones!'

At this point I entered into the conversation and, remembering how ibn Judhām had said he would give me only bread and honey to eat and done just that, I said to the beggar. 'You had better go now, quietly. If you only knew how he carries out his word, you wouldn't stay here a second longer, after what he said he would do to you! Believe you me, I can tell you from bitter experience that when he says something, he means it!'

Ridiculous Actions

People sometimes do some ridiculous things, but probably none more so than Abu 'Uyaina. He came in one evening, and his wife put before him a meal without any meat. When he asked her what had happened to the meat, she replied that the cat had eaten it. Abu 'Uyaina jumped up

from the table, grabbed hold of the cat and put it on the scales to weigh it. 'This is just the weight of the meat: now where is the cat?' he remarked both cynically and angrily.

On another occasion a piece of melon was lost, and Abu 'Uyaina insisted on finding out from his family what had happened to it. Once again the poor cat got the blame. When Abu 'Uyaina heard that the cat had eaten it, he immediately threw the other piece of melon in front of the cat to see if what they had told him was the truth or not. Then when he saw that the cat did not eat it, he made his family pay for the cost of the whole melon.

His family tried to explain, saying, 'It was night time, and so it was dark. If the cat which ate it was not one of those from the neighbourhood, but our own cat, then you threw it the other piece of melon while it was still satisfied with the first bit. Let's wait a while, and then try it with another piece of melon to see if we told you the truth.' But Abu 'Uyaina refused, and made them pay just the same.

Abu 'Uyaina tried to justify his actions and his apparent meanness, even quoting sayings of the Prophet in the attempt. But, of course, he would never change. He had been a miser for years and years, and was too old and set in his ways to think differently now. Perhaps it was true of Abu 'Uyaina that you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

IL PAESAGGIO NELLE ULTIME LETTERE DI JACOPO ORTIS

di JOSEPH M. BRINCAT

UNO dei pregi più alti delle *Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis* consiste nel fatto che quest'opera giovanile di Ugo Foscolo, secondo le parole di Enzo Bottasso, 'è una testimonianza sicura della crisi che travagliò non il suo autore soltanto, ma tutta una generazione.'

In effetti il caotico e immaturo romanzo epistolare del Foscolo è un tipico prodotto di un'epoca di trasformazione, e di questa trasformazione esso riflette anche il trapasso nell'arte, dallo spirito arcadico e sereno a quello romantico e bollente. Nel libro si trovano elementi ed atteggiamenti sia dell'uno che dell'altro polo; ma noi qui ci proponiamo di considerare solamente il modo in cui l'autore guarda la natura. Riteniamo infatti che un'attenta schedatura dei momenti e dei ritorni tematici in cui si prospetta il paesaggio dell'*Ortis* possa servire, meglio di ogni altro angolo di osservazione, a definire l'ambigua e pur affascinante posizione del romanzo tra *sensiblerie* settecentesca ed orrori romantici.

I letterati della fine del Settecento potevano assumere due atteggiamenti diversi verso la Natura. Quelli fatti alla vecchia maniera, come Parini, Monti e Vittorelli, guardavano il paesaggio con serena contemplazione arcadica; altri, presentendo una nuova sensibilità, provavano il gusto dell'orrido, del selvaggio, nella natura flagellata dalla tempesta. Più ci si avvicina alla fine del secolo, più numerosi sono quest'ultimi che seguivano la letteratura macabra del Macpherson (Ossian), di Walpole (The Castle of Otranto), e delle signore Radcliffe (Udolpho) e Shelley (Frankenstein).[1] Oltre questi due modi di interpretazione ce n'era un

[1] Questa 'nuova letteratura' dall'Inghilterra godette una immensa popolarità in tutta Europa. Il Baretti e gli altri letterati del *Caffé* ritenevano la letteratura inglese superiore a quella italiana. Molti, dunque, i traduttori, alcuni per l'intermedio della Francia, parecchi, però, direttamente. Oltre Milton, Dryden, Pope, e Addison, l'influsso inglese si sentì specialmente nel dramma, nel romanzo, nella lirica lugubre o soltanto malinconica. I poeti più rappresentativi dello 'spleen' furono tradotti in italiano nella seconda metà del Settecento, come Young, Gray, Percy, mentre l'*Ossian* che il Macpherson pubblicò nel 1760, fu tradotto dal Cesarotti nel '63.

Il Foscolo ne conosceva già quattro prima di compiere la stesura della prima edizione, anche benché non avesse ancora, come rivela il Fubini, conoscenza della lingua inglese. Lo stesso Fubini propone che questo 'Lo si vede anche dal

terzo: verso la metà del secolo J.J. Rousseau aveva trovato, (o ritrovato, dato che un remoto precedente si può constatare nel Petrarca) un nuovo modo di guardare la natura, diverso da quello della tradizione degli Arcadi. Questa nuova visione, soggettiva e elegiaca, si avverte anche nei paesaggi dell' Alfieri, di Giovanni Meli, del Cesarotti e del Pindemonte.

Nell'*Ortis* la Natura è costantemente presente e partecipa delle vicende intime del protagonista. Oltre tutto è anche possibile constatare come il giovane Foscolo assimili e rifletta, nel progressivo mutamento dello stato d'animo di Jacopo, i vari atteggiamenti suggeritigli dal Neo-Classicismo, dall' Arcadia e dal Romanticismo attraverso le letture di Goethe, di Rousseau, del Petrarca, dell'Alfieri, e dell' Ossian.

* * *

L'inizio del romanzo ci presenta, pur dopo il drammatico annuncio del 'sacrificio della patria', un Jacopo piuttosto pacato e tranquillo: naturale perciò che le prime descrizioni del paesaggio ci presentino una natura serena. Jacopo si è rifugiato dall'oppressione politica sui Colli Euganei dove vive 'per quanto si può tranquillo' e va 'sempre vagando per la campagna'. Cerca la pace nella vita rustica, in quel 'cantuccio della terra' dove spiccano 'fra gli oscuri mortali' solo il medico e il parroco, ma dove

primo *Ortis*, quello del '98 nel quale, come possiamo supporlo della "Laura", che esso ripende, troviamo Rousseau e Young, Gray e Ossian, Monti e Cesarotti, ma assai poco dell'Alfieri'.

Per *Ossian* e Gray, egli porta alla luce delle indicazioni precise, anche se tra essi e il Foscolo ci fu il Cesarotti. 'Nella prima edizione, incompiuta, dell'Ortis (1798) faceva menzione di Omero, Ossian, Dante come dei 'tre maestri di tutti gl'ingegni sovrumani'. Il nome di Ossian fu poi sostituito con quello di Shakespeare nel 1802. Del Gray impiegò i versi 85-92 della famosa *Elegia* nella lettera del 25 maggio. (Lettura dell'Ortis Milano, 1954).

È Giulio Natali che indica che il Foscolo, nel 1798, rivela già tracce del *Viaggio Sentimentale* di L. Sterne, del quale fece la traduzione nel 1813. Il Foscolo avrebbe potuto conoscere quest'opera da traduzioni fattene dal francese (per esempio una versione in francese fu pubblicata da M. Frenais, nel 1769 ad Amsterdam) e di queste si sa che una fu pubblicata, anonima, a Venezia nel 1792. È probabile che il Foscolo stesso alluda ad essa nella *Notizia intorno a Didimo Chierico*, IV. Secondo Eugenio Donadoni (*Ugo Foscolo, Saggio*, Firenze, p. 330) l'episodio di Maria nel *Viaggio Sentimentale* avrebbe addirittura ispirato quello di Lauretta.

Per la poesia dell'orrido che si trova in passi come quelli contenuti nelle lettere da Firenze (25 settembre) e da Ventimiglia (19 e 20 febbraio), il Fubini addita, come influenze principali, il Gray, l'Alfieri e il manierismo. E quest'ultimo suppone anche dei libri, di scarso valore letterario, del tipo di quelli delle Signore Shelley e Radcliffe, e di H. Walpole.

si sente amato. Nella lettera del 23 ottobre 1797 egli descrive come passa una parte della giornata seduto 'a mezzodì sotto il platano della chiesa' leggendo le vite di Licurgo e di Timeone ai contadini che lo ascoltano a bocca aperta. Con due altre pennellate ricorda come abbia incontrato un vecchio che 'con passione' gli narrava fatti di tanti anni addietro, di parrochi, di danni, di tempeste, di tempi di abbondanza e di altri di fame. La lettera dell'indomani, il 24 ottobre, contiene l'episodio del 'ribaldo contadinello' che 'scavezzava allegramente i rami ancora verdi'. Il 1° novembre esclama 'Che bell'autunno! addio Plutarco! sta sempre chiuso sotto il mio braccio'. E qui dobbiamo notare che quel saluto scherzoso a Plutarco sta ad indicare un temporaneo superamento del dramma, una rinuncia alle pose risentite ed altere di tipo alfieriano ed un'accettazione della vita con tutte le sue dolcezze. Poi narra la sua attività favorita delle ultime tre mattine, cioè: 'colmare un canestro d'uva e di pesche, ch'io copro di foglie, avviandomi poi lungo il fiumicello, e giunto alla villa, desto tutta la famiglia cantando la canzonetta della vendemmia'. La lettera del 12 novembre si apre con il ritratto di un gruppo di contadini e contadine al lavoro collettivo, un giorno in cui 'il Sole, più sereno del solito, riscaldava l'aria irrigidita dalla nebbia del morente autunno'. Essi trapiantano dei pini 'sul monte rimpetto la chiesa' e Jacopo collabora. Dopo mezzogiorno si divertono con danze, canti, giochi e brindisi. Intanto Jacopo passa ad un sogno nel quale egli vede se stesso canuto, confortato dal Sole e dai nipotini, e poi morto, sepolto sotto i suoi pini e ricordato con gratitudine dallo stanco mietitore che si riposa alla loro ombra, che lo protegge dal caldo di giugno.

Questi cinque piccoli quadri, rappresentanti momenti sereni e lieti della vita campestre, sono momenti bucolici che, più che l'Arcadia, ricordano Tibullo. L'ambiente è quasi idilliaco ma, a causa di certe differenze di stile e di materia, non si può chiamarli arcadici. Prima di tutto i quadri sono tolti dal vero, mentre si sa che gli Arcadi trasferivano o trasmutavano la realtà in mitologia. Il Foscolo non richiama simili situazioni suggerite dalla mitologia classica, ma descrive quello che vede con semplicità, anche se con un suo gusto calligrafico che si inserisce riflessivamente nelle architetture delle ville venete, nei giardini adorni di statue e di fontane. Poi non c'è qui il distacco completo, benchè il poeta cerchi sempre l'evasione. Egli vi rappresenta se stesso come è, e nemmeno si preoccupa di travestirsi. Anche nel sogno in cui si immagina vecchio, e poi morto, resta sempre lui medesimo il protagonista. Qui la visione non diviene ancora mito, perchè la sola trasformazione che si effetua è quella del tempo. Un puro Arcade avrebbe creato un giardino 'pettinato' o un prato idilliaco, e si sarebbe figurato in uno dei pastori, dandosi certo un nome sonoro.

L'*Ortis* del Foscolo, invece, è autobiografia, e il paesaggio è sempre legato allo stato d'animo del poeta. Conseguentemente la Natura qui non può essere stereotipata, e risulta più simile ai paesaggi sereni de *La Nouvelle Héloïse* e de *I Dolori del Giovane Werther*. Il Foscolo sui Colli Euganei cerca l'evasione: 'Così mi riesce di dimenticarmi ch'io vivo'; e alludendo al signore T***, 'Anch'egli s'è ridotto in campagna per evitare i primi furori del vulgo'. Il Foscolo si schiera con Rousseau nel considerare la vita campestre più pura che la vita nelle città, piene di corruzione, e, per mezzo di Jacopo che accentua la semplicità e la schiettezza dei paesani, dà un esempio della celebre teoria russoviana. Comunque, nello stile, per la brevità delle descrizioni concise e senza l'analisi minuziosa che, nel filosofo di Ginevra, segue le esaltazioni del costume rustico, questi brani si accostano più al primo paesaggio del *Werther* (quello cioè descritto quando 'Ossian non aveva ancora vinto Omero nel *suo* cuore'),[2] dove il Goethe constata che a Wahlheim 'i contadini ignorano il malumore'.[3]

* * *

Un sentimento diverso si avverte già nella lettera successiva, cioè quella del 20 novembre, sempre dai Colli Euganei. 'Piove, grandina, fulmina', così comincia la lettera dopo una breve introduzione ciarliera. L'autore delinea le condizioni del tempo con frasi brevi e semplici, e poi richiama e descrive il giorno in cui egli e gli amici suoi erano andati a visitare la Casa del Petrarca ad Arquà. Conseguentemente inquadra 'il più bel giorno d'autunno' in una 'giornata d'inferno'. L'effetto è bizzarro, forse, ma affascinante. È facile riconoscere la penetrazione del gusto 'gotico'[4] nel giorno in cui 'il vento imperversa', 'la pioggia non cessa', e la notte che lo seguirà 'minaccia la fine del mondo'; più complessa però

[2] W. GOETHE, *Die Leiden Des Jungen Werthers*, Erstes Buch, Um 1. Julius: 'Man predigt gegen so viele Laster, sagte ich; ich habe noch nie gehört, dass man gegen die üble Laune vom Predigstuhle gearbeitet hätte. — Das müssten die Stadtpfarrer thun, sagte er, die Bauern haben keinen bösen Humor.'

[3] Il giovane Werther, appena arrivato nella nuova città, legge soltanto Omero: 'ich brauche Weigenesang, und den habe ich in seiner Fülle gefunden in meinem Homer'. (Erstes Buch, Um 13 Mai). Poi, Ossian lo immergerà in un nuovo mondo, come confessa nella lettera del 12 ottobre (Libro II): 'Ossian hat in meinem Herzen den Homer verdrängt. Welch eine Welt, in die der Herrliche mich führt! Zu wandern über die Heide, umsaust vom Sturmwinde, der in dampfenden Nebeln die Geister der Väter im dämmernden Lichte des Mondes hinführt.' (Zweites Buch, Um 12 Oktober).

[4] L'origine del romanzo *gotico*, o terrificante, è attribuito a Horace Walpole che iniziò un vero culto del medievale. Aveva costruito persino una casa di stile gotico dove poteva perdersi in sogni fantastici, che poi trascrisse in romanzi.

è la descrizione della giornata della visita ad Arquà di 'sei o sette giorni addietro'. Quel giorno Jacopo ha visto 'la Natura più bella che mai', e ricreando quello spettacolo ne rimane estatico: 'Parea che la Notte seguita dalle tenebre e dalle stelle fuggisse dal Sole, che uscia nel suo immenso splendore dalle nubi d'oriente quasi dominatore dell' universo; e l'universo sorridea. Le nuvole dorate e dipinte a mille colori salivano su la volta del cielo che tutto sereno mostrava quasi di schiudersi per diffondere sovra i mortali le cure della Divinità'. Il confronto con il brano del Prometeo (c. II) del Monti, riprodotto nell'edizione del '98 rivela quanto egli *sente* la bellezza della Natura che lo circonda, e perciò la descrizione che ne dà non è una eloquente copia di particolari osservati, ma è anche la rivelazione dei sentimenti provati dal poeta di fronte allo spettacolo – l'effetto di tanta bellezza su un animo sensibile. 'Io salutava a ogni passo la famiglia de' fiori e dell'erbe che a poco a poco alzavano il capo chinato dalla brina. Gli alberi sussurrando soavemente faceano tremolare contro la luce le gocce trasparenti della rugiada, mentre i venti dell'aurora rasciugavano il soverchio umore alle piante. Avresti udito una solenne armonia spandersi confusamente fra le selve, gli augelli, gli armenti, i fiumi e le fatiche degli uomini; e intanto spirava l'aria profumata delle esalazioni che la terra esultante di piacere mandava delle valli e da' monti al Sole, ministro maggiore della Natura'.

È un saggio di prosa lirica, del tipo di quella insegnata dal Rousseau e riprodotta poi dal Goethe; ma mentre Saint-Preux 'attribuiva alla piacevolezza del paesaggio delle Alpi di Valais la serenità che sentiva rinascere nel suo animo',[5] mentre il giovane Werther avrebbe provato il desiderio voluttuoso di perdersi in uno spettacolo così paradisiaco,[6] Jacopo compiange 'lo sciagurato che può destarsi muto, freddo, e guardare tanti benefici senza sentirsi gli occhi bagnati dalle lagrime della riconoscenza'. Questo spettacolo naturale non rasserena, commuove.

Molto significativo è il fatto che a questo pellegrinaggio Jacopo era partito con 'Teresa, suo padre, Odoardo e la piccola Isabellina' perché questo spiega l'effetto nuovo che la Natura produce su di lui. È innamorato da circa tre settimane, e questo non è un giorno qualunque per lui.

[5] 'J'attribuai, durant la première journée, aux agréments de cette variété le calme que je sentais renaître en moi'. (La Nouvelle Héloïse, I, xxiii).

[6] (*Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers*, Erstes Buch, Um 4 Mai) 'Uebrigens befinde ich mich hier gar wohl. Die Einsamkeit ist meinem Herzen köstlicher Balsam in dieser paradiesischen Gegend, und diese Jahrszeit der Jugend wärmt mit aller Fülle mein oft schauderndes Herz. Jeder Baum, jede Hecke ist ein Strauss von Blüten, man möchte zum Maienkäfer werden, um in dem Meer von Wohlgerüchen herumschweben und alle seine Nahrung darin finden zu können'.

L'alba è bellissima; Jacopo è partito col cuore pieno di speranze. Durante il cammino Jacopo vede Teresa 'nel più bell'apparato delle sue grazie'; la vede dolcemente malinconica, ma animata da una gioia schietta, viva. Natura e sentimento sfumano l'uno nell'altro. Ambedue riempiono il cuore di Jacopo. La bellezza della natura si fonde nella gaiezza dei personaggi.

La prossima descrizione del paesaggio sembra oggettiva: 'Eravamo già presso ad Arquà, e scendendo per l'erboso pendio, andavano sfumando e perdendosi all'occhio i paeselli che dianzi si vedeano dispersi per le valli soggette'. Con lo stesso distacco descrive il viale 'cinto da un lato di pioppi' che lasciavano cadere foglie giallicce e 'adombrato dall'altra parte d'altissime querce'. Ad un tratto, però, ci accorgiamo di un nuovo motivo romantico – la potenza della Natura di evocare il ricordo di sentimenti provati nel passato – che, iniziato da Rousseau nella sua elegia in prosa,[7] troverà tanta fortuna presso i Romantici lacrimosi. Teresa ha un pensiero nostalgico, ricordando che tante volte si era 'adagiata su queste erbe e sotto l'ombra freschissima di queste querce!' e che ci veniva 'sovente la state passata con *sua* madre'; e piange. È questa allora la ragione per il tono dimesso della descrizione: la nostalgia turba la felicità di Teresa.

La lettera viene interrotta ma, dopo mangiato, Jacopo torna a scrivere. Si fa sera, e Jacopo è mosso a descrivere la scena stupenda che si stende di fronte a lui: 'Ti scrivo di rimpetto al balcone donde miro la eterna luce che si va a poco a poco perdendo nell'estremo orizzonte tutto raggiante di fuoco. L'aria torna tranquilla; e la campagna, benchè allagata, e coronata soltanto d'alberi già sfrondati e cosparsa di piante atterrate, pare più allegra che la non era prima della tempesta'. La bellezza e la tranquillità sono profondamente sentite da Jacopo: 'Così, o Lorenzo, lo sfortunato si scuote dalle funeste sue cure al solo barlume della speranza'. È quel motivo tanto personale di Ugo Foscolo che sarà ripreso, ampliato e tradotto in sublime poesia nel sonetto *Alla Sera*: la Sera che 'le secrete Vie del *suo* cor soavemente tiene', fenomeno naturale capace di produrre in lui quel misterioso effetto di pace intima, potere quasi sopranaturale che accetta con deferente rassegnazione:

> '... mentre io guardo la tua pace, dorme
> Quello spirto guerrier ch'entro mi rugge'.

* * *

[7] Nella lettera xvii del IV libro di *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Saint-Preux, passeggiando presso il Lago di Ginevra, confida: 'ces foules de petits objets qui m'offraient l'image de mon bonheur passé; tout revenait pour augmenter ma misère présente'.

Questa lunga lettera del 20 novembre, così ricca nella varietà di descrizioni naturali e di motivi intimi, è non meno significativa per la sua chiusa. Jacopo si accorge che Odoardo sospetta un rapporto più che amichevole tra la sua Teresa e il giovane amico. Lo ha osservato mentre parlava con autorità alla sua fidanzata al loro ritorno da Arquà, e pensa che sarà meglio non vederla così spesso. Malinconicamente si rende conto che un giorno Odoardo porterà via l'unica sua gioia, e sogna di 'que' giorni di noja' in cui questa stessa lettera sarà per lui 'una memoria che non siamo sempre vissuti nel dolore'. Leggendola 'sdrajato su l'erta che guarda la solitudine d'Arquà, nell'ora che il dì va mancando', ricorderà Teresa e i suoi giorni felici con lei. Appena innamorato, già sente di dover rinunciare al suo sogno, ma cercherà il suo conforto come aveva fatto il suo grande maestro, nella Natura: sul modello del Petrarca di 'Chiare, fresche, e dolci acque' e di 'Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte', due canzoni che ha recitato quello stesso giorno in Arquà. Comunque, vedremo che l'indole irrequieta, alfieriana, di Jacopo non è capace di mantenere questo suo proponimento, non sa rassegnarsi e compiacersi nella sola elegia.

Il 27 novembre ha deciso di andarsene. Il 3 dicembre sta ancora lì, e ricorda una contemplazione, non priva di desiderio, di Teresa vestita di bianco. Il 7 dicembre è a Padova, nostalgico – 'Ho abbandonato i miei colli, il mio dolce romitorio' – 'con un certo che d'amaro nel cuore', e spesso tentato di ritornarvi. Il 23 non ci può stare più: 'Questo scomunicato paese m'addormenta l'anima, noiata della vita; ... in Padova non so che farmi'. Dal 20 novembre, e per tutto dicembre, la Natura manca dalle sue lettere, tranne la piccola frase di rimpianto riportate più su.

Nei primi di gennaio ritorna sui Colli Euganei, perchè non può star lontano da Teresa. Però trova che la Natura è cambiata. Lamenta 'le austere giornate di questa nebbiosa stagione, le quali ci fanno desiderare di poter non esistere fin tanto ch'esse rattristano la Natura'. Rimpiange il sole.

Jacopo è molto preoccupato. Sente l'ombra di Odoardo come un incubo. Le tre righe del 10 gennaio sintetizzano la situazione: Odoardo ritornerà a primavera, Jacopo dunque si propone di partire ai primi di aprile. Il 19 scrive lamenti e riflessioni pessimistiche sulla sorte umana. Anche la Natura è vista con lo stesso atteggiamento pessimistico: 'Andava dianzi perdendomi per le campagne, inferrajuolato sino agli occhi, considerando lo squallore della terra tutta sepolta sotto le nevi, senza erba né fronda che mi attestasse le sue passate dovizie'; il vertice dei monti è immerso 'in una negra nube di gelida nebbia che piombava ad accrescere il lutto dell'aere freddo ed ottenebrato'. In seguito prova il gusto di immaginare

la forza bruta della Natura scatenata: 'E parevami vedere quelle nevi disciogliersi e precipitare a torrenti che innondavano il piano, trascinandosi impetuosamente piante, armenti, capanne, e sterminando in un giorno le fatiche di tanti anni e le speranze di tante famiglie'.[8] L'unico conforto fra tanto orrore è qualche raggio di Sole: 'sua mercè soltanto il mondo non era dominato da una perpetua notte profonda'. Infine, le vicende della vita dell'uomo sono comparate al succedersi delle stagioni: 'l'uomo non gode de' suoi giorni; e se talvolta gli è dato di passeggiare per li fiorenti prati d'Aprile, dee pur sempre temere l'infocato aere dell'estate e il ghiaccio mortale del verno'.

È un brutto periodo questo che Jacopo attraversa durante i mesi di dicembre, gennaio, e, pensiamo, febbraio. È la figura minacciante di Odoardo, il rivale pur amichevole ma deciso e favorito dal destino?; è la lontananza dall'amata Teresa?; o semplicemente i rigori dell'inverno che producono questo effetto sull'animo di Jacopo? Altrove nel romanzo[9] Jacopo avrà l'occasione di ripetere il suo orrore per il freddo. Rousseau aveva dichiarato colui che possiede un'anima sensibile 'vil jouet de l'air et des saisons'.[10] Jacopo, pochi giorni prima di morire confesserà, rivolgendosi alla Natura, animata e quasi personificata (non sfugga la N maiuscola, secondo l'uso enfatico del tempo): 'nella mia disperazione ti ho poi veduta con le mani grondanti di sangue', e dichiara che era stato lui a trasformarla e bestemmiarla. Più ammissibile qui è un compromesso tra le due ipotesi, cioè che se la stagione non è del tutto responsabile dei mali di Jacopo, tuttavia essa accresce il suo dolore.

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Si avvicina la primavera, e il 17 marzo 1798 Jacopo, dopo un silenzio di due mesi, scrive al suo amico Lorenzo sostenendo che non lo ha dimenticato, e nemmeno la patria, per la passione d'amore. Spiega come cerca di contenere la sua passione, dedicandosi alla politica, non parlando a Teresa d'amore, e lasciando che passino tre o quattro giorni prima di rivederla. Comunque, confida 'Né io vivo se non per lei sola'.

[8] Cfr. GOETHE *Werther*, lettera del 18 agosto 1771 (libro I) che si conclude con una meditazione sulla 'forza distruggitrice riposta nell'essenza stessa della natura': 'mir untergräbt das Herz die verzehrende Kraft, die in dem All der Natur verborgen liegt'.

[9] Verso la fine, dalle Alpi Marittime. La lettera è del 15 febbraio 1799, da un paesetto chiamato La Pietra.

[10] 'Celui qui l'a reçu (una âme sensible) doit s'attendre à n'avoir que peine et douleur sur la terre. Vil jouet de l'air et des saisons, le soleil ou les brouillards, l'air couvert ou serein, régleront sa destinée, et il sera content ou triste au gré des vents'. (*La Nouvelle Héloïse*, I xxv).

'Intanto la Natura ritorna bella', e il 3 aprile l'autore esulta al ritorno della 'ridente Aurora d'Aprile', delle 'fresche rugiade', dei venticelli, dei fiori, e sopratutto del Sole 'sublime immagine di Dio, luce, anima, vita di tutto il creato'. Con il ritorno della primavera, riappare nelle lettere la presenza (*fisica* direi, in confronto con l'occasionale ricordo di lei riportato malinconicamente nelle lettere invernali, dal 7 dicembre in poi) di Teresa. Ecco la sua prima apparizione: 'Ella sedeva sopra un sofà di rincontro alla finestra delle colline, osservando le nuvole che passeggiavano per l'ampiezza del cielo' mirando 'l'azzurro profondo'. Il Foscolo trova l'adeguato sfondo naturale anche quando non si è all'aperto! Li sorprende la tempesta e trovano di fronte 'lo spettacolo della Natura adirata' – un segno della tempesta intima nei due personaggi?

La passione di Jacopo si accende sempre più. Peraltro è sempre consapevole della situazione attuale, tanto che riferisce a Lorenzo un frammento della sua *Storia di Lauretta*.[11] 'Io voleva in quella sfortunata creatura mostrare a Teresa uno specchio della fatale infelicità dell'amore', confida, ma pensa che sia meglio non lasciarglielo leggere. Abbiamo dunque due persone sinceramente innamorate, ma sui cui sogni incombe minacciosa l'ombra triste del fato che decreta l'impossibilità del loro amore. Conseguentemente essi provano momenti di dolce felicità misti con altri di dolorosa malinconia. Il frammento della Storia di Lauretta nella patetica figura della protagonista sintetizza quest'ultimo sentimento. Il Foscolo presenta il primo saggio ossianesco[12] nella descrizione di Lauretta che erra, fuori di sé, per le romite spiagge, cantando pietosamente sotto la Luna. Non è Ofelia? La somiglianza con la creatura scespiriana è notevole, ma si limita alla figura delicata e all'atteggiamento patetico della ragazza. Lauretta e Ofelia versano la loro tristezza in canto pietoso, ma è proprio la cornice naturale che le distingue. Shakespeare non insiste tanto nella descrizione dello scenario: non dice nulla a proposito del cielo, delle nuvole, della Luna. Nella stanza del palazzo dove si svolge la scena v. dell'Atto IV dell'*Amleto* la Natura,

[11] Aggiunta alla lettera del 29 aprile 1798.

[12] Dalla lettera del 29 aprile traspare che il Foscolo aveva già avuto conoscenza di qualche esemplare del nuovo stile *gotico*: 'In un libretto inglese ho trovato un racconto di sciagura; e mi pareva ad ogni frase di leggere le disgrazie della povera Lauretta – il Sole illumina da per tutto ed ogni anno i medesimi guai sulla terra! – Or io per non parere di scioperare, mi sono provato di scrivere i casi di Lauretta, traducendo per l'appunto quella parte del libro inglese; e togliendovi, mutando, aggiungendo assai poco del mio, avrei raccontato il vero, mentre forse il mio testo è romanzo'.

Il Foscolo, dunque, allude ad una probabile fonte d'ispirazione, ma non bada a precisare.

che entra proprio per bocca di Ofelia, può sembrare persino spietata nella sua indifferenza:

'He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass green turf,
At his heels a stone.
White his shroud as the mountain snow,
Larded with sweet flowers;'

e poi, quando appare 'fantastically dressed with straws and flowers' e recita la litania dei fiori – 'rosemarry, pansies, fennel, columbines, herb-grace o' Sundays, a daisy, some violets', – tutti questi fiori rimangono simboli freddi, perché Ofelia rimane chiusa, avvolta nella sua tristezza pacata, tutta interna ma non meno profonda. Il Foscolo *ricreà* l'Ofelia scespiriana, trasportandola in un paesaggio che è più consono alla sua poetica, e nello stesso tempo le infonde dei sentimenti più appassionati, che la muovono ad atteggiamenti più declamatori. La Natura partecipa: 'I flutti gemeano con flebile fiotto, e i venti, gl'increspavano, gli spingeano a lambir quasi la riva dove noi stavamo seduti'. Più cupa è la tristezza che emana dal secondo brano dove è accentuata la solitudine e la paura dell' abbandono che affliggeva Lauretta: 'Una sera d'autunno la Luna appena si mostrava alla terra rifrangendo i suoi raggi su le nuvole trasparenti, che accompagnandola l'andavano ad ora ad ora coprendo, e che sparse per l'ampiezza del cielo rapivano al mondo le stelle. Noi stavamo intenti a' lontani fuochi dei pescatori, e al canto del gondoliere che col suo remo rompea il silenzio e la calma dell'oscura laguna'.

Tuttavia questi giorni primaverili, specie quelli di maggio, sono i più felici per Jacopo siccome egli è più vicino che mai alla sua Teresa, e, di più, vede la sua passione, in un certo modo, ricambiata. Il 29 aprile e il 4 maggio paragona Teresa al Sole per l'effetto che produce in lui. Il 12 ha avuto l'occasione di contemplarla mentre dormiva; l'ha adorata solennemente e avrebbe potuto persino baciarla se avesse osato. Il 13 ricorda due ore passate nella 'estatica contemplazione d'una bella sera di maggio', e ne fa a Lorenzo, una bellisima, serena e minuziosa descrizione,[13] nella quale appare appena una certa malinconia. Quando scendeva dal monte era già notte e nel buio Jacopo vede i fuochi dei pastori, saluta le

[13] Da 'Su la cima del monte indorato dai pacifici raggi del Sole che va mancando.. a 'Lancia il Sole partendo pochi raggi, come se quelli fossero gli estremi addio che dà alla Natura; le nuvole rosseggiano, poi vanno languendo, e pallide finalmente si abbujano: allora la pianura si perde, l'ombre si diffondono su la faccia della terra; ed io, quasi in mezzo all'oceano, da quella parte non trova che il cielo'.

costellazioni, sente il suo cuore che s'innalza. Cresce la malinconia. Trovandosi presso la chiesa, ascolta la campana dei morti che provoca in lui un presentimento della sua fine. Guarda il cimitero dove 'ne' cumuli coperti di erba dormono gli antichi padri della villa', e fa una triste meditazione dopo la quale piange e invoca Teresa.

Il 14 ricorda come ripeteva lo stesso atteggiamento invocando Teresa, ma questa volta non invocava invano. I due giovani, infatti, s'incontrano e, con Teresa appoggiata al braccio di Jacopo, fanno insieme una passeggiata, 'taciturni, lungo la riva del fiumicello sino al lago de' cinque fonti'. Là si fermano 'a mirar l'astro di Venere'. Pensano al Petrarca, riposano seduti sull'erba, sotto 'il più bel gelso che mai', 'alto, solitario, frondoso', stanno vicini e Jacopo recita le odi di Saffo mentre sorge la Luna. La Natura qui fa da bello sfondo sereno per un'ora lieta trascorsa con Teresa. Risulta un quadro tutto Petrarca.

A quella stessa lettera aggiunge (alle ore 11) la confessione che l'ha baciata; è certo che lo ama anche lei, e si sente euforico. Un'altra volta deve interrompere la lettera per la commozione. 'SÌ! ho baciato Teresa; i fiori e le piante esalavano in quel momento un odore soave; le aure erano tutte armonia; i rivi sussurravano da lontano; e tutte le cose s'abbellivano allo splendore della Luna che era tutta piena della luce infinita della Divinità. Gli elementi e gli esseri esultavano nella gioia di due cuori ebbri d'amore'. Un altro brano lirico in prosa descrive l'ora dell'addio quando Teresa se ne va lungo un viale, i capelli rilucenti al raggio della Luna, mentre l'amante, ancora estatico, la segue con lo sguardo finché la sua figura si perde nella fosca ombra degli alberi. 'E partendo, mi volsi con le braccia aperte, quasi per consolarmi, all'astro di Venere: era anch'esso sparito'.

Il culmine della felicità di Jacopo lo troviamo cristallizzato nell'unico brano veramente arcadico del romanzo. Un bacio di Teresa ha elettrizzato il nostro autore: 'Dopo quel bacio io son fatto divino. Le mie idee sono più alte e ridenti, il mio aspetto più gajo, il mio cuore più compassionevole'. La sua felicità si diffonde anche nella Natura in cui è immerso: 'Mi pare che tutto s'abbellisca ai miei sguardi: il lamentar degli augelli e il bisbiglio de' zefiri fra le frondi son oggi più soavi che mai; le piante si fecondano, e i fiori si colorano sotto a' miei piedi'. Gli sembra che tutta la Natura gli appartenga! Fa alcuni pensieri, ottimistici, sulla Beltà, sull'Amore e sulla Pietà, poi spiega a Lorenzo quanto è contento del presente, dimenticando le sventure del passato e non pensando alle minacce e alle lusinghe del futuro. Il suo passatempo favorito è godere il magnifico tempo primaverile, ed ecco che ci si dimostra in un atteggiamento tipico degli Arcadi: 'sdrajato su la riva del lago de' cinque fonti

mi sento vezzeggiare la faccia e le chiome dai venticelli che alitando sommovono l'erba e allegrano i fiori, e increspano le limpide acque del lago'. L'atmosfera è già sognante; mancano solamente gli ingredienti mitologici per completare il trapasso dalla realtà al sogno. Eccoli: 'io delirando deliziosamente mi veggo dinanzi le Ninfe ignude, saltanti, inghirlandate di rose, e invoco in lor compagnia le Muse e l'Amore; e fuor dei rivi che cascano sonanti e spumosi, vedo uscir sino al petto con le chiome stillanti sparse su le spalle rugiadose, e con gli occhi ridenti, le Najadi, amabili custodi delle fontane'.

È da osservare che in questo quadro, in opposizione a tutti gli altri, la figura di Jacopo, benché sempre protagonista, sfuma anch'essa nell'irrealtà. Il Foscolo ha trovato qui un angolo di Paradiso, ma la sua coscienza moderna fa che il suo personaggio esclami: 'Beati gli antichi che credevano in queste illusioni, trovandovi il Bello ed il Vero'. Il sospiro è un'espressione sincerissima dell'autore che presente una nuova meta poetica. Difatti, stilisticamente, il brano è importante perché l'attenzione del poeta si ferma su certi vocaboli, su certi accordi, addirittura su certe iconografie che avranno lunga storia nella sua poesia fino alle *Grazie*: l'Arcadia insomma è qui ormai fermento di quel classicismo sereno ed extratemporale che sarà l'approdo ultimo dello scrittore.

* * *

Purtroppo la sua felicità dura poco. Il 21 maggio confida che si sente divorato da un presentimento di non rivedere la sua amata. Sono queste notti 'lunghe e angosciose' per lui, che non lo lasciano dormire. Ecco che il suo turbamento si traduce nel lampo che rompe le tenebre della notte e accresce il terrore e l'oscurità. Intanto gli giunge la notizia che la povera Lauretta è morta, il che lo rattrista profondamente. Il 25 maggio rivela come egli trovi la catarsi nel guardare dalla montagna più alta la terribile maestà della Natura agitata dai venti, perdendo la vista nell'infinità del lontano orizzonte, e fissando le voragini dei precipizi, poi 'correndo come un pazzo'.[14]

Rimpiange i sogni della sua fanciullezza, richiamatagli da quanto gli sta attorno, e fa delle riflessioni pessimistiche. Una, paradossale, spiega il suo nuovo modo di vedere il paesaggio: 'Cangio voti e pensieri, quanto la Natura è più bella tanto più vorrei vederla vestita a lutto'. La sera si

[14] Sono salito su la più alta montagna: i venti imperversavano; io vedeva le querce ondeggiar sotto a' miei piedi; la selva fremeva come mar burrascoso, e la valle ne rimbombava; su le rupi dell'erta sedeano le nuvole — nella terribile maestà della Natura la mia anima attonita e sbalordita ha dimenticato i suoi mali, ed è tornata alcun poco in pace con se medesima'.

affaccia, come al solito, al balcone per trovare un pò di tranquillità nello spettacolo del giorno che muore, ma invece la tristezza gli porge 'l'immagine della Distruzione divoratrice di tutte le cose'. Guarda il colle dei pini presso la parrocchia, ci vede la sua tomba, e sogna Teresa che la visita all'alba per rattristarsi dolcemente. In questa lettera si alternano abbandoni ad una sommessa malinconia ed altri ad una disperazione più vigorosa. Difatti ci si trovano quadri tipici della poesia sepolcrale come quella del Gray, dal quale il Foscolo ha tratto una fedele trascrizione dei versi 85-92 della famosa *Elegia scritta in un cimitero di campagna.*[15]

Però siamo giunti al periodo della disperazione di Jacopo, che non sa rassegnarsi al suo destino. Gli è stato comunicato che Odoardo sta per tornare, medita sulla sua sciagura, e il suo umore diventa ancora più nero. Questo si riflette anche nelle sue descrizioni dei paesaggi. Il 2 giugno si lamenta perché i colli pittoreschi che amava contemplare gli sembrano ora rupi e precipizi.[16] Nell'intimo del suo cuore è più turbato che mai e si sfoga strappando le piante che prima evitava di calpestare, gittandole al vento. L'8 luglio, alle ore 2 della notte, scrive due righe: 'Il Cielo è tempestoso: le stelle rare e pallide; e la Luna mezza sepolta fra le nuvole batte con raggi lividi le mie finestre'.

Le sue lettere diventano più che altro effusioni di un'anima disperata. Dal suicidio lo trattiene il pensiero della 'madre cara e sventurata' (lettera del 20 luglio a sera da Ferrara). Cerca di dominare la sua disperazione in continue peregrinazioni irrequiete. Il 7 settembre, da Firenze confessa una segreta nostalgia per la bellezza serena dei suoi colli – 'Spalanca le finestre, o Lorenzo, e saluta dalla mia stanza i miei colli'; subito però passa all'orrido e v'introduce anche l'elemento macabro ricordando 'il monte de' pini che serba tante dolci e funeste (mie) rimembranze': il cuculo 'col lugubre suo metro', il pino 'che fa ombra a' rottami di una cappelletta ove anticamente si ardeva una lampada a un crocifisso'. Lassù Jacopo si trova una notte tempestosa, e l'evento gli lascia lo spirito atterrito di tenebre e di rimorso, e pensa di erigere fra quelle pietre in rovina, che gli sembrano nell'oscurità pietre sepolcrali, la sua tomba. In un altro brano ricorda come usava sfogarsi, 'questi ultimi mesi', in atteggiamenti furiosi e istrionici che sbalordivano i contadini: 'E mi

[15] (v. FUBINI, *Lettura dell'Ortis*, Milano, 1954, pp. 38-45).

[16] In circostanze analoghe, Werther aveva constatato che quello che gli era prima 'paradiso' ora gli pareva 'carnefice': 'Das volle, warme Gefühl meines Herzens an der lebendigen Natur, das mich mit so vieler Wonne überströmte, das rings umher die Welt mir zu einem Paradiese schuf, wird mir jetzt zu einem unerträglichen Peiniger, zu einem quälenden Geist, der mich auf allen Wegen verfolgt'. (Erstes Buch, Um 18. August).

vedeano su l'alba saltare i fossi e sbadatamente urtar gli arboscelli ... e così affrettarmi per le praterie, e poi arrampicarmi sul monte più alto donde io fermandomi ritto e ansante, con le braccia estese all'oriente, aspettava il Sole ... Ti additeranno il ciglione della rupe sul quale, mentre il mondo era addormentato, io sedeva intento al lontano fragore delle acque, e al rombare dell'aria quando i venti ammassavano quasi su la mia testa le nuvole, e le spingevano a funestare la Luna che, tramontando, ad ora ad ora illuminava nella pianura co' suoi pallidi raggi le croci conficcate su i tumuli del cimitero ... e m'udiva (il villano) in quel silenzio solenne mandare le mie preci, e piangere, e ululare, e guatare dall'alto le sepolture, e invocare la morte'.[17]

* * *

Via via che cresce la disperazione di Jacopo, più bizzarre diventano le sue azioni e più orribili diventano gli spettacoli naturali. Già l'8 maggio aveva previsto 'senza questo angelico lume (Teresa), la vita mi sarebbe terrore, il mondo caos, la Natura notte e deserto'.

Intanto risorge ad intensificare il suo dolore le delusione della patria perduta, per la quale prova una passione inferiore solo a quella per Teresa. Il 17 marzo aveva negato che il 'desiderio di patria possa temperarsi mai, non che spegnersi; aveva affermato anzi che non cede ad altre passioni, 'ben irrita le altre passioni, e n'è più irritato'. I motivi di questa lunga lettera che all'infelice passione per Teresa aggiunge 'questo infelice amore di patria' ('Pur nondimeno io mi sento rinsanguinare più sempre nell' anima questo furore di patria'), tornano più cupi anche nelle lettere della seconda parte del romanzo. I brani seguenti dimostrano come la Natura provoca, inquadra e accentua questa irritazione.

Da Firenze Jacopo visita Montaperti, all'ora che 'albeggiava appena un crepuscolo di giorno e in quel mesto silenzio, e in quell'oscurità fredda, con l'anima investita da tutte le antiche e fiere sventure che

[17] Cfr. ROUSSEAU, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, I, xxv: 'Dans les violents transports qui m'agitent, je ne saurai demeurer en place; je cours, je monte avec ardeur, je m'élance sur les rochers, je parcours à grand pas tous les environs, et trouve partout dans les objets le même horreur qui règne au dedans de moi'. '... la rage me fait courir de caverne en caverne, des gémissements et des cris m'échappent malgré moi; je rugis comme une lionne irritée'.

E in GOETHE, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, Erstes Buch, Um 30 August 'Und — wenn nicht manchmal die Wehmut das Uebergewicht nimmt ... — so muss ich fort, muss hinaus! und schweife dann weit im Feld umher. Einen gähen Berg zu klettern, ist dann meine Freude, durch einen unwegsamen Wald einen Pfad durchzuarbeiten, durch die Hecken, die mich verletzen, durch die Dornen, die mich zerreissen! Da wird mir's etwas besser! Etwas!'

sbranano la nostra patria', la scena eccita tanto la sua fantasia che si sente 'abbrividire, e rizzare i capelli' e grida 'dall'alto con voce minacciosa e spaventata', e immagina visioni fantasmagoriche di guelfi e ghibellini che ripetono la lotto sanguinosa dei tempi di Dante. La sua sensibilità si è ridotta ad uno stato così fragile che, come dice il 25 settembre, questi spettri lo seguono anche di notte, e particolarmente uno che per ora non vuole nominare.

Continua a viaggiare – Milano, Genova, Ventimiglia, Nizza, Alessandria, Rimini. Il ritmo delle lettere diventa più veloce, gli sfoghi sfrenati, le riflessioni più pessimistiche che mai, tanto che il lettore ne prova quasi un senso di fastidio. Nella regione delle Alpi Jacopo si lamenta del freddo; infatti i soli momenti sereni li trova al sole (a Genova l'11, a la Pietra il 14 e il 15 febbraio). Il 15, scrivendo dalla Pietra, rivela tutto il suo ribrezzo per le 'strade alpestri, montagne orride dirupate, tutto il rigore del tempo, tutta la stanchezza ed i fastidj del viaggio' che non promettono che non 'Nuovi tormenti e nuovi tormentati'. Ripete questo motivo, più a lungo, nella lettera da Ventimiglia del 19 e 20 febbraio dove dice che in quei luoghi 'la Natura siede solitaria e minacciosa': 'Non v'è albero, non tugurio, non erba. Tutto è bronchi; aspri e lividi macigni; e qua e là molte croci che segnano il sito de' viandanti assassinati. ... torrenti, altissime rupi, burroni cavernosi'. Questo paesaggio, che somiglia tanto a quello che ha inquadrato la delusione in amore, fa da cornice alla delusione della patria: 'I tuoi confini, o Italia, son questi!' esclama. E medita: 'ma sono tutto dì sormontati d'ogni parte dalla pertinace avarizia delle nazioni', alludendo alle potenze dell'epoca, ambedue d'oltr'alpe, Francia e Austria. 'Ove sono dunque i tuoi figli?' si chiede, e in risposta segue una lunga e appassionata riflessione sulla situazione politica attuale in Italia, sul patriottismo, sulla storia e sull'umanità, di tono estremamente pessimistico.

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A Rimini viene a sapere che Teresa si è sposata. Il 5 marzo scrive 'Meglio così, da che tutto è deciso'. Allora risolve a dar fine alla propria misera esistenza e per conseguenza si sente 'tranquillo imperturbabilmente. Le illusioni sono svanite; i desiderj son morti'.

Ritorna sui Colli Euganei, e per l'appunto ritroviamo la Natura serena nei brani che descrivono scene viste nel marzo 1799. Il 13 vede 'l'amabile stella dell'alba', fiammeggiante dall'oriente, desidera l'alba e subito pensa a Teresa – 'Forse Teresa si ricorda in questo momento di me'. Il 15 fa una bellissima descrizione di una estatica contemplazione della campagna fatta a mezzanotte: 'Contemplo la campagna: guarda che notte serena e pacifica! Ecco la Luna che sorge dietro la montagna. O Luna,

amica Luna!' Ricorda tutto quello che è stata finora per lui: consolazione, testimone dei suoi delirii, e prega un ultimo suo beneficio: 'quando Teresa mi cercherà fra i cipressi e i pini del monte illumina co' tuoi raggi la mia sepoltura'. Ancora una volta, una bella e serena scena naturale, anche se fremente di sottile malinconia romantica, conduce il suo pensiero a Teresa.

Il 14 marzo sente di dover finalmente comunicare un segreto che ha sempre conservato con premura: l'incidente del cavallo che causò la morte di un uomo, padre di famiglia. Nella narrazione indugia su particolari orridi e sadici. Poi descrive quella notte che seguì l'incidente, 'notte che fu anche burrascosa per tutta la natura', notte di grandine, di folgori che colpirono tanti alberi bruciandoli; in cui la cappella del crocifisso fu rovinata dal turbine; nella quale uscì 'vagando per le montagne con le vesti e l'anima insanguinata' fino all'alba. La natura orrida in questo brano non è una stonatura, anche se si trova in un periodo di calma nello stato d'animo del protagonista. In realtà è una parentesi, perché l'incidente appartiene ad un altro periodo della crisi di Jacopo e proietta il tormento intimo del senso di colpa e di rimorso. È l'ultimo suo sfogo, una vera confessione, indispensabile perché egli trovi la pace spirituale.

L'indomani infatti si sente come alleggerito: 'Bell'alba! ed è pur gran tempo ch'io non m'alzo da un sonno così riposato, e ch'io non ti vedo, o mattino, così rilucente! Rimpiange il fatto che il suo dolore non gli abbia permesso di godere più spesso un simile spettacolo siccome 'gli occhi *suoi* erano sempre nel pianto; e tutti i *suoi* pensieri nella oscurità; e l'anima *sua* nuotava nel dolore'.

Vede la Natura che splende, e spiega tutto ciò che essa è stata per lui nella sua vita: 'Ho già sentito tutta la tua bellezza, e t'ho adorata, e mi sono alimentato della tua gioja ... Ma nella mia disperazione ti ho poi veduta con le mani grondanti di sangue; la fragranza dei tuoi fiori mi fu pregna di veleno; amari i tuoi frutti; e mi apparivi divoratrice de' tuoi figliuoli, adescandoli con la tua bellezza e co' tuoi doni al dolore'. Si pente delle sue descrizioni *gotiche*; gli sembrano delle bestemmie verso la Natura: 'Protrarrò la vita per vederti sì terribile, e bestemmiarti? No, no'.

Si ucciderà. Ma prima di porre fine alla sua vita, come ha salutato Lorenzo, Michele, la madre e Teresa, ha voluto anche visitare 'le *sue* montagne, il lago de' cinque fonti, *ha* salutato per sempre le selve, i campi, il cielo'. Segno di riconoscenza alla forza sovrumana che gli è stata anima gemella in tutte le vicende del suo spirito, testimone e *confidante* nei momenti di serenità, gioia, colpa, disperazione, amore e patriottismo.

DICKENS AND HIS GERMAN RELATIVES

By HELMUT VIEBROCK

IN his comprehensive rwo-volume biography of Dickens, Edgar Johnson has printed the pedigrees of both Dickens' father and mother, and even the most suspicious scrutiny cannot detect any foreign flaw in the long list of ancestors going back to John Dickins of Hazelwood and to Richard Warde, Cofferer to Queen Elizabeth. There are no indications of family members intermarrying with people of foreign extraction. So I have to disappoint those who might expect some sensational discovery or divulgence of family connections of the Dickens family in Germany, by immediately stating that what I mean by German relatives must be taken as a metaphorical hint at relations of a purely literary kind, whether these relations be definite influences of Dickens on German writers (or even vice versa), or whether they are just strange and striking analogies and similarities due to analogous or similar personal dispositions and social circumstances. I wish to confess – knowing that Germans are given to personal confessions – that I am more interested in analogies and similarities, in types and patterns of attitude and artistic expression, than in source hunting and influence tracing.

As far as Germany is concerned, Dickens seems to have gratefully acknowledged and reciprocated the friendly applause and even high esteem of his German readers, a popularity that started very early. As early as 1837/38, the 'Pickwick Papers' were a great success in Germany; the 'Brochhaus Conversations-Lexikon' and the 'Tauchnitz Verlag' helped to spread Dickens' fame quickly, and Edgar Johnson reports that the favourable reception of the famous English author made him exclaim 'that next to his own people he respected and treasured the Germans' (Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens, His Tragedy and Triumph, vol. II, p. 592). Now with all due respect to Dickens and the genuineness of his spontaneous effusions, I would not overestimate such an exclamation, knowing how easily success and amiable criticism provoke similar quick assertions.

But there is certainly more to the story of Dickens and Germany than just his growing fame and an unflagging interest in his works. There certainly were writers in Germany who were profoundly moved and influenced in their art by Dickens, and if on the other hand no palpable influence by any of the earlier German writers on Dickens can be traced, there certainly have been conditions and situations both in England and

Germany, when, in spite of obvious dissimilarities, the spirit of the age manifested itself in similar, though not identical, ways on both sides of the Channel.

Of the three German relatives of Dickens whom I have singled out for a comparative study of 'motif' – although many more might be discovered– namely Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann, the former, E.T.A. Hoffmann, is of course by far the oldest and probably the least well known. He was Dickens' contemporary for ten years, as he died in 1822. Having been born at Königsberg, Kant's birth-place, in 1776, he really belonged to an older generation than Dickens, that of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and like these two English bards he is called a 'romantic' writer, which, in his case, stands for his 'Gothic' fascination by, and expression of, the horrible, grotesque, and supernatural within a perfectly real and recognizable picturesque bourgeois world. Hoffmann's career is a most interesting example of an East Prussian being at the same time a conscientious judge, poet, painter, and musician, and successful in all of these, a perfect example of Romantic synaesthetics.

Of him I want to speak first, and I would like to say by way of explanation of the method I have chosen, that in this as in the other two cases, comparison came to me after I had been struck by certain similarities. The point from which a work of art strikes you is probably the point where you can enter the citadel which each work of art represents.

* * *

In the year that Charles Dickens was born, in 1812, Hoffmann wrote a fantastic story of the adventures of a poor young student, a story which later was to form part of a series of 'Fantasias à la Callot' ('Phantasiestücke nach Callots Manier'), published in four volumes in 1814/15 with a preface by Jean Paul Richter. Hoffmann had invented a literary second self, the mad musician and conductor called Kreisler and had attributed these stories to him. His reference to Callot, the famous French designer of grotesque Commedia dell'arte figures, is most illuminating: it shows that Hoffmann, like Callot, was under the spell of the 'grotesque'.

The story I have referred to is called 'The Golden Pot' (Der Goldene Topf'). It is divided into twelve chapters or 'vigils', thus preparing the reader for a series of events, partly real, partly imaginary, proceeding from a wakeful brain battling with midnight thoughts and fantasies. It is the story of Anselmus, a poor young student, in the once beautiful German city of Dresden. He is introduced by a worthy friend, Konrektor Paulmann, to a wizard-like scholar, Archivarius Lindhorst, for whom he undertakes copying work; he falls in love with Lindhorst's beautiful

daughter Serpentina who, in the spiritual realm of ideal, elementary beings, is a beautiful snake, as her father is the fire-born salamander. Anselmus is torn between his love for the ideal Serpentina and the very real, down-to-earth Veronica, Paulmann's eldest daughter; on account of his temporary unfaithfulness to Serpentina he is imprisoned in a glass bottle whence he watches the fight between Lindhorst, the fiery spirit, and his opponent, an old witch, who, in the real world, is an ugly old apple-woman. It is, in short, a story of a young man, dissatisfied with his narrow world, who is capable of rapturous visions and ecstasies and spends most of his time and of his heart's energies in the constructing of an ideal dream-world, where ordinary, Spitzwegian burghers in a picturesque, Spitzwegian Dresden have their spiritual and ghostly counterfeit, in the guise of elementary beings, spiritual symbols or symbolic spirits. There is a continous strange metamorphosing from real life in a romantically domestic little world into a visionary, ideal elementary world and back again.

The story opens with Anselmus, the maladroit day-dreamer ('Pechvogel'), running down an old apple-woman and her apple-stand. The old woman's curses and ominous prophecies follow the scared young man. When, a little while after, he finds himself facing the door of the old house of Archivarius Lindhorst, who has offered him a post of clerk, this is what happens:

'Notwithstanding the long way to the solitary lane and the old house of the Archivarius Lindhorst, the student Anselmus succeeded in reaching the front-door of the house before twelve o'clock. There he stood, gazing at the large, imposing bronze door-knocker; but when he was just about to touch it, on the last stroke of the clock in the tower of the Holy Cross Church, which resounded through the air, the bronze face contorted itself into a broad grin with a ghastly interplay of blue-burning beams of light. Oh, it quite clearly was the apple-wench from the Black Gate! Her pointed teeth chattered within her slack snoutish mouth, and the snarling noise seemed to say: "du Narre-Narre-Narre warte, warte! warum warst hinausgerannt! Narre!" (Thou fool-fool-fool, wait, wait! Why didst thou run away, fool!) Horrified, Anselmus the student staggered back, he wanted to clutch the door-post, but his hand happened to grasp the rope of the door-bell and pulled at it, whereupon it rang, harder and harder, in shrill, piercing sounds, and throughout the desolate house the echo rang and scoffed: "Bald dein Fall ins Kristall!" ("Soon thou wilt fall into crystal, i.e. into a glass bottle."). The student Anselmus was seized by a feeling of horror that made all his limbs tremble in feverish spasms.' – And the story goes on to tell how the bell-rope transformed itself into a gigantic, white, transparent snake, that came wriggling

down and started to coil round poor Anselmus' limbs, till he had the breath crushed out of him and swooned – and how he awoke in his miserable room on his rickety bedstead, with his friend, the Konrektor Paulmann, leaning over him saying: "In heaven's name what mad things are you doing, my dear Herr Anselmus!"'

Let us, for a moment, consider the passage in which the transformation of the bronze door-knocker is described. It is hardly a 'description', rather an imaginative and suggestive inducement to follow the narrator's fantastic flights. The passage has all the fantastic dream qualities of German romanticism, which, when it is not more theoretically abstract than its British counterpart, certainly is more fantastically abstruse, and excessively extravagant. Anselmus' terrifying Phantasmagoria might be explained as a nightmarish dream, if the end of the story in the fairy-land did not belie any such rational interpretation. There are for Hoffmann two worlds, a real and an imaginary one, and the latter is the more real, because it is ideal. But the story starts and restarts in the 'real' every-day world, a world of significant, suggestive details, such as door-knockers, bell-ropes, and glass-bottles, that cast a strong spell over a sensitive mind unwilling to be controlled by the disillusioning power of reason or will.

> 'Things cannot to the will
> Be settled, but they tease us out of thought,'
> (Ep. to J.H. Reynolds, 76 f.),

John Keats would say; and Rainer Maria Rilke, the most sensitive and finely organized of neo-romantic German poets, was painfully aware of the power things can gain over a sensitive mind; their power that may become an irresistible fascination, an aggressive tyranny, and sometimes an obsession.

Anselmus is, like his creator Hoffmann, a dreamer, and though our day-dreaming, if ever we allow ourselves day-dreaming, may be more streamlined, yet we are made to feel, by a kind of strong suggestion or imaginative contagion, how the excitable senses and sensibility of a naive and candid poetic young man are affected by suggestive forms and physiognomies of things around him. When Duke Theseus in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' eloquently rails at this fearful fancy which makes a bush appear like a bear, we may, with regard to Anselmus, exchange bush for knocker and bear for apple-witch. What happens is that an imagination like Hoffmann's, if once fired by the impression of a thing pregnant with potential analogies, starts working, gaining momentum, until it becomes completely subservient to the impressive object and draws the breathless mind along a more and more fantastic flight that, like an hyperbole, soon

loses touch with the firm ground of reason and like a meteor disappears into the unlimited spaces of uncontrolled fancy, 'brought beyond its proper bound' (Keats, a.a.O. 78 f.).

Notice the description of the bell: the student rings it – he is still the active, controlling part; – then it rings and continues ringing – he is out of control now, passive, helpless; it rings harder and harder until the whole desolate place echoes hideously – he is now at the mercy, or rather at the mercilessness, of the thing he has started. The thing has got the better of him, has got beyond his control, he is made 'subject' to the object he touched, the natural and reasonable roles of the subject, man, and the object, thing, are inverted, we are facing a situation that E.Th. Vischer, the German aesthetic philosopher, has characterized by the term 'the maliciousness of the object' – 'Die Tücke des Objekts'.

And why is this so? Obviously, because the mind is so full of the liveliest forms, so seething and teeming with oppressive impressions and visions, that a small outward sign or token, an ordinary thing, suffices, to 'ring the bell', or to tick it off.

Now, a door-knocker is not really an ordinary thing; not even was it so at a time when it was more in the use than today. Charles Dickens knew this. It is unlikely that Dickens knew Hoffmann's tale of 'The Golden Pot'; but he knew his London door-knockers, for he must have been fascinated by them at a very early date. So, in spite of lacking evidence for a direct motif-contact or motif-chain, there is quite indisputably a certain 'elective affinity' between Hoffmann and Dickens, an affinity, but also a difference to which the door-knocker may bear testimony.

You will all the time have thought of the famous 'door-knocker' – passage in Dickens' 'Christmas Carol'. It is hardly necessary to quote it, and yet for the sake of a close comparison, we had better remember it. Scrooge is returning to his house on Christmas Eve:

'Now, it is a fact that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact that Scrooge has seen it night and morning, during his whole residence in that place, ... And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock at the door, saw in the knocker, *without its undergoing any immediate process of change* – not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow, as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look; with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air; and,

though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face, and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.' (Ch.D., A Christmas Carol, London 1954, Macmillan, p. 12 f.)

Dickens carefully prepares us for Scrooge's hallucination. He emphasises the ordinariness of the knocker, so much so and with such hammering in of its factuality, that we become a little incredulous and apprehensive. Indirection for a writer like Dickens is the way of intentionally introducing the supernatural. The author stresses that what happens is a man's sudden hallucination and not a slow change in the object itself. The transformation is a process within Scrooge. By a seemingly perplexed question, the narrator succeeds in drawing the reader's imagination to Scrooge, with whom he establishes a reluctant sympathy. The horribleness of Scrooge's (and the sympathising reader's) experience is stressed but also made slightly ironical by the lobster simile. The word 'ghostly' is repeated for its magically compelling effect, and the mentioning of the 'curiously stirred hair' as if by breath or hot air', which has no longer any relation to the knocker, is certainly a purposefully veiled allusion to purgatorial fires that poor Marley, like the ghost of Hamlet's father mentioned a little earlier, has temporarily escaped. Dickens can be terrifying when he draws images out of a deeply hidden store of nightmare visions and impressions; when he contrives supernatural effects like that of Marley's ghost in a story for small and great children, he is rather amusing, and probably wants to be. But he knows how far to go with his mildly enlightened, strongly susceptible middle-class readers: there is no point in denying that a knocker is a knocker. But a knocker *is* a strange magical thing after all!

Just to discover *what* associations the knocker as a 'magical detail' had for young Dickens, let us look at the 'Sketches by Boz' and 'The Pickwick Papers'.

In the early part of the 'Sketches', 'Our Parish', Ch. VII, he describes 'Our Next-Door-Neighbour'. He idly speculates on people's characters and pursuits; the various expressions of the human countenance suggest to him the physiognomies of street-door knockers affording just as much interest, and the fanciful idea crops up that 'between the man and his knocker, there will inevitably be a greater or lesser degree of resemblance and sympathy.' Having enumerated various types, he constructs an absurd but amusing 'new theory', like the one based on the observation that a man always resembles his dog, that if a man's disposition is altered, he will find himself a more suitable knocker or even move to another house.

In the 'Pickwick Papers', Chapter VI, the 'Bagman's Story' is inserted, and in it an old chair presents itself to Tom Smart awaking from a confused bibulous dream: 'Tom gazed at the chair; and suddenly as he looked at it, a most extraordinary change seemed to come over it. The carving of the back of the chair gradually assumed the lineaments and expression of an old, shrivelled human face; the damask cushion became an antique, flapped waistcoat...', in short, he beholds an ugly old man...

There is a traceable line of development in Dickens' description of an object assuming human traits: from a physiognomic interest ('Sketches'), through a hallucination of a drunken man ('Pickwick') to a vision stirred up by a deeply hidden conscience ('Christmas Carol'). There is no evidence of Dickens' having known the 'Golden Pot'. There is a significant difference between Hoffmann, who gives his visionary world a shape and a reality of its own, making man a 'wanderer between two worlds', and Dickens, for whom reality is the real world and its reflection in man's soul, the boding forth of his own imagination that may distort reality into caricatures but nevertheless remains bound in by the shapes of the things of this world. But there is one important common denominator: Both Hoffmann and Dickens lived and wrote at a time when small things of every-day bourgeois life like door-knockers had become wonderfully poetic and when writers had become more than ordinarily affected by, and sensitive to, the spell of small things and suggestive details. It is this poetisation of the middle-class world with its interest in small things that establishes a relation between Hoffmann and Dickens, but also a common sense of the horrible and grotesque.

It would be interesting to gauge the effect of Dickens' 'Christmas Carol' on Wilhelm Raabe's sketch (written 'long before the "Children of Finkenrode"' in Oct. 1857) called 'Christmas Spirits', where a doll that the narrator has brought, seems to become alive for him after a terrific bout with a friend. It would probably show how there is an influence on Raabe by both Hoffmann and Dickens. But this is not our business. As a result of our comparative study of motif in Hoffmann and Dickens we may conclude and note that both writers work the metamorphosis of a dead thing into a human being by the effort of a grotesquely animating and distorting fancy.

* * *

It would be daring to suggest, or speculate about, a relationship between Dickens and Kafka, if this had not been done already by Kafka himself. In his diary (F.K., Tagebücher, New York 1951, p. 535/6; The Diaries of F.K., 1914-23, ed. Max Brod, Tr. Martin Greenberg with the

coop. of Hannah Ahrendt, New York 1949, p. 188/9) Kafka invites a comparison of his novel 'America', or rather its first chapter, 'The Stoker', publ. 1913, with Dickens' 'David Copperfield'. This chapter was called by Kafka himself in 1917 'a sheer imitation of Dickens, even more so the novel as planned'. This hint has been taken up as a challenge by scholars as eminent as Professor E.W. Tedlock, Jr., ('Kafka's Imitation of David Copperfield', Comparative Literature, vol. VII, 1955, p. 32-62) and Professor Roy Pascal (The German Novel, Manchester UP 1956).

E.W. Tedlock passes criticism on two previous attempts at analysis, in his opinion abortive, one by Jlaus Mann (in his preface to Edwin Muir's translation of 'America'), who, on the assumption of a strong philosophical and religious dichotomy between Dickens and Kafka, dismisses the alleged resemblance, and the other by Rudolf Vasata, '"America" and Charles Dickens' (in: The Kafka Problem, ed. Angel Flores, New York 1946, p. 134-139) who overemphasizes his criticism of an oppressive social system from the Marxist point of view as a common ground between Kafka and Dickens.

Instead, Tedlock undertakes to discuss the points of similarity mentioned by Kafka himself: 'the story of the trunk, the boy who delights and charms everyone, the menial labour, his sweetheart in the country-house, et al., but above all the method,' and he comes to the conclusion 'that what interested Kafka most was Dickens' achievement of certain qualities of experience that cannot be completely reduced to systematic religious or social 'explication', and that are particularly compatible with Kafka's own sensibility'. (op.cit., p. 53). These qualities of experience Tedlock calls 'moral and emotional ambiguity and perplexity'. And he finds an appropriate term for the peculiar distortive method of both Dickens and Kafka for the expression of their experience in the word 'grotesque'.

Roy Pascal on the other hand passes criticism on C. Neider (Kafka, His Mind and Art, p. 93/94), who thinks that 'the similarity lies in the technique, while Kafka's theme is "original and mature"'. (see Pascal, The German Novel, p. 224); for Pascal 'the reverse seems nearer the truth' (ibid.); he claims that Karl Rossmann, Kafka's young hero, is another David Copperfield or Oliver Twist and 'moves through hostile environments and maintains his goodness intact – and as a reward he enters a sheltered refuge.' (Pascal, op.cit., p. 224).

It is E.W. Tedlock who goes furthest into detail. Let me sum up the argument by enumerating the five points of alleged similarity with the conclusions drawn: (1) the 'trunk' or 'box' episodes, revealing an experience of frustration; (2) the 'delightful boy' episodes indicating the ambiguity of powerful charm and social and moral hypocrisy; (3) the 'sweetheart-in-the-country motifs representing a pathetic pantomime;

(4) the 'menial work' motifs stressing mechanisation and degredation of human labour, and, lastly (5) the 'dirty houses' scenes suggesting what Tedlock calls 'the mood of decayed isolation from the main currents of life' (Tedlock, op.cit., p. 59).

Hence, frustration, hypocrisy, pathetic pantomime, mechanized life and labour, decayed isolation: those are the prevailing qualities and moods of an all pervading sense of outraged innocence and homelessness boy exposed to injustice in an ambiguous world.

Roy Pascal, in a more condensed argument, assesses both the absolute and relative meaning of 'America' by judging it in the context of Kafka's complete achievement. He concludes that 'More explicit and optimistic than the later novels, 'America' shows us a world which is bewildering and hostile to the hero, yet not ultimately senseless and not absolutely impervious to effort'. (Pascal, op.cit., p. 225)

It seems that for Professor Pascal the main issue of the alleged similarity between Dickens and Kafka is man's social position in the world, whilst Tedlock's argument is rather more concerned with the novels' aesthetic aspect.

Professor Pascal very happily illustrates Karl Rossmann's confusion of brain and senses as a result of the moral confusion of the world by the episode in which Karl, at his uncle's, 'gropes his way in the dark along endless corridors past dark doorways' (Pascal, op.cit., p. 225).

Now this groping one's way along endless corridors has an early counterpart in the first chapter, 'The Stoker', where Karl, on board the ship entering New York harbour, tries to find his way to the exit. This is how this quite unobtrusive passage is framed: 'He hastily begged his acquaintance, who did not seem particularly gratified, to oblige him by waiting beside the box for a minute, took another survey of the situation to get the bearings for the return journey, and hurried away. Below decks he found to his disappointment that a gangway which made a handy short cut had been barred for the first time in his experience, probably in connection with the disembarkation of so many passengers, and he had painfully to find his way down endlessly recurring stairs, through corridors with countless turnings, through an empty room with a deserted writing table, until in the end, since he had taken this route no more than once or twice and always among a crowd of other people, he lost himself completely. In his bewilderment, meeting no one and hearing nothing but the ceaseless shuffling of thousands of feet above him, and in the distance, like faint breathing, the last throbbings of the engines, which had already been shut off, he began unthinkingly to hammer on a little door by which he had chanced to stop in his wanderings.' (F.K.,'America', New York 1946). It is the stoker's cabin he enters.

There is a passage curiously similar to this in a novel by Dickens utterly dissimilar: 'Pickwick'. (Dickens, 'Pickwick Papers', Chapt. XXII.) Mr. Pickwick, on his journey to Ipswich, before getting involved in a romantic adventure with a middle-aged lady in yellow curl-papers, discovers that he has lost his watch, remembering, however, to have left it in the inn's bar-room. And this is what follows: 'Now, this watch was a special favourite with Mr. Pickwick, having been carried about, beneath the shadow of his waistcoat, for a greater number of years than we feel called upon to state at present. The possibility of going to sleep, unless it were ticking gently beneath his pillow, or in the watch-pocket over his head, had never entered Mr. Pickwick's brain. So as it was pretty late now, and he was unwilling to ring his bell at that hour of the night, he slipped on his coat, of which he had just divested himself, and taking the japanned candle-stick in his hand, walked quietly downstairs.

The more stairs Mr. Pickwick went down, the more stairs there seemed to be to descend, and again and again, when Mr. Pickwick got into some narrow passage, and began to congratulate himself on having gained the ground-floor, did another flight of stairs appear before his astonished eyes. At last he reached the stone hall, which he remembered to have seen when he entered the house. Passage after passage did he explore; room after room did he peep into; at length, as he was on the point of giving up the search in despair, he opened the door of the identical room in which he had spent the evening, and beheld his missing property on the table.'

On his way back, same confusion, same multiplying of stairs, doors, – till, again, he is 'reduced to the verge of despair' when at last he finds what he considers his door.

Again, this seems to be a case of analogy rather than 'influence'. What happens in either case is almost identical: the search of a man for a door or an exit, the losing of the way en route, stairs and corridors mulitplying, bewilderment and confusion, that are on the point of, or actually growing into, panic and despair, a relief in the end that entails new complications.

What really happens is that both characters, single-mindedly in search of a forgotten object, are abstracted from their purpose and involved in fighting their way through a labyrinth. The more they feel given up to the mercilessness of the object, stairs and corridors, the more narrow-minded, almost hysterical they get, until, their wills completely frustrated and their instincts baffled, they seem to be lost and become subject to the 'law' of stairs and corridors, and a prey to the trickiness of things, diabolical monsters, – an experience that E.Th. Vischer had termed 'the maliciousness of the object'. It is this malice of the object,

the stairs and the corridors, that both Mr. Pickwick and Karl Rossmann experience, as in other comic situations the malice of the object subjects the will to its own malicious law or principle, filling the mind entirely and monomaniacally with one panicky idea: how to get out of a situation that seems without end or exit. It is a grotesque scene in either case, a minor form of psychosis or monomania; it is what Vischer calls the 'vortex', well known from Edgar Allan Poe, another distant relative of both Dickens' and Kafka's.

The experience described by Dickens and Kafka en passant, and therefore the more revealing, because caught unawares, I would, therefore, call:

'*the malice of the object, and the puzzled will.*'

* * *

If, thirdly and finally, I venture to point to a certain relationship between Dickens and Thomas Mann, it is with one single aspect of this complex relationship in mind. Twice have I mentioned Ernst Theodor Vischer, the German philosopher. I shall quote him again, because he has been aware of both the phenomenon of the grotesque and the malice of the object. In his 'Aesthetics' he deals (in § 742) with 'The Grotesque Interlacing of Forms' and with 'Mechanisms, Plants, Animals, turning, into man and vice versa'. Vischer is sensitively aware of the dangerous perversion lurking in such an exchange of living beings with dead things, the effect of which may range from humorous laughter to an effect of 'alienation', anxiety, or even terror. The effect of 'alienation', used with a particular meaning by Bertold Brecht, is involved. It seems that both Dickens and Kafka were intensely aware of the terrifying danger arising for the individual as well as for society when men are being treated as objects assume the role of living beings. But their reaction to the looming danger, a very real social situation, was different: Dickens conforted to an ultimately optimistic attitude of his social environment, whilst for Kafka there was no such anodyne as optimism or conformism.

It seems that Thomas Mann, more highly intellectual than either Dickens or Kafka, and advocating a superior rationalism by which to detect, even in Kafka, the more innocuous forms of humour, nevertheless shared Dickens' satirical view of people who are determined to 'play a role' in society up to the point of a grotesque marionette-like attitudinising.

In Dickens' Sketches by Boz (Tales, Chapt. V, 'Horatio Sparkins'), the elegant Sparkins, who is really a scoundrel, 'attitudinised with admirable effect'. When the Maldertons had crossed the room, he then started up, with the most natural appearance of surprise and delight; accosted Mrs. Malderton with the utmost cordiality; saluted the young ladies in the

most enchanting manner; bowed to, and shook hands with, Mr. Malderton, with a degree of respect amounting almost to veneration; and returned the greetings of the two young men in a half-gratified, half-patronising manner, which fully convinced them that he must be an important, and, at the same time, condescending personage.

'Miss Malderton,' said Horatio, after the ordinary salutations, and bowing very low, 'may I be permitted to presume to hope that you will allow me to have the pleasure –'

'I don't think I am engaged,' simpered the interesting Teresa, at last. Horatio's countenance brightened up, like an old hat in a shower of rain...' (op.cit.)

In Thomas Mann's novel 'Buddenbrooks' it is Herr Grünlich, Consul Buddenbrook's future son-in-law, who is Sparkin's counterfeit. Like him, Grünlich, early in the novel, enters a family circle, and this is what happens:

'With a final, lengthy stride he arrived, the upper part of his body describing, in the process, an all-embracing semi-arc which thus paid his reverence to the whole assembled company.

'I intrude, I am breaking in on a family gathering,' he uttered in a voice which contained just the right balance of sensitivity and delicate reserve, 'good books have been opened, there is animated conversation. I must hasten to offer my most humble apologies.'

Herr Grünlich, as the reader soon finds out, is an impostor, a hypocrite, like Horatio Sparkins. It is obvious that Thomas Mann's performance of characterising and caricaturising him, is more subtle than Dickens' method. But the very movements of both figures, impelled by one central, predominant impulse: hypocrital adaptation, are almost those of a marionette, and in this are very much alike.

* * *

Dickens often exploits this potential mechanism in human beings and the potential dynamism in mechanical things. In his story 'Mugby Junction' (1850), the hero, Barbox Brothers, looking down from a railway bridge, observes this scene:

'There was heard a distant ringing of bells and blowing of whistles. Then, puppet-looking heads of men popped out of boxes in perspective, and popped in again. Then, prodigious wooden razors, set up on end, segan shaving the atmosphere. Then, several locomotive engines in several directions began to scream and be agitated.' (Mugby Junction, Chapt. I, 2)

The comic, almost grotesque effect is here produced and neatly demonstrated in two consecutive sentences, the first changing men, signal-

men, into puppets, or automata, the next animating and personifying railway signals into strange beings doing monstrous things in a surrealist way.

There is in Dickens, as there was in Hoffmann, who created the famous figure of the dancing doll Olympia, as there is in Kafka and Thomas Mann, a strong sense of the possible perversion of the relation between human beings and dead things. This perversion of the established natural order is both comic and terrifying, it is 'grotesque'.

The late Professor Wolfgang Kayser of Göttingen has left us a book entitled *Das Groteske* ('The Grotesque') in which he tries to establish the term 'grotesque' as a valid literary aesthetic category, tracing the development from the early grotto ornaments in Italian catacombs through literature and the fine arts. In this connection he mentions what he calls the quality of 'mechanical dynamism' in Dickens:

'Dickens' characters,' Kayser writes, 'are throughout flatter than those of Raabe, they are more mechanical, but in so being, are thus more dynamic, always 'running down' (like a clock), always in action. The energy with which they are activated is no personal quality of their character, but works rather like a spring of an impersonal force that propels them. The narrator has a peculiar gift of observation for the driving and exaggerating force (das Treibende und Übertreibende), of this elementary power, otherwise quite unbroken, that moves his universe.' (Wolfgang Kayser, *Das Groteske*, Oldenburg & Hamburg 1957, p. 133)

Kayser calls this grotesque world 'the self-alienated world' ('die entfremdete Welt') (op.cit. p. 198). Surely, this is the fasihonable, Brecht-born slogan and jargon, but Kayser's diagnosis seems to me remarkably poignant and suitable for the emotional elements that constitute a relationship between Dickens and some German writers: 'Mechanical things alienate themselves, or: lose their nature and identity, *gaining life*; human beings, lose their identity, *losing life*. Bodies stiffened into puppets, automata, marionettes, and faces hardened into larvae and masks, are recurrent motifs.' (op.cit., ibid.) This is the third result of our comparative experiment.

This inversion of men and things is not only, I think, an expression of anxiety in our age of growing technology, bureaucracy and general mechanisation; it is, rather, the ever possible perversion of the natural order of things, of which Dickens, like his 'German relatives', was so strongly aware.

MORIENDUM EST

When I shall come to die as die we must
(We are in transit here on longer journey
Trainloads of exiles travelling through dark tunnels)
I know I'll fear loneliness more than death
Being alone to undertake a journey
By night, not knowing where it starts or ends.
If you, for old time's sake, will sit beside me
To watch the parting, lay your hands on mine,
Dear belovèd friend, wife, son and daughters;
And I shall feel less lonely, less cut off
Being remembered by those whom I have loved.
Such contact for a while will soothe the fears
Of renunciations; painful separations
From those we cherish; from the daily tasks
Of 'lectures' and 'research' performed with zest
Expressing a deep urge to live through work.
Shed no idle tears. Remember me gently,
Forgive my brusqueness and recall instead
The love that bound us tight as one large family,
Your dear faces will haunt me after death
As I shall long for your sweet company,
Remember, friends, our fight for 'a square deal'
Such little things as meals in the canteen,
The jokes, the conversation of the day,
The laughter in the hours of relaxation
Between one Council harangue and another.
Remember and forget; remember only
The many kindnesses we showed each other,
The years of comradeship in our Alma Mater.
Forgive the frailties of human flesh and blood;
Remember me by what was best in me
(Are we not all part Shadow and part Light?)
Then look around you who are still alive
And have more years before you to enjoy
The comradeship of work before you die.
Allow one farewell wish before I go:
I wish you the sweet comfort of a hand

Laid on your own before your last goodbye;
The parting kiss that will dispel the darkness
Of the Unknown and will reveal in part
The Mystery of that Love our Father, God
And His Son, Jesus and the Holy Ghost
Reserve for mortals at their journey's end.
I travelled by this Light through life's dark tunnel
God help you find your road by your own Lamp.

11th April, 1969. J. AQUILINA

MALTESE SOCIETY

If you give a cocktail party, all the guests will be there
Including the very ornate pillars of Maltese society.
If 'tis instead a talk you give, most are busy elsewhere
Including the paladins of Social Propriety
Unless the Speaker is a 'big gun' from the Establishment
Whose favours are bought with salaams and blandishment.

March 1969 J. AQUILINA

SMILE

You need not smile
For I will not smile back
Unless it were a nice girl smiling
When due return is courteous
Or irresistible
Smiles are a luxury
Their price gone high through further super-taxes
You are not on the list on whom
My sun may smile
And so I switch it off.

And may I ask you please to dim your light
Your glare sears my complexion
Cracks my flash
The last that I am saving.

13.ii.68. BERNARD MALLIA, S.J.

PIETRO ARETINO

By GIOVANNI CURMI

NON dobbiamo meravigliarci nè scandalizzarci se la letteratura che comincia con San Francesco, se la letteratura che ci ha dato Dante e il Manzoni, abbia pure prodotto, durante i suoi sette secoli di gloriosa esistenza, alcune figure di scrittori bizzarri e strampalati. Una di queste figure è, senza dubbio, quella di Pietro Aretino, che visse in pieno Rinascimento, in quel periodo d'oro della Letteratura Italiana in cui fiorirono tanti geni universali, come Michelangelo Buonarroti, tanti pittori illustri, come il Tiziano e il Correggio, tanti sommi poeti, come l'Ariosto e il Tasso.

Nessun altro scrittore, in tutta la storia della Letteratura Italiana, fu tanto esaltato e tanto vituperato, tanto odiato e tanto temuto quanto Pietro Aretino. L'odio gli procacciò terribili inimicizie e due colpi di pugnale, ma il timore gli procurò la richezza e la fama, la stima dei principi, la lode degli scrittori, le blandizie dei due più potenti sovrani di allora, Carlo V e Francesco I, e il titolo di 'divino' dal più grande poeta dei suoi tempi, l'Ariosto.

Nato ad Arezzo da un calzolaio nel 1492, l'Aretino passò una vita avventurosa e burrascosa, maledicendo chi non lo pagava e adulando che gli dava quattrini. Per queste sue bravure, si meritò, quando era ancora in vita, la reputazione di largitore di glorie, di bollatore d'infamie e di flagellatore di principi. È un fatto innegabile che da origini umilissime, col solo mezzo della penna, egli diventò, in breve tempo, potentissimo, e riuscì a carpire ai suoi contemporanei iperboliche lodi e fantastici onori. Gli furono coniate medaglie, erette statue, elargite pensioni; piazze, strade, fiumi e cristalli di murano furono battezzati col suo nome; l'effigie gli fu murata nelle facciate dei palazzi e improntata nelle casse dei pettini, negli ornamenti degli specchi e nei piatti di maiolica; ma poi, quando morì a Venezia, nel 1556, non fu compianto da nessuno, come ne fa fede la notizia della sua morte conservata nell'Archivio di Firenze: 'Il mortal Pietro Aretino, mercoledi a hore 3 di notte fu portato all'altra vita da una cannonata di apoplexia, senza haver lassato desiderio nè dolor a nissuno huomo da bene.'

Contriaramente a quanto credevano i dotti della sua epoca, l'Aretino non aveva molto profonda cultura, e non era troppo entusiasta degli studi

seri. Egli stesso, infatti, scrisse una volta al suo grande amico Agostino Ricchi: 'Il soverchio dello studio procrea errore, confusione, maninconia, colera e sazietà.' Suppliva però alla mancanza di profondi studi la vivacità del suo ingegno, la giovialità del suo spirito, e, sopratutto, la sua sfrontatezza e la sua audacia.

L'opera letteraria dell'Aretino è tra le più abbondanti del Cinquecento. Egli scrisse molti versi, generalmente maligni e osceni, molti libelli, generalmente indecenti ed astiosi, un poema parodistico *Orlandino*, molto triviale, un gran numero di 'pasquinate' molto mordaci, parecchie commedie in prosa molto disoneste, tra cui ebbero grande fortuna *La cortigiana* e *L'ipocrito*. L'unica sua opera quasi scevra delle solite pecche è il suo copiosissimo epistolario in sei volumi, che è a un tempo documento della vita dell'epoca e testimonianza del valore dell'arte descrittiva e narrativa del suo autore.

Benchè questo sia il vero Aretino, l'Aretino cinico e miscredente, non è ancora tutto l'Aretino. Da perfetto uomo del Rinascimento, l'Aretino ondeggia perpetuamente fra il paganesimo e il cattolicesimo, fra la materialità e la spiritualità, e così, accanto a poemetti satirici e volgari, componeva leggende sacre, accanto a dialoghi per cortigiane componeva dialoghi per religiosi, e accanto a libri osceni scriveva libri di santi.

Queste opere ascetiche però non denotavano in lui alcun inizio di conversione, perchè non gli erano dettate dal rimorso o da ravvedimento. Il fondo del suo spirito rimaneva sempre lo stesso: un cinismo sornione materiato di astuzia e di voluttà. Ed egli passava da uno scritto immorale a uno scritto morale con la stessa leggerezza d'animo con cui in vita da libertino si era fatto frate, da frate valletto del Papa, e da valletto del Papa compagno d'orgie di Giovanni delle Bande Nere.

Morì però bene, come risulta dal seguente documento, firmato dal pievano Demetrio il 21 settembre 1556, e conservato nel pubblico Archivio di Arezzo: 'Il Sig. Pietro Aretino poeta, che stantiava nella mia parrocchia de San Luca sopra 'l Canal Grande di Realto, nelle case del claris.mo Senatore il Sig. Leonardo Dandolo del già claris.mo Sig. Hieronimo, morì in detta mia contrada, et è sepolto nella chiesa mia de San Luca Evangelista guà molti anni, in un sepolcro novo vicino alli gradi della sagrestia; et io Pietro Paolo Demetrio, Pievano della detta chiesa, feci l'ufficio et l'esequie et l'ho sepolto cristianamente; il quale, il Giovedi Santo innanti che egli finisse gli ultimi suoi giorni, il detto Sig. Pietro Aretino si confessò et in detta mia chiesa, il detto giorno, pigliò la Santissima Commonione, piangendo lui estremamente, et ciò vidi io stesso. Il quale morì da morte subitanea giù d'una cadrega d'apozzo.' (poltrona d'appoggio).

Non molto erudito, ma dotato d'una certa dose non comune d'ingegno e d'una maggiore dose di sfacciataggine e di presunzione, è un fatto che l'Aretino riuscì a burlarsi di tutti, facendo a tutti credere che egli fosse un grande letterato. Ma se egli si burlò degli uomini del suo tempo, il tempo e gli uomini si vendicarono di lui strocemente. Dopo la Controriforma, infatti, i suoi libri furono messi all'Indice, e perseguitati con tanto accanimento che per ben tre secoli non ne fu permessa in Italia la pubblicazione. Questa persecuzione tuttavia non impedì che nel Secento venissero stampate alcune sue opere minori sotto falsi nomi e alcune delle sue commedie sotto il nome del Tansillo e di altri scrittori del Cinquecento.

Del resto più che per la sua opera letteraria caduta da tempo in oblio, l'Aretino è rimasto famoso per la sua venalità, e in modo particolare per il suo atteggiamento da ricattatore di fronte ai grandi personaggi della sua epoca, siano essi scrittori o principi.

Nel Rinascimento, nonostante tanto risveglio d'arte e di cultura, la condizione del letterato non era affatto invidiabile. La stampa era in pieno rigoglio, ma i lettori non potevano ancora essere molto numerosi, con la conseguenza che gli scrittori non potevano, come oggi, vivere col ricavato dalla vendita dei loro libri. E così vediamo perfino i due più grandi poeti del Cinquecento, l'Ariosto e il Tasso, mettersi per necessità al servizio di potenti mecenati, e dedicare il primo il suo maggior poema al Cardinale Ippolito d'Este, il quale gli assegnò circa 1200 lire all'anno in rendite ecclesiastiche, e il secondo dedicare la *Gerusalemme Liberata* ad Alfonso II, Duca di Ferrara, il quale gli *assegnò* circa 58 lire al mese.

L'Aretino, spirito pronto e vivace, ma non elevato, ingegno acuto e versatile, ma inviluppato negli interessi pecuniari, seguì tattica molto diversa: non volle essere servo dei grandi, ma il loro padrone; non volle mettersi al servizio di nessuno, ma ricattare chi aveva del denaro da spendere. E con la minaccia della calunnia o con la promessa dell'elogio riuscì ad avere dai paurosi e dai vanitosi ciò che voleva: la ricchezza, l'onore e la fama. E tanto bene seppe tramare il suo inganno, e tanto bene seppe organizzare la sua beffa che gli uomini del suo tempo, anzichè considerarlo, quale era nella realtà, un uomo abbietto, lo ritennero alla pari di Dante, come un sommo giustiziere e come un apostolo. E anzichè ricacciargli in gola la malignità e il vituperio, gli uomini dei suoi tempi amavano, come dice il De Sanctis, 'trattarlo come Cerbero, e chiudergli i latrati gettandogli un'offa.'

Il fenomeno Aretino costituisce una tappa importante nella storia degli scrittori, perchè segna il trapasso da un'epoca ad un'altra: dall'epoca degli scrittori servi del passato all'epoca degli scrittori liberi dell'età

moderna. Facendosi pagare per i suoi scritti a volte con la lusinga dell'adulazione, a volte con la minaccia della maldicenza, l'Aretino è qualcosa fra lo scrittore tradizionale, mezzo servo e mezzo parassita, da Omero al Tasso, e lo scrittore dell'età nuova che per vivere non ha bisogno di accontentare gli umori dei mecenati, ma scrive e canta secondo l'estro gli detta. Osserva argutamente il Graf: 'Fra il letterato che chiede l'elemosina e il letterato che mette in vendita il suo libro, ci doveva essere il letterato che impone l'elemosina; e questo letterato fu Pietro Aretino.'

Due epigrammi celebri ritraggono meglio d'un intero volume la vera figura dell'Aretino come scrittore e come critico. Il primo epigramma sintetizza in due versi il valore letterario delle sue opere:

Qui giace l' Aretin, che tanto visse
da veder obliato quel che scrisse

e il secondo, nel giro d'una terzina, scolpisce a perfezione la sua fisonomia morale e spirituale:

Qui giace l'Aretin, poeta tosco:
di tutti disse mal, fuorchè di Cristo,
scusandosi col dir: non lo conosco.

THE JEW OF MALTA AND THE MYTH OF THE MACHIAVELLIAN KNAVE

By P.P. GRECH

SEVERAL critics have commented on the prevailing influence of Machiavelli on the Elizabethan World. In 1927, for instance, Wyndham Lewis, affirmed that: 'Machiavelli was at the back of every Tudor mind,'[1] whilst H.S. Bennett maintained that, '...Machiavelli is so omnipresent and important a constituent of Elizabethan drama.'[2] Very few scholars seek to minimize the influence of Machiavelli on the Elizabethan mind. E.M.W. Tillyard in 1948, however, argued that: '...his (Marlowe's) basic doctrines lie outside the main sixteenth century interests.'[3] But this is not the only conflict. A subject of a prolonged controversy has been the introduction of the Machiavellian Legend into England. Since Meyer published his famous dissertation on *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama*, in 1897,[4] several important monographs and books have been written on the subject. The issue does not seem very clear as yet. Undue importance has been attached to Innocent Gentillet's French Book, popularly known as *Contre-Machiavel,* published in 1576. For a long time it has been considered the grand arsenal, from which most of the Elizabethans, according to the suggestion of Meyer, derived their knowledge of Machiavelli. Repeated attempts have subsequently been made to dispose of the alleged influence of Gentillet's book as merely one of many anti-Machiavellian documents. Yet, until quite recently, critics were pleased to cling on to Meyer's original suggestion.

This is not the whole picture. The distortions of the true Machiavellian doctrine have been attributed mainly to three causes – ignorance of the works of Machiavelli, the misconceptions propagated by Gentillet and the more recent plea, the inability of the Elizabethans to understand Machiavelli's works. The three suggestions seem to me unfounded, as I hope to show.

Marlowe was the first English dramatist who introduced Machiavelli on the Elizabethan stage *in propria persona.* Through the prologue of *The*

[1] See Wyndham Lewis, *The Lion and the Fox,* N.Y. 1927, p. 64.
[2] See Bennett H.S., Edn. *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris,* Methuen & Co., Introduction p. 12.
[3] See Tillyard E.M.W., *Shakespeare's History Plays,* London, 1948, p. 21.
[4] See Meyer Edward, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama,* Weimar, 1897.

Jew of Malta, Machiavelli with great pomp, ushers in his disciple Barabas and begs the audience to grace him despite his Machiavellian villainies. The Machiavellian influence on Marlowe's works is particularly and most remarkably evident in *The Jew of Malta.* Mario Praz declared:

> The two plays which gave birth to the type of the Machiavellian knave on the English stage are *The Jew of Malta* and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy.*[5]

We are only concerned here with *The Jew of Malta*

No doubt, Marlowe shows great familiarity with the Machiavellian Legend, which he used as a vital source of his plays, especially of *The Jew of Malta.* That Marlowe exhibits in his works a more intimate knowledge of the popular misconception of Machiavelli than his true teachings is, I think, true. But is this due to ignorance of the real doctrine of Machiavelli? In trying to trace the origin, nature and development of the popular Machiavelli Legend, I hope I shall have adequately answered this interesting question.

None of Machiavelli's more famous books was published during his lifetime, but all his works were freely circulated in manuscript form even after his death in 1527. During the lifetime of Machiavelli, Francesco Giucciardini wrote *Considerazioni sui discorsi del Machiavelli.* In one chapter, Giucciardini opposes Machiavelli's appraisal of fraud as an essential factor in the rise of low-born men to power:

> *Quanto alla fraude puo essere disputibile se sia sempre buono instrumento di pervenire alla grandezza.*[6]

The first publication of *Il Principe* and *I Discorsi* was undertaken by the Pope's own printer, Blado, in Rome, in 1531 and 1532 respectively, whilst independent editions of the same works were simultaneously issued in Florence. The year 1540 saw the first publication of a collected edition of Machiavelli's works. The Pope's *imprimatur* indicates, that no controversy on Machiavelli's works had as yet arisen. Besides, Machiavelli was highly esteemed in his lifetime and this is clearly attested by such men as Soderini, Vettori, Clement VII and several others.[7]

Towards the late 1530's a growing reaction against Machiavelli's doctrine was firmly gaining ground. Monarchs who were only too glad to set

[5] Praz Mario, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans,* Proceedings of the British Academy, XIV, 1928, p. 49-97; same Lecture is contained in *The Flaming Heart,* N.Y., 1958, pp. 109-144.

[6] Quoted by Freyer Grattan, 'The Reputation of Machiavelli' in *Hermathena,* Vol. LVI, Nov. 1940, pp. 148-167.

[7] Ibid.

themselves up as absolute rulers or to assert their superiority over the Church, found in Machiavelli's teaching the sanction which they needed. Such a fairly new concept of kingship could not but arouse fierce antagonism from several quarters. Curiously enough, the earliest extant violent attack on Machiavelli seems to have come from an Englishman, Cardinal Reginald Pole.[8]

Pole's interest in Machiavelli apparently was stimulated by Cromwell's recommendation about the year 1527, to read a famous book by an Italian, 'a very acute modem.'[9] In his treatise *Apologia ad Carolum V,* published in 1539, Pole averred that with great eagerness he sought this book which, according to him, eventually turned out to be *Il Principe.* He confessed that he had read it with great care and soon proceeded to lash out at it, in the most bitter terms, associating Machiavelli's name with the devil and Cromwell's with both.[10] We do not know, for sure, whether Cromwell actually recommended Machiavelli's *Il Principe* or Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* or whether he was really in earnest at all. But whatever it was, Pole stated that he had read *Il Principe* and Cromwell's persistent advice to Henry VIII to make his will the law and set himself an absolute monarch regardless of any theological repercussions, was indeed identical with the maxims advocated in *Il Principe.*[11] With his wide travelling in Italy, Cromwell had ample opportunity of reading Machiavelli's works in manuscript form, but even if he did not, his concept of monarchy would hardly have been different.

Machiavelli's aim was the unification of Italy and the establishment of a sound, orderly government. He was alarmed by the chaotic conditions obtaining in Italy and the bitter rivalries, hatred and strife existing between different principalities. Indeed an iron hand was needed. To achieve this unity a Prince ought not to shun any policy. He regarded the Church as a most powerful enemy in his scheme of things. He therefore preached the entire segregation of politics from religion. Unlike the great medieval thinkers, like St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, William of Occam, John of Salisbury and others, who were moralists and concerned with what should be, Machiavelli, who was completely amoral, was solely concerned with what was. Irving Ribner pointed out:

Machiavelli's great contribution to political thought lay in his divorce

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid: See also, Einstein Lewis: *The Italian Renaissance in England,* 1st pub. N.Y., 1902, p. 292.

[10] See Pole Reginald: Apologia ad Carolum V, in *Epistolarum Reginaldi Poli,* Vol. I., Brescia, 1744, pp. 137-152.

[11] See *Letters and Papers,* Henry VIII, Vol. VII, p. 1554.

from it of all consideration of sentiment, morality or Christian ethics.[12]

Lord Acton had also suggested this same idea earlier on:

> The essence of Machiavelli's method is the removal from the realm of political science of all questions of sentiment and morality. His one consideration was of politics as a logical science of cause and effect which could only be adequately understood if moral considerations were left out of the question.[13]

This was Machiavelli's target and this was Pole's fear – the complete secularisation of Politics and the State in a still predominantly theological age. Attempts to discover new forms for the medieval ideal of a united Christendom which was rapidly disintegrating and on which the pope's supremacy depended, were seriously endangered and soon shattered by Machiavelli's precepts. In 1540, Pole again declared:

> Machiavelli had already poisoned England and would poison all Christendom.

He eamestly hoped that his works would be supressed.[14] His diatribe was soon followed by others, notable among these we find those of Caterino Politi, Bishop Osorio and Possevino.[15] A similar outcry was eventually raised in France by Gentillet:

> Machiavelli by his doctrine and documents, hath changed the good and antient governments of France, into a kind of Florentine Government, whereupon we see with our eyes, the total ruine of all France.[16]

Ascham's impression of Machiavelli is not less unfavourable. In 1551, in fact, he fulminated against Machiavelli, whom he associated with paganism and opportunism.[17] Machiavelli has already become a bug-bear and his name is bandied about with epithets like 'devilish', 'pagan' and 'opportunist'. As a result of these repeated, violent attacks on Machiavelli's doctrine, the Roman Inquisition decided to place his works on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1559. What this meant actually, was, that all

[12] See Ribner Irving, *The Significance of Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel*, H L Q, Vol. X., 1949, pp. 153-157; See also: Villari Pasquale: *Life and Times of Nicolo Machiavelli*, trans. from Italian by Linda Villari, London, 1898, II, pp. 185-233.
[13] Lord Acton, Introduction to N. Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, Edn., L. Arthur Burd, Oxford, 1891, pp. 16-17.
[14] See Raab Felix, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, London, 1964, p. 32.
[15] See Villari Pasquale, *Life and Times of Nicolo Machiavelli*, trans. Linda Villari, op. cit. II, pp. 185-233.
[16] Quoted by Bakeless J., I, op. cit. p. 349.
[17] See Ascham R. quoted by Raab Felix, op. cit. p. 33.

new editions of Machiavelli's works were suspended in all the lands under the control of the Inquisition. In England, at least, there seems to have been no positive prohibition on reading Machiavelli's works, though their printing was henceforward considered illicit. In spite of these bans however, copies of earlier editions of Machiavelli's works, had already circulated far and wide and therefore a copy of his works was not presumably very hard to obtain by those who were really interested.[18] But among the many detractors, Machiavelli had also a few defenders and adherents. Morison who rose to eminence after serving as a member in Pole's household at Padua, had recourse to Machiavelli's maxims when he took up Henry VIII's cudgels and rebutted Cocklaeus' attack on divorce and royal supremacy. His most remarkable piece of writing is perhaps *A remedy for Sedition*, which appears to be drenched in Machiavellian doctrine.[19] Another Italianate Englishman who sympathised with Machiavelli, was William Thomas, who, on his return from Italy in 1549 was soon appointed Clerk to the Privy Council and eventually, political tutor to the young king Edward. He lost no time in trying to inculcate in the mind of the young king maxims from *I Discorsi*.[20]

If further evidence is needed to prove the growing popularity of Machiavelli's works in pre-Elizabethan times, we may refer to Charles V's sanctioning of a Spanish translation of *Il Principe* in the early fifties despite the suspicious view which the Inquisition was already taking of Machiavelli's works. A French translation of *Il Principe*, dedicated to the powerful Scottish nobleman, Prince James Hamilton, was also published in 1553. With the accession of Elizabeth Machiavellian doctrine was finding richer and more fertile soil. The growing, fierce, religious quarrels which had been raging for some time, strongly aided the perpetuation and popularity of Machiavelli's doctrine. With little or no restraint Catholics and Protestants labelled each other as Machiavellians.[21] Indeed, Machiavelli was more and more being used as a symbol for all that was hateful, immoral, monstrous and evil. In 1954, J.C. Maxwell stated:

> ...the Machiavellian legend had made considerable progress nearly a

[18] See Freyer Grattan, op. cit. pp. 148-167.

[19] See *A Remedy for Sedition*, London, 1536, Edn. Cox, E.M. London, 1933.

[20] See Raab F., op. cit. p. 42.

[21] See Hull James, *The Unmasking of the Politique Atheiste*, London, 1602, sig. A4, D4, and E3v. – a protestant treatise. Also: *A confutation of the Apologie* etc. Antwerp, 1565, Anonymous, p. 134v – Catholic. Such instances of how Machiavelli was being used as a weapon in the politico-religious quarrels of the time could be multiplied by reference to Horrocks, *Machiavelli in Tudor Political Opinion & Discussion*, unpub. D. Litt., Thesis, Lon. 1908.

quarter of a century before Gentillet's book.[22]

Machiavelli stood in the popular Elizabethan mind as an inhuman monster, an advocate of all evil and a devil disguised in human form. They needed no misrepresentation or misconception of his works such as that of the French Huguenot Innocent Gentillet in 1576, to visualize him as a Politic Villain.

Since the publication of Edward Meyer's famous analysis on the Machiavellian influence in Elizabethan drama (1897), however, it has become customary among literary historians to attribute the 'Machiavel' of the Elizabethan stage to false impressions and distortions of Machiavelli's true political thought. These perversions were, according to these critics, disseminated in England by Innocent Gentillet's vituperative attack on Machiavelli's doctrine.[23] This biting censure was first published in 1576 in France, and although it was probably translated in English by S. Patericke in the following year, the English version did not appear in print before 1602.[24] To attribute such a powerful force and influence in Elizabethan England to a foreign polemical document is undoubtedly very strange, to say the least.

Mario Praz, in his British Academy Lecture in 1928, sought to mitigate Gentillet's alleged influence by pointing out that the Machiavelli Legend was popular in Europe even before the appearance of Gentillet's book, commonly known as *Contre-Machiavel.* He maintained that Contre-Machiavel was just one of the many anti-Machiavellian expressions.[25] Hans Beck in 1935, went a step further and attributed the Elizabethan misunderstanding of Machiavelli to historical and sociological influences rather than to *Contre-Machiavel.*[26] But despite the earnestness with which these and other critics sought to minimise the importance attached to Gentillet in the creation of the new Machiavellian stage villain, writers like Nadja Kempner,[27] Thomas Hugh Jameson,[28] Jean Robertson,[29] James Emerson

[22] See Maxwell J.C., *Notes and Queries,* New Series, I, 4 (April 1954) p. 141.
[23] See Ribner Irving, 'The Significance of Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel', op. cit. pp. 153-157.
[24] See Raab F., op. cit. p. 56.
[25] See Praz M., *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans,* op. cit. pp. 49-97.
[26] See Hans Beck, *Machiavellismus in der Englischen Renaissance,* Duisburg, 1953, pp. 5-7.
[27] See Kempner Nadja, *Raleghs Slaattheoretische Schrifte, Die Einfuhrung des Machiavellismus in England,* Leipsig, 1928, pp. 23-25.
[28] See Jameson T.H., 'The Machiavellism of Gabriel Harvey', PMLA, LVI, 1941, pp. 645-656.
[29] See Roberton J., 'Nicholas Breton and the Uncasing of Machevils Instructions to his Sonne' *H L Q.* IV, 1940-1941, 477.

Phillips,[30] Wyndham Lewis,[31] and Arnold Weissberger,[32] still clung to Meyer's original view. The modern tendency, on the whole, however, disapproves of Meyer's suggestion. Gentillet's contribution however, had its significance too. It helped to strengthen the already existent popular legend and is perhaps the earliest extant treatise which associated Machiavelli with a real political event – the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew in 1572.

Within fifty years from the publication of *Il Principe* and *I Discorsi*, Machiavelli had become in England a household word.[33] Greene formed a proper noun out of his name which symbolised anything that was immoral and evil. Soon dramatists like Kyd and Marlowe got hold of him and introduced him as a new stage villain which caught on for many years.[34] There is no doubt that this new type of villain simultaneously horrified and entertained Elizabethan audiences for quite a long time.

That the Elizabethans read Machiavelli can perhaps be illustrated by the great demand for his works. To begin with, there were the illicit Italian editions published in England by John Wolfe under false imprints, during the eighties – *I Discorsi* and *Il Principe* in 1584, with the imprint of Palermo; *Arte Della Guerra* with no date and same imprint, *Istorie Fiorentine* 1587, issued under the imprint of Piacenza and *L'Asino d'Oro*, published in 1588, with Roma as its imprint.[35] To these editions must be added the English translation of *The Art of War* in 1563, 1573, 1588 by Peter Whitehorne, who dedicated his work to Queen Elizabeth, and Thomas Bedingfield's English translation of *The History of Florence* in 1595. The earliest extant published translations of *I Discorsi* and *Il Principe* in English are those of Edward Dacres, dated 1636 and 1640 respectively. However both Hardin Craig and Napoleone Orsini were able to establish that *I Discorsi* and *Il Principe* had been widely circulated in English before 1600, and that copies of these translations are still preserved at the British Museum, The Queen's College Library, Oxford and at the

[30] See Phillips J.E., *The state in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays*, N.Y., 1940, pp. 31 ff.

[31] See Wyndham Lewis, op. cit. p. 71.

[32] See Wemsberger L.A., 'Machiavelli and Tudor England', *P. S. Q.*, XLII, 1927, 589 ff.

[33] See D'Andrea A., 'Studies on Machiavelli and his Reputation in the Sixteenth Century' in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Edn. Hunt, Klibansky and Labour-sky, London Univ. Vol. V, 1961, pp. 234-235.

[34] See Praz M. op. cit. pp. 49-97.

[35] See Gerber A., 'All of the Five Fictitious Italian Editions of Writings of Machiavelli and Three of Those of Pietro Aretino', Printed by John Wolfe of London, 1584-1588 *M L M* xxii 1907, pp. 2-6, 129-135.

Library of Mr. Jules Furthman of Los Angeles.[36] Ribner remarked:

> All of these manuscripts were evidently widely circulated and together with the surreptitious Italian editions published at great personal risk by John Wolfe, attest to the great popularity which Machiavelli's works themselves enjoyed and to the great eagemess with which they were sought.[37]

Versions of Machiavelli's works were scattered in great profusion, in Italian, English, Latin and Spanish. This must have made it quite possible for the interested sixteenth century Englishman to pick up some copy of Machiavelli's works either at home or when he travelled abroad. Indeed such a variety and multiplicity of the Florentine Secretary's works published in their original in various editions as well as their rendering in different languages in manuscript or printed form, not to mention the cost and trouble involved, must undoubtedly point to the tremendous popularity of their author and the great avidity with which people yearned to read him.

The stage Machiavelli has been burdened with crimes, horrors and vices entirely unwarranted by the original works of the author. These are most flagrant distortions, but they are neither the result of any Elizabethan unawareness of the true Machiavelli nor the alleged influence of Gentillet's diatribe. The reason for this perversion has been summed up by Raab:

> The Tudor horror of Machiavelli even in its most grotesque form (the stage version) was not a distortion due to ignorance or the (non-existent) popularity of Gentillet, it was the horror of a generation which saw its traditional *Weltenschauung* seriously and validly challenged.[38]

Besides, a state figure as such, has an independent vitality and life of its own, completely detached from its origins. The new stage-Machiavel in fact, embodied other popular traditions such as traits from the Senecan villain hero as well as qualities derived from the vice or the devil-incarnate of the native tradition.

The term 'villain' in actual fact, had originated from the feudal expression 'villein' which normally stood for a peasant or a low, base fellow. Soon this term was transferred from a social to a moral setting and thence to the theatre. The role which the villain persistently played before the introduction of the Machiavellian knave, had been somewhat akin to the motiveless malignity of the Vice of the Native morality tradition. The

[36] See Ribner Irving, op. cit. pp. 153-157.
[37] Ibid.
[38] See Raab F., op. cit. p. 69.

Vice figure, in reality, represented an allegorised abstraction, as a tempting mischief-maker who symbolised a single or a multiplicity of Vices. As the drama began to be more and more secularised in tone and subject matter, particularly after the second half of the sixteenth century, the Vice figure gradually, but steadily, began to assume human form, even, if initially, highly unrealistic. With his roaring, thundering, plotting, murdering, revengeful and fraudulent villain hero, Seneca invaded the early Elizabethan Stage through the Elite drama, and gave the already existent native Vice figure, all the vigour, substance and vitality that it really needed. Seneca's influence in the portrayal of this type of villain can be seen for instance in *Gorboduc* (1561) and *Cambeses* (1569) not to mention the presentation of his own 'Villain heroes' in plays like *Thyestes* and *Medea.* We have also to remember that ten classical plays, nine of which written by Seneca, were translated in English in the early 1560's and undoubtedly both these translations as well as their performance must have greatly influenced the dramatic development of the knave of the popular stage. The Senecan and native influence on the development of the Elizabethan Villain hero has been very adequately and thoroughly treated by Boyer,[39] Praz,[40] and Bevington.[41]
Ribner concluded thus:

> The stage-Machiavel thus grew out of three elements: the Elizabethan inability to understand Machiavelli's method, which was aided by attacks upon it from the Church, the Senecan 'villain hero' and the devil incarnate tradition of the native English drama.[42]

Among the many horrible sins with which the Machiavellian stock figure had been saddled we find the following three most prominent and persistent – his underhand stratagems or 'policie', his atheism or irreligiousness and his dissimulation. The reason why the Elizabethans found in Machiavelli such a convenient term of abuse is perhaps, best supplied to us by an anonymous *Treatise of Treasons Against Queen Elizabeth and the Crown of England* dated 1572, extracts from which are worth quoting:

> '.....the hazard of turning one of the most principal and ancient monarchs of Christendome, from a most Christian govemment into a machiavellian state... And that is it, that I call a Machiavellian state

[39] See Boyer C.V., *The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy,* N.Y., 1964, 1st printed in 1914.
[40] See Praz M., op. cit. pp. 49-97.
[41] See Bevington D.M., *From Mankind to Marlowe,* Cambridge 1962.
[42] See Ribner I., op. cit. pp. 153-157.

and Regiment, where Religion is put behind in the second or last place, where the civil Policie, I meane, is preferred before it, and not limited by any rules of Religion, but the Religion framed to serve the time and policy when both by word and example of the Rulers, the ruled are taught with every change of Prince to change also the face of their faith and Religion, where in appearance and show only, a Religion is pretended, now one, now another, they force not greatly which, so that at hart there be none at all, where neither by hope nor fear of ought after this life, men are restrained from all manner of vice, nor moved to any vertue what so ever, but where it is free to slander, to belie, to forswear, to accuse, to corrupt, to oppresse, to robbe, to murther, and to commit every other outrage, never so barbarous (that promiseth to advance the Present Policie in hand) without scruple, fear, or conscience of hell or heaven, of God or Divel... and where no restraint nor allurement is left in the hart of man, to bridle him from evil, nor to invite him to good, but for the vain fame only and fear of lay lawes, that reach no further then to this body and life, that I cal a Machiavellian state and Governance.[43]

There is strong, internal evidence in Marlowe's plays, not only that he was acutely aware of the popular Machiavelli Legend, but also that he apparently delighted to portray his major characters according to distorted or true Machiavellian precepts.

There is, for instance, Tamburlaine's persistent extolling of the Machiavellian concept of *virtù*. His character and aspirations are in reality a vivid personification of this concept. Like Machiavelli, Tamburlaine is not concerned with morals or ethics, his sole aim is, 'the sweet fruition of an earthy crown,' and in the pursuit of a soaring ambition, Tamburlaine quite unscrupulously violates both human and moral bounds. In *Edward II*, Isabel is depicted as an example of a perfect dissembler. In public she professes love, loyalty and zeal to her husband and great interest in the welfare of the country, whereas in private, she is constantly and unwaveringly aiding and sharpening her paramour's Machiavellian schemes. Edward too, adopts a true Machiavellian principle, when the realisation dawns upon him that it is his weakness and inefficiency of government which secured his downfall:

...yet how have I transgrest
Unless it be with too much clemencie.[44]

[43] Quoted by Raab F., op. cit. p. 60.
[44] See *Edward II*, *The Works*, op. cit. 2109-2110.

In the portrayal of the Duke of Guise, Marlowe must have found another splendid exponent of popular Machiavellianism. He too is a perfect dissembler, who uses religion as a stalking-horse, and the target which he constantly and unscrupulously aims at is the Crown of France. But it is really in *The Jew of Malta,* particularly in the portrayal of Barabas, Femeze and the slave Ithamore, that we find Marlowe's knowledge of the Machiavelli Legend exploited to the full.

Machiavel makes his first appearance on the Elizabethan Stage, and utters a Prologue in which he announces his disciple Barabas and asks the audience to welcome him. Generally speaking, the Machiavellian maxims enunciated in the Prologue do not really reflect the true Machiavelli. Several scholars, including Kocher and Bakeless[45] maintained that Marlowe based the Prologue on Gabriel Harvey's *Epigramma in Effigiem Machiavelli.* D'Andrea holds an entirely different view.[46] Whatever it was we should be very wary of assuming either Marlowe's ignorance of the true Machiavelli or any enslavement to Harvey's poem.

We need hardly doubt that books like *Il Principe* and *I Discorsi,* so popular then, would have offered a great attraction and temptation to Marlowe. Distortions from the true Machiavelli that we find in the Prologue to *The Jew of Malta* and elsewhere in Marlowe's works, as for instance:

> though some speak openly against my bookes;
> Yet will they reade me, and thereby attaine
> To Peters chayre: And, when they cast me off,
> Are poyson'd by my climbing followers.[47]

or

> I count religion but a childish Toy,
> And hold there is no sinne but Ignorance,[48]

are partly due to commonplace Elizabethan pleasantries, partly to the popular Machiavelli Legend, but more emphatically to Marlowe's own propensities and beliefs. However maxims like:

> might first made kings

and

> ...a strong built citadel,
> Commands much more than letters can import[49]

[45] See Kocher P.H., op. cit. p. 195 and Bakeless J., op. cit. p. 350.
[46] See D'Andrea A., op. cit. pp. 214-248.
[47] *The Jew of Malta, The Works,* op. cit. 10-13.
[48] Ibid: 14-15.
[49] Ibid: 20, 22-23.

are almost certainly derived from Machiavelli, even if slightly modified.[50]

Just as the Duke of Guise and the mighty Tamburlaine exemplify the Machiavellian thirst for power at all cost, in a similar manner Barabas typifies the Machiavellian intrigue, and crafty 'Policie', a term associated with the Machiavellian 'politic-villain', is mentioned at least thirteen times in *The Jew of Malta* and it is very effective in setting the right tone and atmosphere of the entire drama. Whilst no single line in *The Jew of Malta* can be said with certainty to have come directly either from *Il Principe* or *I Discorsi* or for that matter, direct from Gentillet, it cannot equally be gainsaid that the play, apart from the Prologue, is steeped in the popular legend of Machiavelli who was saddled with all manner of crimes like poisoning, murdering, plotting, dissembling, hypocrisy, greed and egoism, all of which are exemplified in *The Jew of Malta.*

To begin with, the Christians are represented, using religion as mere 'policy' with the common Elizabethan connotation of 'hypocritical self-seeking'. From the outset, they are depicted as avaricious, perjurious and hypocritical. They wrong Barabas by supposedly confiscating all his property to pay their tribute to the Turks to honour the truce which they should never have undertaken. They even quote biblical tags to cloak and justify their wrongs, to which Barabas with biting sarcasm replies:

> Is theft the ground of your religion?

or again,

> What? bring you Scripture to confirm your wrongs?
> Preach me not out of my possessions.[51]

In his scathing parody of Christians, Barabas reveals an intense disparity between their professions and deeds. They quite unceremoniously break the league (which was considered a very serious slip then as now among the league of nations) on the notorious principle that it is no sin to break faith with infidels, though they never paid back to the Jew the property confiscated. We can easily sense Barabas's delight in exposing their villainies:

> For I can see no *fruits* in all their faith
> But malice, falsehood and excessive pride
> Which me thinks fits not their profession[52]

The word 'fruits', in the first line is very significant from the point of view of Christians. It vividly recalls and was probably meant to recall

[50] See D'Andrea A., op. cit. p.225-227.
[51] See *The Jew of Malta, The Works*, op. cit. 328, 343-344.
[52] Ibid: 154-156.

Christ's biblical advice to his apostles how to recognise their followers:

By their fruits, you will know them[53]

Barabas too misses no opportunity of lashing at Christian hypocrisy:

I, policy? that's their profession
And not simplicity as they suggest[54]

A strong appeal to *Cupiditas* is noticeable not only on the part of the Jewish and Turkish societies, but also among Christians. This greed for instance, is revealed with bitter sarcasm in the Friars' most ridiculous attempt to secure Barabas's property when the latter was constrained to assume readiness for erpentence and conversion. Their excessive greed rendered them unaware of the trap which the wily Barabas laid for them and in which they irretrievably found themselves engulfed. Love of *Lucre* is admirably summed up in the Basso's reply to the Governor's question:

Gov: What wind drives you thus into Malta rhode?

Basso: The wind that bloweth all the world besides,
Desire of Gold.[55]

This love of wealth is also vividly demonstrated at the opening of the play, in Barabas's first soliloquy:

Bags of fiery Opals, Sapphires, Amatists,
Iacints, Hard Topas, Grasse-greene Emeralds,
Beauteous Rubyes, sparkling Diamonds,
And seildsene costly stones of so great price
As one of them indifferently rated,
And of a Carrect of this quantity,
May serve in peril of calamity,
To ransome great Kings from captivity.
This is the ware wherin consists my wealth.[56]

Douglas Cole considers *The Jew of Malta* as a play which owes its structural unity and cohesion to the theme of *Cupiditas* – the desire of gold.[57]

The friars and nuns who are sworn to celibacy are depicted as no less avaricious and lecherous and their prayers are ridiculed by Barabas:

[53] Matthew, Chap. 7 verse 16.
[54] See *The Jew of Malta, The Works*, 393-394.
[55] Ibid: 1421-1423.
[56] Ibid: 60-68.
[57] See: Cole Douglas, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, Princeton, 1962, p. 123.

And yet I know the prayers of those nuns
And holy friars, having money for their pains
Are wondrous, and indeed do no man good.[58]

In breaking the sad news to her father that the house in which he had part of his treasures hidden had been confiscated and turned into a nunnery, Abigail describes the aim of the confiscation thus:

To make a nunnery, where none, but their own sect,
Must enter in, men generally barr'd.[59]

We cannot miss here the innuendoes in the words 'sect' and 'men generally barr'd', Barabas's similar retort to Lodowick:

And made my house a place for Nuns, most chast[60]

is followed by his undisguised 'aside' about the fickleness of nuns, who: '...doe a while increase and multiply'.[61] The earlier reference to 'Nuns most chast', has become fully charged with biting sarcasm, at the same time Barabas's comment about the nuns who do, 'increase and multiply', echoes a biblical warning.[62] The irony of it all, lies in the fact that whereas God exhorted Adam and Eve to 'increase and multiply' Marlowe with his peculiar sardonic twist, applied this same exhortation through Barabas to the nuns who are ostensibly swom to chastity.[63]

Abigail greeted Friar Iacomo, on seeking admittance into the nunnery, with the following sarcastic salutation: 'you happy virgins' guide' and immediately we notice the hollowness with which both Friar Iacomo and the Abbess so readily and peremptorily accepted the pretended penitence, atonement and mortification of Abigail. Ithamore's question to Abigail: '...have not the Nuns fine sport with the Fryars now and then?' is loaded with meaning in Friar Bamadine's confession. The dying Abigail appeals to the Friar:

Convert my father that he may be sav'd
And witness that I die a Christian,[64]

and Friar Jacomo regrettably breaks out:

[58] See *The Jew of Malta, The Works*, op. cit. 843-845.
[59] Ibid: 491-492.
[60] Ibid: 840.
[61] Ibid: 857.
[62] See Genesis, Chap. I, verse 28.
[63] To get an idea of the depraved morals of the Religious Orders in Tudor England, we should read: Knowles David, *The Religious Orders in England*, Vol. III, Cambridge, 1959.

I, and a virgin too; that grieves me most.[65]

Such sly digs however, must have stimulated burst of laughter and applause, rather than condemnation, on the part of the audience. Bevington summed up the Friars' characters thus:

> The two friars are presented as greedy and unscrupulous in their desire for gold. They are also lecherous, and have mistresses within the walls of the convent.[66]

Marlowe appears to have set out to depict the Christian society as not less Machiavellian in certain respects than Barabas himself. But it is Barabas who is the villain hero. He embarks upon a succession of murderous schemes and crafty dealings until finally, he overreaches himself.

The drama shows Marlowe more interested in portraying villainous, treacherous, hypocritical Machiavellian knaves, than in following true historical accounts, too closely. The emphasis unmistakably lies in exposing the deceitful and revengeful schemes of his protagonist, who stops at nothing to achieve his selfish ends. This is of course in keeping with Barabas's advice to Ithamore, his 'second-self':

> First, be then voyd of these affections,
> Compassion, love, vaine, hope and hartlesse feare,
> Be mov'd at nothing, see thou pitty none
> But to thy selfe smile, when the Christians moane.[67]

In presenting the Turks as temporarily victorious over the Christian Community in Malta as they were in Gozo and Tripoli during the Siege of 1551, Marlowe makes some departure from history. Apart from other consideration, the Christian defeat in Malta though unwarranted by true historical events, was necessary to enable Barabas's Machiavellian policies to secure the highest position on the island. Thus Barabas could adequately avenge the wrongs inflicted upon him by the Christians, who towards the end, planned to make him pay dearly for his past misdeeds. But his stratagem (drinking a sleeping potion to be considered dead) enabled him to effect a narrow escape, though Marlowe did not allow him to enjoy long the success of his revenge resulting from his betrayal of Malta to the Turks and his appointment as governor of the island, in recognition for the services he rendered to the Turks.

[64] *The Jew of Malta* 1254-1255.
[65] Ibid: 1493-1496; 1497.
[66] See Bevington D.M., From Mankind to Marlowe, Cambridge, 1962, p. 23.
[67] See *The Jew of Malta*, *The Works*, op. cit. 934-237.

The intrigues in which a Machiavellian knave involves himself, will inevitably and finally bring about his downfall. Thus Barabas in attempting to betray the island back to the Christian Community in return for a hundred thousand pounds, finds himself fatally entrapped in the stratagem which he had prepared for Calymath and his Bassoes. In his dying speech he is still crying vengeance and avers that he means to bring confusion on both 'the Christian dogs and Turkish infidels'. The Machiavellian knave does not boast long of his boggling policies:

... why, is not this
A kingly kinde of trade to purchase Townes
By treachery, and sell'em by deceit?
Now tell me, worldlings, undemeath the sunne,
If greater falshood ever his bin done.[68]

Such a triumphant outburst, sung in the spell of his ascendancy is soon changed to the bitter cry which he utters from the boiling cauldron:

But now begins the extremity of heat
To pinch me with intolerable pangs:
Dye life, flye soule, tongue curse thy fill and dye.[69]

The heroic role in which, we view Barabas in the early stages of the play, suffering the wrongs inflicted upon him by 'Christian hypocrisy', is soon turned into a truly revengeful one. Barabas gradually reveals himself as an iniquitous Machiavellian knave. Without much ado, he announces his villainous schemes and stratagems, in his famous soliloquy, after Job's comforters had deserted him:

See the simplicitie of these base slaves
Who, for the villaines have no wit themselves
Think me to be a senselesse lumpe of clay
That will with every water wash to dirt!
No! Barabas is born to better chance
And fram'd of finer mould than common men
That measure naught but by the present time,
A reaching thought will search his deepest wits[70]

Soon Barabas starts his series of revenges. His first victims are the Governor's son and Matthias who are both in love with his daughter and between whom he devises a counterfeit challenge in which they both

[68] Ibid: 2329-2333.
[69] Ibid: 2371-2373.
[70] Ibid: 448-455.

perish. This is followed by poisoning a whole nunnery, including his daughter Abigail, and causes the death of two Friars, one of whom he strangles with the help of Ithamore, his slave. He then proceeds to poison Ithamore, Pilia Borza and Bellamira with a 'nosegay' and to escape the penalty for his misdeeds, he drinks a sleeping potion. Immediately he betrays Malta to the Turks, in return for which, they appoint him governor of the Island.

Even when he is dying, Barabas boasts of his wickedness, and avers that he had intended the destruction of both sides:

> And, had I but escap'd this stratagem
> I would have brought confusion on you all
> Damn'd Christians, dogges and Turkish Infidels.[71]

Strewn throughout the play we find some vivid reflections of the true Machiavellian doctrine. Barabas counsels his daughter:

> Be rul'd by me, for in extremitie
> We ought to make bar of no policie.[72]

or again Barabas on being appointed governor exclaims:

> Thus hast thou gotten, by thy policie
> No simple place, no small authority
> . . . . . .
> And since by wrong thou got'st authority
> Maintaine it bravely by firme policy.[73]

These and similar remarks could be compared with maxims expounded in the seventeenth chapter of *Il Principe*, where Machiavelli is discussing whether it is better for a prince to be loved or feared. In both *Il Principe* and *I Discorsi* Machiavelli exhorts the prince to be just by preference, but vicious and cruel if the need arises. Another direct reminiscence of the main theme of Chapter II of *Il Principe* is contained in Barabas's remark:

> And crowns come either by succession
> Or urg'd by force: and nothing violent
> Oft have I heard tell, can be permanent.[74]

This is also clearly reflected in Calymath's readiness to accept the

[71] Ibid: 2367-2370.
[72] Ibid: 507-508.
[73] Ibid: 2128-2148.
[74] Ibid: 169-171.

suggested respite on the basis that:

> ... 'tis more Kingly to obtaine by peace
> Then to enforce conditions by constraint.[75]

Like 'Policie', 'dissembling' is another key-word in *The Jew of Malta*. It is a disguise assumed by Christians and Jews alike. Barabas often tells the audience in his 'asides' that he is going to assume the role of dissembler. To encourage Abigail's dissimulation and at the same time strike at religious hypocrisy, Barabas tells her:

> I Daugher, for religion
> Hides many mischiefs from suspition.[76]

From his knowledge of Christians, Barabas regards religion merely as a cloak for crime.

Ego-centric love explicitly or implicitly pervades the characterisation of Marlowe's heroes. Gentillet actually attributed an unfair emphasis to this aspect of Machiavelli's doctrine. *The Jew of Malta* is saturated with touches of this unruly passion, which is principally embodied in the character of Barabas. Whatever he does, says or deliberates, clearly reveals his self-edification and gratification. His motto *Ego mihimet sum semper proximus* is actually a garbled quotation derived from the *Andria* of Terence.[77] It is even more forcefully expressed in:

> For so I live, perish may all the world.[78]

As a great misanthropist, the Jew's considerations are bounded by love of himself, his gold and his profits. Even his sole daughter he was prepared not only to disinherit and disown, but also to cause her untimely death by poisoning. The Jew's and Ithamore's frank confession of their villainies, though somewhat conventional, reveals their true nature and it also shows the quintessence of what the Elizabethans heard or dreamt of Italianate villainies with which Machiavelli's name was generally coupled. In discussing the various ways of poisoning in the sixteenth century, Bowers remarked:

> It is true that the Elizabethans unanimously regarded Italy with horror as the land of poisoners. Nashe called it (1592) 'the Apothecary shop of poyson for all Nations.[79]

[75] Ibid: 254-255.
[76] Ibid: 519-520.
[77] Terence had actually stated: 'Proximus sum egomet mihi', See *Andria*, IV, i, 12.
[78] See *The Jew of Malta, The Works*, op. cit. 2282.
[79] See Bowers F.T., *The Audience and The Poisoners of Elizabethan Tragedy*, *JEGP*, Vol. XXXVI, 1937, pp. 491-504.

Bowers also quoted Thomas Adams who in 1614 stated:

> If we should gather sinners to their particular
> Centres we would appoint.....
> Poysoning to Italie.[80]

Nashe accused English travellers of bringing the art of poisoning from Italy and warned Englishmen to beware of poison put:

> ...into a man's dish, his drinke, his apparell, his ringes, his stirrups, his nosegay.[81]

The devious intrigues of Machiavellian 'policie' appear in most of Marlowe's plays. The Duke of Guise, the evil favourites of Edward II, the young Mortimer, Isabel and the barons all undertake to carry out their sinister schemes ruthlessly and unscrupulously, and this the Elizabethans commonly referred to as 'policie', or Machiavellism. Such devilish intrigues are also most emphatically revealed in Barabas's character, which is summed up by Cole thus:

> Into the character of Barabas Marlowe has poured all the vilest ingredients from the bugbears of contemporary popular imagination fusing the infidel Jew with the ruthless Machiavellian and animating the mixture with the spirit of the Morality Vice.[82]

Many more examples could be cited to prove Marlowe's intimate knowledge of the Machiavelli Legend. Most of these, admittedly are perversions of the true Machiavellian doctrine. But to argue on the premise of these false impressions that Marlowe did not read the true Machiavelli but derived his knowledge of the Florentine Secretary and his works from Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel* is in my opinion to misunderstand the true Marlovian approach. Indeed we have to remember, that from what we have seen of Marlowe's use of the Machiavelli Legend, it seems it must have appealed to him on the double count of repulsion and attraction.

Even more untenable seems to me Kocher's suggestion that the Machiavellian influence on Marlowe is a minor one. In order to minimize the importance of such an influence on Marlowe, Kocher argued that the villainous traits of his heroes are generally determined by the sources, and in the case of Barabas by the Senecan, native and semitic traditions.[83]

[80] Quoted by Bowers F.T., ibid.
[81] Nashe T., *The Unfortunate Traveller, The Works*, Edn. Mc Kerrow R.B., London, 1910, p. 301.
[82] See Cole Douglas, op. cit. p. 142.
[83] See Kocher P.H., op. cit. p. 201.

Whilst I have already expressed concurrence with the prevalence of the Senecan and Native influence on Marlowe, I strongly disagree with the view that the sources determined the portrayal of Marlowe's villain heroes. If the sources, in fact had any influence on the character of Marlowe's villain heroes, what, one might well ask, determined Marlowe's choice of such sources? Marlowe never enslaves himself to any source, in fact he seems characteristically disinclined to follow even the major sources too closely. He created his own heroes and animated them with his own vitality and ambition. Critics have, in fact, suggested that some of his heroes are self-projections.

When we acquaint ourselves with the available biographical evidence on Marlowe, we shall no longer remain unduly surprised to realise why all the major characters of his plays symbolise or expound a complexity of unorthodox views. Even his apprenticeship work *The Tragedy of Dido,* hints at the homo-sexual theme and the theory of 'absolutism'. We have to bear in mind that quite often these and similar heterodox tenets are not solicited by the sources and when they are, they have been highly elaborated upon.

Tamburlaine represents a symbol of an ambitious unorthodoxy. He strives hard to achieve the sweet fruition of an earthly rather than a heavenly crown. He even hints at invading Heaven after his worldly conquest. In extolling the Machiavellian concept of *virtù*, he is deliberately rejecting the medieval ideal of communal achievement. Tamburlaine emphasises that gentility is the reward of one's virtuous deeds and not an accident of birth. Both his military conquests and achievement reflect the theory of absolute rule. Marlowe's impatience with Christian orthodoxy is perhaps best revealed in *The Jew of Malta* as we have already seen, and *Dr. Faustus.* Faustus rejects divinity with great arrogance and flippancy and takes up, instead, necromancy. He secures his soul's damnation in return for twenty-four years of forbidden magic power to enable him to leap beyond human bounds. Dr. Faustus seems to me a protest against religious dogmas and impositions aimed at clamping down on man's freedom. Marlowe is reported by Baines to have preached that religion was originally designed to keep men in subjection and awe, that Moses was a juggler and Christ an impostor.[84] In *The Massacre at Paris,* Catholic religion is merely used as a pretext to attain, by Machiavellian tactics, the crown of France. Even here we notice some occasional homosexual touches. In *Edward II,* the theme of homosexuality is given more prominence. In fact, Marlowe is attributing Edward's downfall to his weak-

[84] See 'Richard Baines on Marlowe', quoted by C.F. Tucker Brooke in *Marlowe, The Life and Dido,* op. cit. pp. 98-100.

ness and effeminacy, a degect which runs counter to the theory of absolutism which he constantly expounded.

Both the works and the extant biographical evidence point to a man of strong heterodox beliefs, which he was very fond of propagating, generally under a thin disguise. Kocher in referring to the components and ingredients of Marlowe's works had this to say:

> Any given play is a series of compromises between Marlowe's subjectivity and the sources of the story he is using...he had liberty after the plot had been selected to mould it according to his conviction. Therefore the mere fact that an idea or theme of the play is to be found in the sources is by no means conclusive against its having a subjective element also. The test must always be its generality of use, its outstanding eloquence of statement and its congruity with other ideas presumptively or certainly Marlowe's.[85]

With his strong unorthodox beliefs, Marlowe was most peculiarly disposed to interest himself in and to read Machiavelli's works. The difficulty of laying his hands on a copy of the Florentine Secretary's works should not have been serious especially in his case. However the only available external evidence which hints at Marlowe's reading of Machiavelli's works comes from a letter which Gabriel Harvey wrote to Spenser in 1579, where, *inter alia* he stated:

> And I warrant you sum good fellowes amongst us begin nowe to be prettely well acuaynted with a certayne parlous byoke callid as I remember me, 'Il Principe' di Noccolo Machiavelli, and I can peradventure name you an odd crewe or tooe that are as cunninge in his 'Discorsi'...in his Historia Fiorentina, and in his Dialogues della Arte della Guerra tooe and in certayne gallant Turkish Discourses tooe.... as University men were wont to be in their parva logicalia and Magna Moralia and Physicalia of both sorts: verbum intelligenti sat.[86]

A very significant point emerges from this letter and that is that Machiavelli's works were widely and eagerly read at Cambridge. It is not possible that Marlowe joined the 'odd crewe' after entering Cambridge in 1580 as an undergraduate? That Marlowe shows great familiarity with the popular legend of Machiavelli as well as with Turkish wars, which is, incidentally, another subject alleged in Harvey's letter to have been keenly read at Cambridge, cannot be denied. Edward Meyer made bolder

[85] See Kocher P.H., op. cit. p.6.
[86] See Letter by Harvey to Spenser (1579) in *The Works of Gabriel Harvey*, Edn. Grossart, A.B., 1884, Vol. I, p.138.

suggestions when he remarked:

> ...it may be stated as an absolute certainty that had 'The Prince' never been written, Marlowe's three great heroes would not have been drawn with such gigantic strokes.[87]

In 1875, Broune recorded Richard Harvey's attribution of the Elizabethan freethinking, of which Marlowe seemed thoroughly imbued, to three well known Italian writers:

> Richard Harvey, in his 'Discourse of the Lambe of God', London, 1590, a work written expressly against the Elizabethan freethinkers, attributes the atheistical tendencies of the age to the three famous Italians – Pomponatius, Aretine and Machiavelli – Pomponatius on account of his famous book, 'De Immortalitate Animae', which, according to Harvey, was thought to have converted Leo X; Aretine, whom some call, 'divine' but who is 'the porter of Plutoes divinitie' and the 'grandsire' of all Martinish courtiership', in consequence of his 'horrible and damnable book of the "Three Impostors"'; Machiavelli is 'that secretary of hell as well as of Florence'.[88]

That there was close social, commercial and intellectual intercourse between Italy and England in the sixteenth century, perhaps more than in any other age, is amply demonstrated by Lewis Einstein's famous book, *The Italian Renaissance in England.*[89] Bakeless, in stressing the possibility that Marlowe read *Il Principe*, remarked:

> In the intellectual circles which he frequented – which had at one time included Giordano Bruno – there must have been several men who interested themselves in Italian circles; and in any case Elizabethan England was rapidly becoming so Italianate that it was hard for any mind to escape contagion.[90]

Complimentary references to Italianate gentlemen in England were counterbalanced by deragatory remarks on the English 'Italianato', who was considered a devil incarnate. In a notable passage in the *Groatsworth of Wit,* the jealous contemporary Robert Greene, attributed Marlowe's atheism to Machiavelli:

> Is it pestilent Machiavelian policie that thou hast studied? O peevish

[87] See Meyer E., op. cit. pp. 33-34.
[88] See Broune C.E., 'Christopher Marlowe and Machiavelli' in *Notes and Queries,* Aug. 21, 1875, pp. 141-142.
[89] See Einstein Lewis, op. cit.
[90] See Bakeless J., I, op. cit. p. 349.

follie... The brother of this dyabolicall atheisme is dead, and in his life had never the felicitie he aymed at, but, as he beganne in craft, lived in feare, and ended in dispaire. (We may remark here that this is more or less, how Greene ended his life). Quam inscrutabilia sunt Dei judicia! This murderer of many brethren had his conscience seared like Cayne; this betrayer of him that gave his life for him, inherited the portion of Judas, this aposlata perished as ill as Julian, and wilt thou, my friend, be his disciple?[91]

Among the books available at the Chapter Library of Canterbury Cathedral, in Marlowe's life time, Doctor Urry, the archivist of the City of Canterbury, listed the following, which he maintained Marlowe had used:

Two Volumes of Holinshed's Chronicles,
Ovid,
Fortescue's 'Foreste',
Tindal's Translation of the Bible 1571,
Book of Common Prayer 1552,
T. More's Miscellany 1556,
Munster's Cosmography,
Philip Lonicerus: 'Chronicorium Turicicorum tomi duo,
The Works of Machiavelli.[92]

On the basis of the above, we could better argue that Marlowe read Machiavelli's works than that he did not. His propensities and beliefs, the biographical evidence available and his works provide us with strong indications, that Marlowe acquainted himself not only with diatribes against Machiavelli, including Gentillet's, but that he also read his works, which he used as an important source and influence in composing his works, particularly *The Jew of Malta*. In summing up Machiavelli's influence in *The Jew of Malta*, Wilson remarked:

...he (Machiavelli) is a presiding genius over Jew and Christian alike.[93]

The Machiavellian influence in *The Jew of Malta* is predominant. It prevails in the portrayal of Christian, Jew and Turk, who represented the three great religions of the world. In addition to this, we have also noted the strong Semitic, Senecan and Native influence on Marlowe, particularly in *The Jew of Malta*. No other Marlovian character better than Barabas embodies and combines so many traits from all these various influences. The fusion seems complete.

[91] See Greene R., *Groatsworth of Wit*, 1592, Edn. Grossart A.B., XII, pp. 141-142.
[92] See Wraight A.D., and Virginia F.S., op. cit. Preface by Dr. W. Urry, p. 42.
[93] See Wilson F.P., op. cit. p. 62.

THE HOUSE OF ARAGON AND MALTA: 1282-1412*

By ANTHONY LUTTRELL

MALTA and Gozo, two small and barren islands lying between Sicily and Africa at the very centre of the Mediterranean, were for many centuries dependent on Sicily, if only because their rocky soil and limited water supply meant that the population had to import foodstuffs. The Norman, Hohenstaufen and Angevin rulers of Sicily all considered that it would have been dangerous to allow Malta to be controlled by a hostile power. The Maltese were influenced in many ways by their successive conquerors, but the isolation and smallness of the islands helped them to preserve their own characteristics; their Christian heritage survived centuries of Muslim occupation just as their African language subsequently endured through centuries of European rule. In 1282 Malta and Gozo were governed by the Angevin Kings of Sicily, and they enjoyed a small measure of prosperity as a commercial outpost of Genoese and other traders. Following the conquest of Sicily by King Pere of Aragon, the Maltese recognized the new regime. When Charles of Anjou, King of Naples, attempted to use Malta as a base for the recovery of Sicily, the Aragonese Admiral Ruggiero Lauria inflicted a decisive defeat on the Angevin fleet in a great battle fought in the harbour at Malta on 8 July 1283.[1]

The importance of Malta and Gozo was purely strategic, since they were of little value for their products or as commercial outposts. They exported small quantities of cotton, but their food supplies were insufficient; they suffered from Muslim razzias; and they were ruthlessly ex-

* This article first appeared in Catalan, in a volume dedicated to a great Catalan medievalist, as 'La casa d'Arago i Malta: 1282-1412', *Estudis Ferran Soldevila* (Barcelona, 1969); the Institut d'Estudis Catalans at Barcelona kindly assented to its reproduction, with slight revisions, in English.

[1] There is no satisfactory history of medieval Malta, and what has been written is often seriously confused. Much of the detail in G. ABELA, *Malta illustrata*, expanded edition by G. CIANTAR, 2 vols. (Malta, 1772-1780), is inaccurate. P. DE JOVE Y HEVIA, *Indagaciones acerca de la dominacion de Espana en Malta de 1285 a 1530* (Madrid, 1863), is brief and outdated. The fundamental works are still the articles and documents published by A. MIFSUD, in *Archivum Melitense*, ii-iv(1914-1920), and by R. VALENTINI, in *Archivio Storico di Malta*, v-xiii(1934-1942); see also G. WETTINGER-M. FSADNI, *Peter Caxaro's Cantilena: a Poem in Medieval Maltese* (Malta, 1968). The royal registers in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragon at Barcelona contain rather little material concerning Malta, but the sources for Sicilian history, both published and unpublished, are rich in references.

ploited by the Sicilian magnates, to whom the islands were periodically granted.[2] Malta had a good harbour which served as a refuge both for the corsairs who brought in certain profits and for shipping blown off its route. It was a port-of-call for vessels trading to Tunisia and elsewhere in North Africa, but it did not lie on any major sea-lane, since shipping sailing from the Western Mediterranean towards the markets of Egypt, Asia and Byzantium normally followed a more northern route, passing from Sicilian ports directly to Coron in Greece, to Crete or to Cyprus, while the Venetians bound for Spain, the Atlantic or North Africa usually sailed along the north coast of Sicily. In fact, neither the Genoese nor the Venetian showed any consistent interest in Malta during this period; Venice was often allied to the Aragonese Crown, and the Genoese presumably realized that it would be hard to retain Malta while the Aragonese controlled Sicily.[3] For the Aragonese Crown and its mercantile subjects in Barcelona and the other ports who built up an economic and dynastic hegemony stretching from Aragon, Valencia and Catalunya to Mallorca, Sardinia and Sicily, Malta and Gozo lay just beyond the fringe of their Western Mediterranean commonwealth; and while Catalan trade in North Africa was of paramount importance, Malta was not a significant port on Catalan routes to Tunis.[4] Nor was it a stepping-stone to the East where, in anycase, Aragonese interests were always secondary. The Aragonese were concerned with places like Cyprus or Athens which offered a prestige attraction and might be useful pawns in the diplomatic game, but the crown was never prepared to expend financial or naval resources on them.[5] The visionary Mallorquin Ramon Lull, writing soon after 1300, suggested that Malta should be used as a crusading base from which Christian merchants could be prevented from trading illegally with the Muslims,[6] but the Aragonese rulers were realists for whom Malta was for long periods no more than a frontier station of minor importance on the eastern margin of their Mediterranean empire; their chief concern was that it should not be in enemy hands.

In the years immediately following their conquest of Sicily, the Aragon-

[2] On the economic-geographical background, see B. BLOUET, *The Story of Malta* (London, 1967), with a select bibliography.

[3] Details in A. LUTTRELL, 'Venetians at Medieval Malta', *Melita Historica*, iii, no. 1(1960), 74-76.

[4] See C. DUFOURCQ, *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris, 1966).

[5] This thesis is argued in A. LUTTRELL, 'La Corona de Aragon y la Grecia catalana: 1379-1392', *Anuario de estudios medievales* (forthcoming).

[6] Text in A. GOTTRON, *Ramon Lulls Kreuzzugsideen* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1912), 86.

ese did however appreciate the importance of Malta for the retention of Sicily itself and for their influence in North Africa. Ramon Muntaner, who was governor of the island of Gerba off the coast of Tunisia, described how the Aragonese manifested their joy when in 1283 they received rumours that the *castrum* at Malta had fallen; Muntaner wrote: 'the castle is most royal and fine, and the castle and the island stand well to the island of Sicily as the stone suits the ring.'[7] The bulk of the Maltese population went over to the Aragonese at a time when the future of the Kingdom of Sicily was still in doubt, perhaps partly as a result of Angevin oppression and taxation, partly because the Maltese depended on grain supplies from Sicily. On 9 December 1282 Pere of Aragon had nominated a notary for the island of Malta; on 23 January he intervened to protect a Genoese merchant there. By this time Malta and Gozo had asked Pere for help, and the Angevin governor Dionigi de Barba was acting as Justiciar of Malta for Pere. On 27 January the Aragonese king excused himself for not sending prompt aid on the grounds that his fleet needed repairs and that there was no immediate danger; he confirmed the privileges of the Maltese; and he granted facilities for grain to be sent from Sicily to Malta. In February and March Pere was negotiating with Matteo del Poggio for the submission of the *castrum*, which was considered impregnable. On 12 April Pere wrote from Messina to Manfredi Lancia, his new Captain and Justiciar in Malta and Gozo, and on 19 April he granted a privilege to the men of both islands at their request; Malta and Gozo were to be perpetually incorporated into the royal *demanium et dominium*, as they had been by a privilege of the Emperor Frederick of Hohenstaufen which dated to the period of the emperor's youth before 1198 and which was issued jointly in his name and that of his mother Constança of Aragon.[8]

In the summer of 1283 the garrison of the *castrum* by the sea in the grand harbour at Malta was relieved by the Angevin fleet, which thus threatened Pere's position in Sicily and his supply-lines from North Africa. Ruggiero Lauria arrived in time to prevent the complete loss of the island by his victory of 8 July 1283, his men fighting to the cry 'Arago! Arago! via sus! via sus!' Malta and Gozo were reconquered. The inhabitants received Lauria well, giving him money, jewels and provisions, and he left behind three hundred *homens de Cathalans* for their defence, since he was unable to take the castle without siege-engines.[9] The Castle

[7] *Chronik des edlen en Ramon Muntaner*, ed. K. LANZ (Stuttgart, 1844), cap. 100.
[8] Texts in G. SILVESTRI, *De rebus regni Siciliae* (Palermo, 1882), 316-319, 418-419, 422-423, 436-439, 611-612; appendice, 19, 134, 141; cf. VALENTINI, vi. 26-31; viii. 35-36.
[9] MUNTANER, caps. 81-84; further details and references in M. AMARI, *La guerra*

itself continued to resist, and the Angevins were concerned to provision it at least until February 1284.[10] Meanwhile the Aragonese were building up a hegemony based on the possession of Sicily, their influence in North Africa, and their control of the islands lying in between. The conquest of Malta was completed by Manfredi Lancia, Captain of Malta and a kinsman of Ruggiero Lauria; Lauria himself captured and acquired titles to Gerba and Kerkena, establishing a kind of maritime principality between Sicily and Africa.[11] These developments did not pass unchallenged. An Angevin fleet from Calabria landed on Malta in the spring of 1287, recaptured the *castrum*, and then attacked Augusta in Sicily.[12] At Avignon on 16 June 1290 Charles of Anjou, King of Naples, recognized the ancient claims to the County of Malta of a certain Andreolo, who declared himself ready to attack the island; this was probably the sea-captain Andreolo de Mari of Genoa, and Charles perhaps hoped for Genoese support in the enterprise.[13] In fact, Andreolo soon went over to the Aragonese, and by October 1292 he had been recognized as Count of Malta by Jaume of Aragon, King of Sicily, who was well aware of the island's importance. In 1287 Jaume insisted that whatever conditions were agreed for a peace with the Angevins, he should continue to hold not only Sicily but also Malta, Gozo, Pantelleria, the Lipari islands and the joint Sicul-Catalan fonduk at Tunis; and he repeated this insistence in 1290. A few years later, at Barcelona on 27 and 28 October 1292, having become King of Aragon as well as of Sicily, Jaume gave orders for the strengthening of the garrison and castle at Malta.[14]

The whole situation in the Western Mediterranean became confused in 1296 after Jaume of Aragon had renounced the Sicilian Crown and his younger brother Federigo had, to Jaume's annoyance, been elected King of Sicily. For a while Malta was in danger from Jaume and also from Ruggiero Lauria who retained control of Gerba. On 25 March 1296 Federigo appointed Lauria Admiral of Sicily, but he soon abandoned Federigo and

del Vespro Siciliano, ii(Milano, 1886), 13-18; DUFOURCQ, 263, wrongly dates the battle to 1284 and gives *Conrado* Lancia.

[10] Eleven letters (September 1283 to February 1284) in V. LAURENZA, in *Archivio Storico di Malta*, v(1934), 157-168, and R. MOSCATI, *ibid.*, vii(1936), 507-508. VALENTINI, vi. 31, wrongly dates that of 21 November 1283 to 1284; in fact, the *castrum* probably fell early in 1284.

[11] Cf. DUFOURCQ, 259-268 *et passim*.

[12] Text of 15 May 1287 in MOSCATI, 508-509.

[13] Text in LAURENZA, 168-169; cf. VALENTINI, vii. 38-40.

[14] Texts in G. LA MANTIA, *Codice diplomatico dei re aragonesi di Sicilia*, 2 vols. (Palermo, 1917-1956), i. 364-365, 466-467; ii(ed. A. DE STEFANO-F. GIUNTA), 309, 317-318.

on 2 April 1297 Jaume reappointed him Admiral of Aragon.[15] Malta and Gozo were attacked and devastated by an Aragonese fleet, apparently in 1297,[16] a move which had no clear motive but served as a demonstration to Federigo of Aragonese sea-power. Ruggiero Lauria subsequently fought for the Angevins as well, and on 22 April 1300 Charles of Anjou King of Naples, who had already made Lauria Admiral of Naples, invested him and his heirs in perpetuity with the County of Malta;[17] on Lauria's death in January 1305 the claim passed to his son Rogeró, but his rule at Gerba was ineffective and short-lived.[18]

The position of Malta and Gozo with respect to the Aragonese Crown was altered when Jaume of Aragon renounced the Kingdom of Sicily. For some eighty years the islands were governed by the Kings of Sicily, but these kings were still members of the house of Aragon, and Sicily continued dynastically, politically and economically to form part of the commonwealth dominated from Barcelona; despite moments of tension, the islands thus remained within the union of the dominions of the Crown of Aragon.[19] In fact, on 7 October 1345 the King of Sicily authorized the Catalan consul at Messina to nominate a vice-consul at Malta and Gozo.[20] Politically, the Sicilian Kings continued the practice of granting out the islands as a county. After Ruggiero Lauria's revolt against King Federico in 1297, the islands were confiscated from Lauria, and they reverted to the royal *curia*. In 1300 Federigo considered enfoeffing the *castrum* at Malta to the Genoese,[21] but subsequently the islands were, apparently, conceded to Luchina Aragona, from whom they passed to her husband Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada; and in 1320 they returned to the crown when King Federigo exchanged them for Augusta and other places which were granted to Moncada.[22] Malta and Gozo were later granted to Guglielmo,

[15] DUFOURCQ, 341, 408-409.

[16] The attack was described in a protest of Federigo dated Palermo, 13 February 1298: text in H. FINKE, *Acta Aragonensia*, iii(Berlin, 1923), 68-70.

[17] Text in LAURENZA, 169-171; numerous authors follow ABELA, i. 732, in confusing Lauria with Ruggiero de *Flor*.

[18] MUNTANER, cap. 248; cf. DUFOURCQ, 430-432, 579.

[19] Cf. A. LUTTRELL, 'Malta and the Aragonese Crown: 1282-1530', *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal Malta University*, iii, no. 1(1965), which treats the present topic more generally and from the point of view of Malta rather than from that of the Aragonese Crown. See also the bibliography in S. TRAMONTANA, 'La Spagna catalana nel Mediterraneo e in Sicilia', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 50(1966).

[20] Text in A. CAPMANY Y MONPALAU, *Memorias historicas sobre la marina, comercio y artes de la antigua ciudad de Barcelona*, revised edition, ii part 1 (Barcelona, 1962), 232.

[21] Text in *Liber Iurium Reipublicae Genuensis*, ii(Torino, 1867), 415-418.

[22] References in V. D'ALESSANDRO, *Politica e società nella Sicilia aragonese*

the younger son of King Federigo. Then in September 1330 the king confirmed an act by which Guglielmo ceded the islands to his half-brother Alfonso Federigo d'Aragona, the king's natural son; he was to enjoy the *jurisdictio criminalis* and the *merum et mixtum imperium*. On the death of Alfonso Federigo, which occured by August 1349 at the latest, Malta passed to his eldest son Pietro Federigo, Lord of Salona in Greece, where he resided. In March 1350, however, Pietro Federigo d'Aragona was accused by the Venetians of piracy; subsequently he was deprived of his Greek titles, and by 1355 he was dead.[23] He also lost Malta and Gozo which, at their inhabitants' request, were reincorporated into the royal *demanium* by an act of King Ludovico dated 7 October 1350. By this time a clear pattern had emerged: the crown conceded Malta and Gozo to powerful Sicilian magnates or to royal cadets; the population, anxious to escape exploitation by greedy counts, petitioned for reincorporation into the royal *demanium*; the crown granted this request in perpetuity, but subsequently in a moment of weakness granted out the county once again. The counts had certain powers, such as the nomination of Captains and Justiciars and the exercise of the *merum et mixtum imperium*, but the islands were still part of the Kingdom of Sicily; their *universitates* continued to enjoy their privileges, the Crown and the Admiral of Sicily continued to impose taxes and exercise certain powers in the islands, and ecclesiastically Malta continued to suffer from the interdicts imposed by the Papacy on the Kingdom of Sicily.[24]

This patter of Siculo-Aragonese rule at Malta was threatened when in 1356 the troops of Jeanne Anjou, Queen of Naples, captured Messina and Palermo. On 30 March 1357 Jeanne issued a diploma enfeoffing her powerful favourite the Florentine Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Grand Seneschal of the Kingdom of Naples, with the County of Malta and Gozo; every year on the feast of Pentecost he was to provide 'the service of one black slave, dressed in crimson cloth and bathed the night before...' The Neapolitans were soon expelled from Sicily itself and the danger passed, though the claim to Malta was inherited by Niccolò's son Angelo Acciaiuoli, who was still using the title when he drew up his will in 1391.[25] The men of

(Palermo, 1963), 25, 54-56, 58 note 81, 67. The idea that Giovanni, son of King Federigo, was made Count of Malta seems to originate in ABELA, i. 732-733.

[23] Texts in A. RUBIO I LLUCH, *Diplomatari di l'Orient català: 1301-1409* (Barcelona, 1947), 253, 298-299, 482-485; cf. R.-J. LOENERTZ, in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, xxv(1955), 174-175. Alfonso Federigo was still count in 1335 (partial text in MIFSUD, iii. 277 note 1).

[24] VALENTINI, vii. 46-51.

[25] Texts in J. BUCHON, *Nouvelles recherches historiques sur la principauté*

Malta maintained their allegiance, and in January 1357 Federigo addressed a letter to Giacomo de Peregrino his Captain, Justiciar and Castellan in the islands.[26] Yet the threat had been real enough, and the Acciaiuoli were no friends to the Aragonese Crown which suffered severely from their activities in Greece where Nerio Acciaiuoli, another son of Niccolò, became Lord of Corinth and the greatest enemy of the Catalans who were established at Thebes and Athens.[27] Meanwhile on 29 December 1360 King Federigo of Sicily granted the County of Malta and Gozo to Guido Ventimiglia, Captain of Trapani. Guido did not go there, however, and in 1362 he died.[28] The county returned to the royal *demanium*, but on 4 May 1366 it was enfeoffed in perpetuity to Manfredi Chiaramonte, Admiral of Sicily. Malta was already in revolt, and on 5 May the king conceded Terranova in Sicily to Chiaramonte *usque ad acquisitionem insularum Meliveti et Gauditii.*[29] In 1371 the Genoese took advantage of these troubles, sending ten galleys to sack Malta which they considered a refuge of corsairs.[30] During 1372 the *castrum* was reconquered, and in November King Federigo visited Malta in person to settle the rebellion.[31] On 31 January 1376 Federigo appointed another of his own kinsmen, Giovanni Federigo d'Aragona, as Captain of Malta, enjoining him to go there in person.[32]

Federigo died on 27 July 1377 leaving the Kingdom of Sicily to his daughter Maria. One party of magnates recognized her as their Queen, but King Pere of Aragon also had claims to the kingdom and there ensued a long period of civil strife, which was complicated by the schism in the Roman church. Malta was naturally involved in these struggles. The

française de Morée, ii(Paris, 1843), 138-143, 163, 204-214; cf. VALENTINI, vii. 51-53.

[26] Text in G. COSENTINO, *Codice diplomatico di Federico III di Aragona, re di Sicilia: 1355-1377*, i(Palermo, 1855), 322-323.

[27] LOENERTZ, 134, 137, 143, 152-155, 194-195.

[28] Details in D'ALESSANDRO, 97 note 39, 99 note 51.

[29] Text in A. INVEGES, *Carthago Sicula*, in J. GRAEVIUS, *Thesaurus Antiquitatum* ... xii(Leyden, 1725), 176. A variation on the second document written in Sicilian (dated Malta, 12 April 1369!) is printed by E. GENTILE, in *Archivio Storico di Malta*, viii(1937), 392-393. VALENTINI, vii. 54-58, attributes the six-year revolt to the perpetual infeudation of May 1366, but it was apparently already under way by then.

[30] U. FOGLIETTA, *Dell'istorie di Genova* (Genova, 1597), 305.

[31] VALENTINI, vii. 55.

[32] Texts in Rubio, 442-444; cf. LOENERTZ, 178. References to three sisters of the house of Aragon established in Malta (eg. ABELA, ii. 261-263, 380-381, 468-472; MIFSUD, iii. 276) should apparently be to members of the Alagona family (VALENTINI, vii. 447 note 115).

Aragonese Crown had already shown a tentative interest in the island several years earlier. In June 1370 Eleonora of Sicily, a sister of Federigo who had become Queen of Aragon, wrote to her brother claiming the dowry of her sister Bianca of Sicily, who had married the Count of Ampurias; she suggested that, since the money was not forthcoming, Federigo should make over to the Aragonese Crown either the Duchies of Neopatras and Athens, or all the incomes and rights of Malta and Gozo until the dowry should be paid.[33]

In his will Federigo left the County of Malta to his natural son Guglielmo,[34] but this provision seems not to have had effect. After Federigo's death, Pere of Aragon asserted his rights over Malta and Gozo by confirming, in documents of 1 and 18 September 1380, the claims to the County of Ludovico Federigo d'Aragona, Count of Salona, whose support in Greece he was anxious to ensure. Ludovico Federigo who was a nephew of Pietro Federigo d'Aragona who had been dispossessed of the county in 1350, remained in Greece where he died in 1382, his Greek claims and titles passing to his wife Helena Cantacuzena; he had no influence upon events in Malta, and neither his widow nor their daughter Maria seems to have claimed the County of Malta.[35] Meanwhile the young Queen Maria was abducted from Sicily and taken to Spain, where she was married to Martí whose father, Martí Duke of Montblanch, was a son of Pere of Aragon; Pere's claims to Sicily were transferred to the young couple. Effective control in Sicily passed to four great magnates, the *quattro vicari* – Artale Alagona, Manfredi Chiaramonte, Francesco Ventimiglia and Guglielmo Peralta – who divided the kingdom into spheres of influence and presided over a sort of controlled anarchy. Malta apparently came under the domination of Manfredi Chiaramonte, the most powerful of the *vicari*. At Chiaramonte's request a notarial copy of a royal document recognizing his claims to Malta was made on 15 June 1380;[36] he continued to entitle himself count, and in 1388 he led an expedition which seized the Tunisian island of Gerba, possibly using Malta as a base.[37] In Manfredi's will, dated 8 September 1390, he was styled *Comes Meliveti* and,

[33] Text in RUBIO, 413-415.

[34] According to G. ZURITA, *Anales de la Corona de Aragon*, ii(Zaragoza, 1610), 370.

[35] Texts in RUBIO, 480-485, 501; cf. LOENERTZ, 177; D. NICOLI, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus): ca. 1100-1460* (Washington, 1968, 160-163.

[36] Cited GENTILE, 393 note 2. For what follows, see the general background in D'ALESSANDRO and F. GIUNTA, *Aragonesi e catalani nel Mediterraneo*, i(Palermo, 1953); but these works provide no treatment of the history of Malta.

[37] Details in VALENTINI, vii. 56-59.

under certain rather complicated conditions, he provided for the *comitatus* of Malta and the *insula* of Gozo to pass, as her dowry, to his eldest daughter Elisabetta Chiaramonte, wife of Niccolò Peralta.[38]

In March 1392 Martí of Aragon, Duke of Montblanc, arrived in Sicily to assert the joint claims of his son Martí and of Maria of Sicily. He aimed to reassert Aragonese predominance in the island and to reverse the long process by which power had passed from the crown to the barons, a programme which was not really completed until 1397. During those five years Malta remained at the mercy of the magnates. The Duke of Montblanc repeatedly tried to influence certain barons by granting them the County of Malta. Thus, at Barcelona on 12 November 1391, he had already approved various proposals sent by Giacomo Alagona from Sicily; *inter alia* he confirmed the possession of Malta by Giovanna Alagona, Giacomo's niece, on condition that she married *cum consilio* of the crown.[39] This agreement apparently remained a dead letter, for at a time when the Chiaramonte were being declared rebels, the Duke of Montblanc confiscated Malta and Gozo from Andrea Chiaramonte, to whom they must have passed after the death of his father Manfredi during the first half of 1391, and granted them on 2 April 1392 to Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada, a firm supporter of the Aragonese. In July 1393 this concession was revoked by Martí the Elder who on 5 July granted the islands to Artale Alagona, the nephew of Artale Alagona the late *vicario*, who was resisting the Aragonese at Aci, in an attempt to pacify him; Moncada was to be recompensed with lands in Sicily. By 16 July Moncada's son had reached Malta in a royal galley, and by 24 July he had handed the island over to Alagona's officials. This arrangement broke down at once when Alagona refused to surrender Aci and other lands in Sicily, and on 25 July the Duke of Montblanc instructed Orlando di Castro, Alagona's lieutenant in Malta, that the islands had reverted to the crown and that he was to consider himself a royal official; the duke also released Alagona's vassals in Malta from their allegiance to him. There were similar negotiations in 1394, and a royal document of 31 July once again confirmed Alagona as Count of Malta.[40] On 12 August 1394 Martí the Elder ordered that Moncada be

[38] Text in G. PIPITONE–FEDERICO, 'Il testamento di Manfredi Chiaramonte', in *Miscellanea di archeologia, storia e filologia dedicata al Prof. Antonio Salinas* (Palermo, 1907), 332-339.

[39] Text in D'ALESSANDRO, 327-329.

[40] Details in I. LA LUMIA, 'I quattro vicari', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, III ser., v parte 2 (1867), 145, 176-177, 181-182, 205; MIFSUD, iii. 280-281; VALENTINI, vii. 59-61; GIUNTA, i. 200-201; D'ALESSANDRO, 135-137. The details of this complex story are still confused.

given the fief of Campetro in exchange for Malta.[41] Marti continued to recognize Alagona's title,[42] and a visitor to Gozo and Malta in June 1394 reported that both islands were under Alagona's rule.[43] Towards the end of 1394 the Duke of Montblanc sent Raimondo Abella, to whom he had confided two galleys *in corso*, to recover Malta and Gozo from Alagona who had raised the islands in revolt against the crown, and to set up a new administration;[44] again there was no success.

The Aragonese only slowly overcame opposition from the Sicilian barons. Artale Alagona's forces still held out at Aci in Sicily and in Malta, and in 1396 he attacked the Sicilian coast with two galleys which he had apparently armed at Malta, where he seems to have gone. He hoped to rescue his wife and a son from Aci, but having failed to do so he submitted to the Duke of Montblanc and was restored to the County of Malta, only to revolt again a few days later.[45] Once again Malta and Gozo were confiscated by the crown and on 13 December 1396 they were granted as a marquisate to Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada.[46] By January 1397 Moncada too was in revolt in Sicily,[47] though he was recognized as Marquis of Malta – *lu Magnificu Markisi di Malta* – in royal documents of February and March.[48] Moncada himself wrote, as Marquis of Malta, from Agrigento on 6 April to the Captain and people of Malta that he was sending envoys to receive their homage, and from Augusta on 5 June calling upon the men of Malta, from whom he had received a delegation, to serve and obey him.[49] Then on 16 November 1397 he was formally deprived of Malta and Gozo, which once again had suffered from their use as a centre of baronial

[41] Text in F. GUARDIONE, in *Archivio Storico per la Sicilia Orientale*, i(1904), 90-91.
[42] Texts of 22 and 25 August in GUARDIONE, 95-97.
[43] 'Relation du pélerinage à Jérusalem de Nicolas de Martoni, notaire italien: 1394-1395', ed. L. LEGRAND, *Revue de l'Orient latin*, iii(1895), 578-579.
[44] Documents of 15 December 1394 (cited LA LUMIA, 205) and 23 May 1395 (text in ABELA, ii. 390).
[45] ZURITA, ii. 422. At some point before 4 May 1396, the Duke had sent a royal galley under Bertrando Lancia to Malta *super quibusdam tractatis factis super reductione castri lacii* (cited LUTTRELL, *Melita Historica*, iii, no. 1,77 note 12).
[46] According to ZURITA, ii. 422v.
[47] D'ALESSANDRO, 152 note 127.
[48] Texts in G. BECCARIA, in *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, xiii(1888), 361-363, and G. LAGUMINA, *ibid.*, xvi(1891), 327, 331.
[49] Texts in MIFSUD, iii. 289-290, giving dates as 'agringenti VI. aprilis [4a inis 1396]', and 'Auguste V. iunii v Inis' [which gives 1396]; the first year was supplied from a copy and is impossible. VALENTINI, vii. 63, citing the manuscript, gives 6 April 1396 and 5 June 1397. Probably both documents date to 1397, but doubts remain.

resistance to Aragonese pretensions in Sicily.[50]

The Maltese were in a desperate state after decades of exploitation by the rebellious counts who had ruined the islands, confiscated many lands and oppressed the population. The *universitates* therefore petitioned the crown that the islands should return to the royal *demanium*. Some Maltese had in fact resisted the baronial rebels, and Martí King of Sicily pardoned the islands. At Siracusa on 16 November 1397 they were reincorporated into the *demanium* and entered a period of direct royal government, and in February 1398 they were freed from paying various royal duties and taxes. At the same time a number of crown supporters who had suffered under Alagona and Moncada were rewarded with crown lands; one confiscated fief was granted in February 1398 to *Arnaldus Gueraldus civis civitatis Barchinone*. The effect of these concessions on the royal incomes, out of which the castles at Malta and Gozo had to be maintained, was so serious that in November 1399 they were revoked. The taxation imposed by Martí was heavy, but it was designed to provide for the defence of the islands against corsairs and razzias.[51] The royal documents were still, incidentally, being issued in the names of the two Martís and of Maria *omnes tres consedentes, conregentes et conregnantes*, though Martí the Elder became King of Aragon and departed for Spain following the death of his brother King Joan of Aragon in 1396. Martí the Younger was left to rule in Sicily under a form of *conreggenza*, which allowed his father to keep a strict control over Sicilian affairs even after he left the island. Malta and Gozo were in reality being governed by the King of Aragon.

During most of the fourteenth century, however, influences from Spain were rather limited. A number of the three hundred Catalans left on Malta and Gozo by Ruggiero Lauria in 1283 may have settled there. There was some Catalan economic activity in the islands, but it is doubtful whether the Catalans ever nominated the vice-consul at Malta and Gozo whom they were authorized to appoint in 1345. In 1356 a certain Joan Marserio, Catalan, was travelling from Sicily to reside in Malta and conduct business on the island of Lampedusa.[52] A typical visit was one due to take place in 1362 when Francesco Ros planned to travel from Cagliari in Sardinia to Malta to receive from Arnaldo Cicera, an inhabitant of Malta, three pieces of cloth which a certain Bernardo Giraldi of Cagliari had bequeathed to his brother Francesco.[53] Arnau Gerau of Barcelona was

[50] Text cited in VALENTINI, vii. 61-62.
[51] Texts and details in *ibid.*, v. 13-20, 37-54; vii. 61-65, 406-415; xiii. 15-20, 35-36.
[52] Document of 1356 cited in COSENTINO, 246.
[53] Document (at Cagliari) cited in VALENTINI, vii. 53.

granted a fief in Malta in 1398, but he may not have resided there. The Gerau Desguanes whom King Martí sent to collect taxes in Malta in 1405, and who was appointed Castellan of the castle by the sea,[54] had possibly come directly from Catalunya to settle in Malta; the family did not appear in Malta before about 1400, but *Antonius de Isguanes* was one of the six major landholders in Malta in 1408.[55] The Desguanes do not seem to have been settled in Sicily, but most of the other Maltese notables with Catalan names belonged to families long established there.

In the ecclesiastical sphere the king had the right to present candidates for election to episcopal sees within the Kingdom of Sicily. From 1393 onwards Martí the Elder was attempting to install his own candidates, a process complicated by the schism in the Roman church, for while the followers of the Avignonese Popes were pro-Aragonese the Romanist clergy supported the baronial rebels. The candidates proposed by the king were mainly Sicilians whose chief interest was probably in those goods of the Maltese diocesis which lay in Sicily; and when the king proposed Giovanni de Pino in 1393 some of the canons of Malta were actually resident in Catania. On 16 August 1408 King Martí did grant Miquel de Letras the goods of the Maltese bishopric to be held *in commendam*,[56] and by January 1410 Martí the Elder, King of Aragon, who had succeeded his son as King of Sicily, had appointed a royal confessor, the Franciscan Joan Eximeno of Mallorca, to administer the see of Malta for life, *veents que la esgleya de Malta, per tal com era destituida de idoneu pastor, era mal servida.*[57] It is unlikely that either Miquel de Letras or Joan Eximeno went to Malta before 1412, and in general very few Spaniards received benefices in the Maltese church.

Malta and Gozo were basically a part, though a rather special part, of the Kingdom of Sicily. The islands lay within the dominions of the Aragonese Crown, but on the margin of the interests of its rulers in Spain; they were ruled by a branch of the house of Aragon but not directly controlled by the Aragonese Crown, except during the periods after 1282 and 1392 when the rulers of Aragon were directly concerned with Sicily and thus

[54] Texts of 1398 and 1405 in *ibid.*, v. 43-46; viii. 73; cf. viii. 412-415.
[55] Text in R. GREGORIO, *Biblioteca Scriptorum* ... ii(Palermo, 1792), 498.
[56] Texts in B. FIORINI, 'Il comm. Abela e la cronologia episcopale di Malta', *G. F. Abela: Essays in his Honour by Members of the Malta Historical Society* ... (Malta, 1961) 106-109. *Nicolaus Boneti*, OFM, created bishop in November 1342, may have been a Catalan; even if he reached Malta his tenure was extremely brief as he died before October 1343 (*ibid.*, 94, 105 note 70).
[57] Text in A. RUBIO I LLUCH, *Documents per l'Historia de la cultura catalana mig-eval*, i(Barcelona, 1908), 446.

with Malta. After the death of Martí the Younger in 1409 the *universitates* of Malta and Gozo sent an embassy to Martí the Elder which presented their complaints but emphasized their attachment to the crown. When Martí the Elder died in 1410 without an evident heir, the regency in Sicily was disputed between Queen Bianca, the widow of Martí the Younger, and Bernat Cabrera, the Grand Justiciar, who secured control of Gozo and threatened Malta. However, Francesco Gatto held Malta as Captain for Queen Bianca, and on 24 June 1411 she gave him permission to reduce Gozo to obedience *per la inclita casa di Aragona.*[58] The Maltese recognized the new King of Aragon and Sicily, Fernando de Antequera, who was elected at Caspe in 1412, and the articles they sent to their king in 1416 looked back to the time of Martí, when Malta was *reducta a la sou naturali signuri, zo esti a la sacra casa di Aragona.*[59] The new dynasty, with its very different Italian and Mediterranean ambitions, brought Malta and Gozo much more closely into contact with the Aragonese Crown, whose policies were a decisive factor in the fortunes of the islands in the fifteenth century. It was really only after 1412 that Catalan and Aragonese influences became strong at Malta.[60]

[58] Text of 1409 and other details in VALENTINI, vii. 419-428; viii. 73-79.

[59] Text in S. GIAMBRUNO – L. GENUARDI, *Capitoli inediti delle città demaniali di Sicilia* (Palermo, 1918), 366-367.

[60] According at least to the evidence available. Without much more detailed work it is impossible to tell whether settlers with Spanish names come directly from Spain or belonged to families long established in Sicily. For example the *Jaymucio Catalano* who held lands in Gozo before 1372 may have been a Sicilian and not (as VALENTINI, xiii. 13 note 44, claimed) a 'prova della espansione catalana in queste isole'. The conclusions of this preliminary sketch may well be modified by further research, especially among the sources in Spain which have often remained unknown, even when in print, to students of Maltese history.

CHOICE

It cannot be seen
But if you ever want to experience it
All you need is closing your eyes
As firmly as you possibly can
And then you'll see nothing
But you will get to know better
What it is really like
If with closed eyes you move
To the end of the landing
And take the step forward.

Then opening your eyes wont keep you
From rolling all the way down
Where darkness will grow darkness
As you roll down
For your choice
You have made it.

BERNARD MALLIA, S.J.

MASSIVE

Put on hard massiveness
Massive Massaccio
Knit bushy eyebrows
And you'll be Moses like
Do not relax I promise
I wont hit you
For you have made your mind
No condescension
To human words

I only have to stand back
Throwing my head one side
And — when I like — the other
Serene and serious
Just connoisseuring
Your classic art.

HEYTHROP BERNARD MALLIA, S.J.

FABLE

I know a true fable
Which happens still
Too often
Of how a man just vanished
In a whirlpool
While no one passing by could realize
Only that man could see
For it was he rawled
Without shovel and pick
Pneumatic drill
Or oil rig
Silently.

His heart began to sink
Deeper over the brink
The whirlpool drawing him on
To make deeper still
The centre of the vortex
That he once started rawling with his eyes
To make it wide enough
To swallow him
Unnoticed.

Of those who passed him by unwitting
Some had already started
Others were far ahead
Making their whirlpool to size
Enough to suck them in
Separately
Singly.

BERNARD MALLIA, S.J.

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