

Carmine Melino

R.A. Knight¹

C.P. Snow was an English Don and novelist who popularised the idea that science and art are incompatible. He wrote of the “two cultures” – one side being cold, closed and rational, the other warm, emotional and creative. Never has the artificial division of our two cortical hemispheres been more starkly articulated.

Carmine’s life was a total contradiction of this philosophy. He wrote extensively and rationally on the science of hygiene while painting word canvases of his inner Capri, no doubt aware that the one informed the other. He was, therefore, a truly integrated person. Not perhaps a Renaissance man in the character of a Leibniz, for this was virtually impossible in the complexities of the twentieth century, but a truly rounded human being.

Others are more competent than I to review his many and varied contributions to Hygiene and Occupational Health. But it is very apparent to an outsider that his work was entirely practical – what today we should perhaps call translational. The esoteric minutiae of academic were not for him. Instead his work immeasurably improved the health, safety and quality of life of workers on the railways, in hospitals and in other industries. It is a great tribute to Carmine that many of his innovations, such as widespread influenza vaccination, are now routine and taken for granted.

When Carmine was seated at his desk, you never knew whether he was writing another paper on Occupational Health or some poetry. In Rome, perhaps the former was more likely, since his poetic inspiration

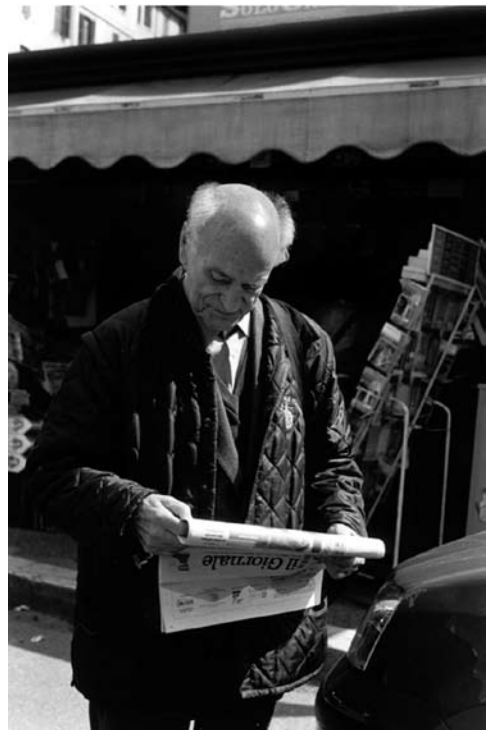


Fig. 1 - Carmine Melino reading the latest news. Photo courtesy of Dino Pederali (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dino_Pedriali).

¹) MRC Toxicology Unit, Leicester, UK
e-mail: richard.knight@ucl.ac.uk

was Capri. I think of him sitting and talking politics with old friends in the Bar Funicolare, looking over the panorama of the Bay of Naples, before walking back to his house through the narrow passageways to write more verse. Many of these volumes of poetry were illustrated by Gerry, and I think it gave both of them the greatest pleasure to collaborate in this way and to symbolise the very deep and affectionate relationship between father and son.

In Rome, you would arrive at that much loved and cluttered flat in the Piazza

Bologna, to be greeted by the reticent smile of a monk from Carmine, followed by an embrace as warm and effusive as a glass of good red wine. And he would take a glass of red wine with dinner, and later phone his daughter, Gabriella, and the grandchildren, Ludovico and Claudia-Sophie. A close knit and mutually supportive family.

Carmine's was a life well lived, with his major contributions to both those alleged "two cultures", many warm relationships and good friends. May he rest in peace in his beloved Capri.