

*The last paper of the two issues dedicated to Prof Carmine Melino has been written by Dr Lanfranco Luzi, a medical doctor, a pupil and a friend of Carmine Melino, also an appreciated writer.*

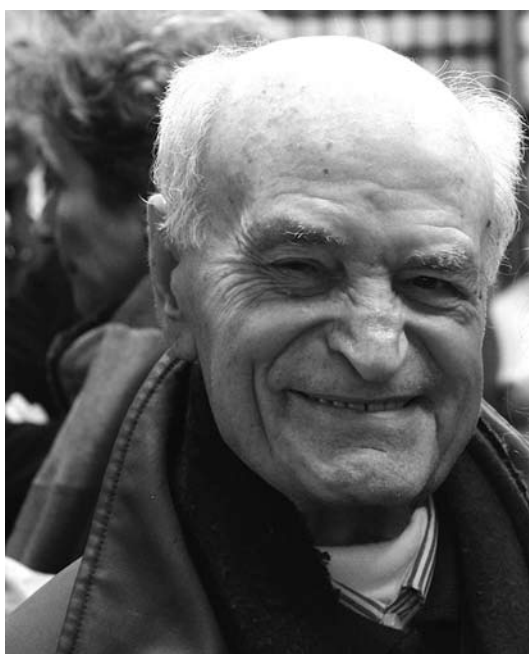
*I believe that this inspired piece can close in the best way our initiative of commemorating Carmine Melino, the academician and the man, with both scientific articles and direct testimonies.*

*Gaetano M Fara, MD MPH, Editor in Chief*

## **In remembrance of a colleague and a friend ...**

### **Il ricordo di un collega, di un amico ...**

L. Luzi<sup>1</sup>



Prof. Carmine Melino

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*A part of our academic history has gone* said Prof. Alessandro Finazzi-Agrò, former Rector Magnificus of the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, in the presence of students, teachers, old friends who met in the church of Sant’Ippolito to wave their last farewell to Professor Carmine Melino. During his long academic life, he taught so many generations of students, always passing on his love, passion and scientific rigor as well as his humanity. Every day, for years, he lived with his Faculty, with his students, in research laboratories and at workplaces; these were his “*young ones*”, and “*his*” students before becoming colleagues. Here, I do not want to discuss his academic and scientific achievements in detail; this is evident from his many scientific papers, amassed during his long life as a Hygienist and practicing Preventive Doctor, and in his legacy of mass influenza vaccination and in occupational medicine in general. Instead, I will describe Professor Melino the writer and poet, as we both shared a common interest in Medicine and poetry. He has left to us all a great cultural heritage and, above all, an indelible ethical imprint.

I will leave other qualified Authors to describe his academic profile as a great scientist, but instead I will describe the creativity, the poetic vein that is manifest in the many poetry books he wrote in the last decades of his earthly life. Many of these were written during stays on the island of Capri, the island of magic and sirens. I was lucky and honoured often to be there with him. Together we wrote the book “*Capri in verse for different paths*”, a poetic ramble along those wonderful little streets, those unique places that he had loved so much. He had previously “hosted” some of my poems in his collection of verses “*A Summer in Capri*”, written in the Jubilee Year 2000 and published in 2001 by the Universe Publishing Company. For this, we both were awarded a great prize: the *International Prize Emily*

*Dickinson*. I remember, with excitement, the day of the award ceremony that took place in Naples on a beautiful summer day. His enthusiasm was contagious in the presence of the natural beauties of the Gulf of Naples, with the unmistakable profiles of the ancient islands of Capri, Procida and Ischia.

In the many verses, written while living on the island of sirens, he did not try to articulate particular or specific truths. His poetry was full of memories, fragments of life, which hinted at meaning indirectly. Words, in Carmine’s case, were instruments for evoking images and dreams. His verse reflects moments of loneliness, and an abiding love, all expressed in a manner akin to music. Thus, the mystery is like a wonderful symphony, where accurate descriptions are only the “supporting structure”. Already, the nobility of a feeling, of a constant theme like the magic sound of a perfectly integrated instrument in the natural orchestra of Capri varies in its many scenic aspects.

I want particularly to mention some of his many collections of verses, in which I provided the preface and wrote the introduction. The splendid drawings by his son, Prof. Gerry Melino, have always enriched these editions, in a joint common effort of father and son. The book “*Capodanno a Capri*”, published in 2002 by Casa Editrice Kappa, conveys an eerie silence in revisiting people and places depicted with accurate chronology. These images, imprinted in his mind, are expressed in a simple fluid style and thus accessible to every reader.

Sometimes writing a preface can be quite simple, especially if you are favoured by particular circumstances such as being able to observe literary creation at first hand indeed, I have been privileged to be in that position. We were on the wonderful Capri terrace sipping a coffee, and I read his thought just at that instant committed to

paper. He was far from sad as he seemed to leap over the wings of a wind that did not disturb the prospect of hope, the continuous enrichment of the spirit, the prevailing of the positive aspects of life, the bond with essential values, faith, friendship, and love for his loved ones.

Professor Carmine Melino has been able to mould the past to a future, pervaded by optimism in that magic that drives the soul into the sublimation of artistic creation, in the wonderful game of cultural renewal. His poems seemed to hover over a marvellous path that touches the most striking places of the island's nature. The characteristic streets, the climbing trails in the rock, the beautiful fountains between the sea and the sky. A succession of wonders in the enchanted landscape: Marina Piccola, Punta Carena, Via Krupp, Tragara, Marina Grande, Villa Jovis, Piazzetta and Faraglioni ... A delineation of colours, that are loaded with beautiful reflections immersed in the green and in the blue of the sea.

I also had the chance to find myself, for several days, a guest at the Author's home when, in summer 2005, he wrote: "*Between symbols and magic myths and dreams in Capri*". The work was published in early 2006, edited by Graus Editore and I was honoured to write the introductory note.

I shared with professor Carmine Melino important moments of the day. It was great to listen to his wise words and to accept them as a child in the presence of a parent who can inspire your enthusiasm because it is a part of a world where his feelings lie.... and feelings always transpire sentiments. From the bar *Funicolare*, in the gentle summer afternoon atmosphere, the poet's thoughts were shaped like paper and seemed to fly lightly, touching once again, in a loving idyll, in a tender play, the places that appear to the eye, all the time conveying the suggestion

which infuses the landscape and nature of the island. Professor Melino, in this poetic journey, retraces the most famous places by reliving, at times, human events of people whose memory has been lost today. He knew how to penetrate into the depths of the soul, crossing the thin curtain that surrounds it. In poetry he has transcribed the myths of Capri, the symbols on which, both recently and in the past, the history of the island evolved, its legends perpetually marked by the Clock Tower Campanaria in the Piazzetta.

The Professor once again painted with his verses the marvellous contrasts between heaven and the sea in the harmonious succession of colours, reflections and light dances. With his loving look he created beautiful portraits by contemplation with enchanted eyes.

In the book: "*On the terrace of the funicular bar*", the poem of professor Melino is born and grows, from time to time, as a poem of a world that, though imbued with contents not always positive, keeps intact the essence of an "Art" that can rise above any reality. He knew how to interpret it by personalizing it and to transfigure it through a deep reading that moves from a peculiar and unique personality and experience.

Here, then, the poetic verse, the essence and the breath of the artist, acts like a magnifying glass to highlight those aspects, those images, those representations that the inhabitant of the city cannot perceive with his own eye. They have now forgotten or perhaps, unfortunately, have not had the opportunity to observe.

With these few words I wanted to remember the scientist's poetic spirit: the university professor faithful to the essential values, to ethical principles. With him I shared unforgettable moments. Through his poetry, I have revisited the serene years he

spent in contemplating the wonders of that particular Italian land. Right where the sea blends with the sky in a heavenly vision, in a borderless hug, without space and time ...

I conclude this brief note recalling the passion of a man for his land and for his tender consort, the woman he loved even more than the island of sirens. A love he passed to his relatives and friends. I will remember his gaze, the essence of the educated and wise man who was absorbed in the mood of memories, in finding the traces of his beloved spouse, a sweet presence that the flow of time could not erase: "... *To Maria, who always lives in this sun of Capri*".

He wrote in one of his poetry books: "... *And life passes, flows, and repeats, the seasons repeat in their flowers ... the man also shakes between good and evil, and Capri always laughs in the harsh grey rock between sea and sky* ... "

And yet, the superb figure of the man, the scholar, who, in the twilight of his life, perceives and feels, in the solitary land of the island, the magical place that evoked circular, mental and physical return: "*The gull rises, shaving the sweetly smiling Virgin Mary. Among myrtles and lemons, I dominate the island: a big butterfly, its wings as cliffs darting on the sea, my head in my heart, in golden exile*".

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