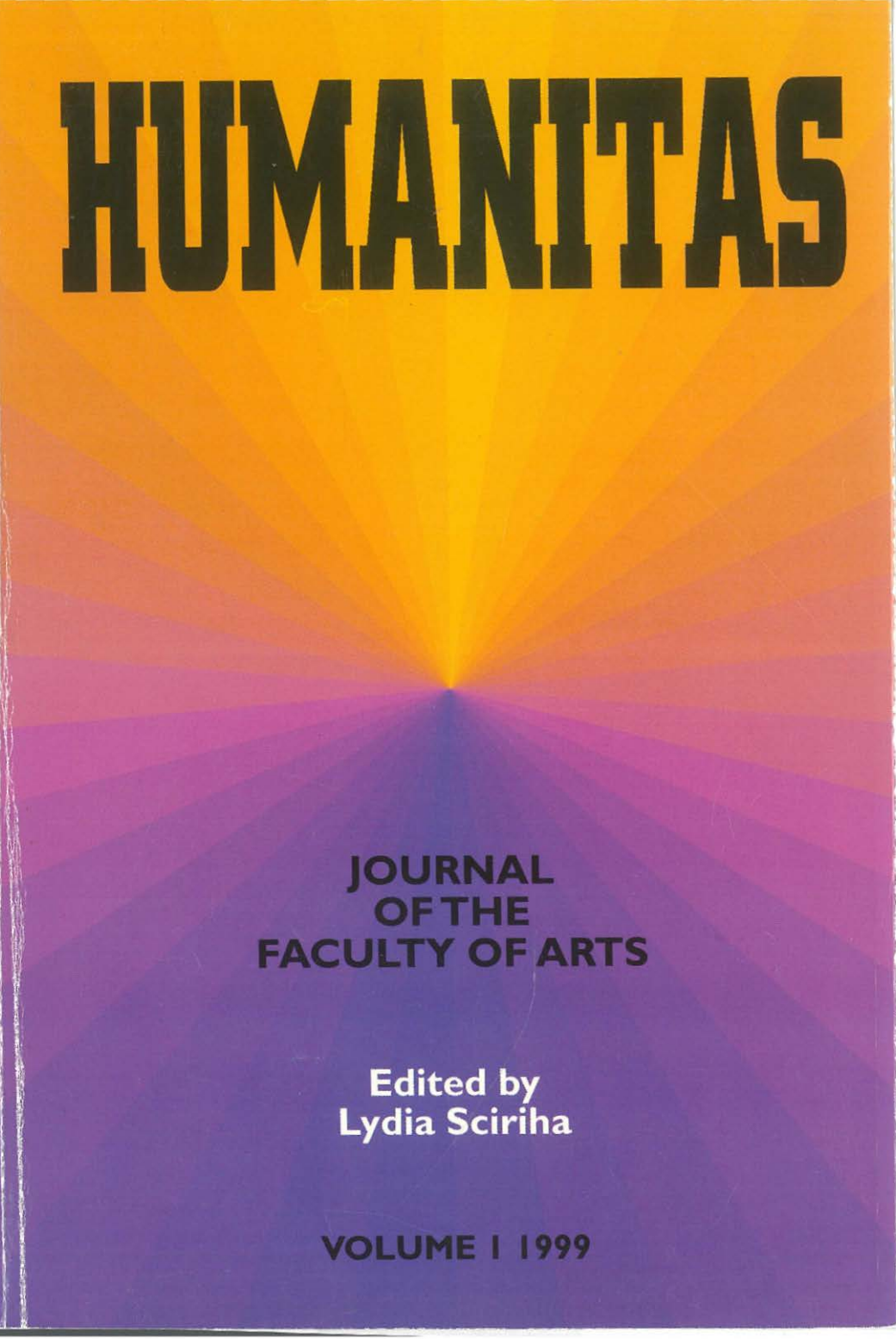


# **HUMANITAS**



**JOURNAL  
OF THE  
FACULTY OF ARTS**

**Edited by  
Lydia Sciriha**

**VOLUME I | 1999**

# **Humanitas**

**Journal of the Faculty of Arts**

**Volume I  
1999**

**Edited by  
Lydia Sciriha**



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# **Humanitas**

Journal of the Faculty of Arts

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## FOREWORD

After an absence of more than two decades, the Journal of the Faculty of Arts, first published in 1957, is finally being re-launched under the new title *Humanitas* and in a different livery. Its long absence tells an important tale.

Since the last issue of this Journal in 1977, the Faculty of Arts has gone through innumerable changes and extensive experiences, some of which were indeed traumatic. The Faculty of Arts was suppressed in 1981, and this brought about concomitant repercussions. Some of its members served in other Faculties for some time, while others carried out tasks away from the University Campus. In 1987 the Faculty of Arts began to function again when Professor Peter Serracino-Inglott, who had just been appointed Rector, took the necessary steps to re-instate the Faculties of Arts and Science.

Since then, the Faculty has grown both in numbers and services: in addition to providing teaching and research in 37 areas of studies, it services numerous other courses, provided both by other Faculties and Institutes. Within it, new courses both professional and otherwise have been born. Some still thrive within the Faculty of Arts, others now prosper in other Faculties or Institutes. Since the last issue of the Journal, some senior staff who had contributed enormously through their work to successive issues of the Journal and to the work of the Faculty of Arts are, alas, with us no more, while the younger ones who remember the last issue of this Journal, have since then flourished in their academic career.

*Humanitas* is being brought back to life because of the dire need for the Faculty to demonstrate that, despite the trials and tribulations it has gone through since the last issue of this Journal, it is alive and active, eager to dwell on the values that have enriched the life of the Faculty ever since it was first established, initially as the College of Philosophy, many decades ago. The breadth and depth of the articles in this issue are a clear indication of the concerns of its members, of the variety of topics that are discussed and researched during the courses provided by the Faculty, and can serve as a pointer to some of the main current interests within the Faculty. The emphasis needs to be on 'some', because there are many other interests, interspersed within the various disciplines in which members of the Faculty of Arts specialise, which could not be covered by a specialised article in this first issue of *Humanitas*.

Despite the variety of topics discussed in this issue, a number of common threads can be identified and all these relate, in one way or other, to the core of the *raison d'être* of the Faculty. The Faculty's scientific concern is the study of humanity, of the preoccupations of men and women and of their search for a better understanding of their own achievements. This search is undertaken through the study of languages and literatures, perhaps the largest component of the whole Faculty. It is undertaken also through the study of History through which the present can be better understood. It is completed through reflection and empirical analysis of man and of his milieu, respectively undertaken by the philosophers and the sociologists in the Faculty. Although at first glance these areas of specialisation appear to be different and unrelated, they are essential for a deep understanding of humans, what they are, what they aspire for and of how, empirically, they provide solutions to problems of ultimate meaning. In one way or another, whether this is done through Literature or Sociolinguistics, Philosophy or Sociology, History or Music, members of the Faculty seek to understand how men and women construct universes of meaning that make life worth living, and how, during periods of stress and strain, they express their humanity in the form of a record that casts their experience in an indestructible record for others to understand and eventually interpret.

Over the years, the Faculty has proved its worth in many different ways. The skills it imparts are not always perceived to be immediately marketable or strictly utilitarian. In fact, the main criticism over the years from both friend and foe has been that its courses are not 'functional' and therefore not much in demand in a society bent on immediate returns, time and motion studies, opportunity costs and profitability. This is, of course, a myopic vision of reality. A more than surface analysis of current economic reality shows that skills learnt narrowly in a classroom environment are quickly out of phase, and what an effective educational system needs to impart is not solutions to problems that will last a lifetime, but attitudes of creativity, a critical outlook to life and work, the ability to understand effectively and the knack to understand and participate in interaction processes. The vast and fast changes in technology constantly make *passé* solutions that were *avant garde* only a couple of years ago. Through its courses and approach, the Faculty's challenge has always been to nurture creativity, research and critique, especially by looking at how the great catalysts of past and contemporary cultures have managed to do so in a prophetic way during their lifetime.

It is with these ideas in mind that the Faculty re-presents itself through the re-launch of its Journal, *Humanitas*. The future beckons today in the same way that it did when the greatest of past civilisations managed to survive best when they systematically undertook to understand their own cultural productions and to promote them. It is hoped that this publication will contribute, even if in a small way, towards this great project which men and women will never tire to engage in: to understand, to enjoy the beautiful and to keep recreating themselves in their culture.

August 1999

LYDIA SCIRIHA



# RELIGION AND SOCIAL COHESION IN MALTA: DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

MARIO VASSALLO

*Abstract - The presence of religion in Maltese society at the end of the millennium is not insignificant, but it is very different from what it used to be at its beginning. The fabric of Maltese society has changed radically, and with it, the role of religion has been modified both from within and from without. This paper seeks to identify these changes and the extent to which religion continues to exert influence and control.*

## Introduction

At the beginning of this century, life in Malta was all of-a-piece, with barely any structural differentiation in the way society was organised. Malta was a colony under British rule, and despite the extensive processes already very present for more autonomy and self-determination pushed forward by caucuses of Maltese leaders, the affairs of Malta depended extensively, if not exclusively, on the needs of the Empire. The islands were considered strategically important for the maintenance of military power especially in times of war, and economic activity reflected such needs. During the previous century, the British presence had spread its tentacles on all aspects of life, despite the fact that Britain had originally been invited to help the Maltese in their predicament after Napoleon Bonaparte had ousted the Knights of St John from ruling Malta and had accepted the famous Maltese Declaration of Rights before they acceded to this invitation.

The population at large was cushioned from being completely acculturated by the British colonisers by two very important processes that had served them well in this respect during other times in the island's chequered history. Social distance was kept through the existence of an indigenous language, Maltese, a variety of Arabic, and by religion itself. Maltese, an underdeveloped Semitic language was effectively the language the people used in their daily interactions and, even if without any literary history, it was practically the only effective means of communication among the Maltese. Only those Maltese who had gone through formal education, and only a few of these existed, had become conversant in Italian, then the

language of culture in Malta. Italian had developed locally in parallel to its development in Italy, and was used in Malta by the courts, by the clerics and even in the few newspapers and other publications that existed. To the *litterati* use of Italian was the way in which they distinguished themselves as 'cultured', but at the same time, as 'different' from the colonisers. Maltese, the language of the locals, was strong at the level of interpersonal communication, but was held low in esteem by both foreigners and by a good number of *litterati* and professionals who did not want to be associated with, except by extending patronage to, the common folk.

Another important mechanism bound the Maltese together: their belief structures. Catholicism is indeed readily recognised to be an import in Malta, but its presence at every stem of Maltese root was indeed pervasive. To each Maltese, religion - and religion in this context is synonymous with Catholicism - had provided the framework for a local system of organising their affairs at all levels, namely civil and religious. Indeed one could barely talk of a distinction of social spheres: the dividing lines between politics and religion, the economy and the Church, leisure and religious practice, family life and the Church were indeed thin, and hardly discernible.

With a measure of education, when this became compulsory in the aftermath of World War II, this was bound to change. The presidency of the Church was forcefully shaken when a new group of indigenous leaders developed a party system that, despite all odds, gradually led Malta to achieve Independence from Britain in the first half of the nineteen sixties. As a result, the Church did not provide any more the only status route to power. Concomitantly, the need for a new island state to survive made the need to diversify its economy and to shed its erstwhile dependence on expenditure of foreign military services stationed in Malta even more urgent. The resultant tourist influx, now possible as Europeans discovered cheaper and faster air travel and the Mediterranean was swiftly transformed into the European's holiday resort, brought many more Maltese in direct contact with foreigners of a different kind from those they were used to before. The massive military presence in Malta especially in time of war, had put many Maltese in contact with outsiders, especially British, but tourism had not only diversified the culture of origin of these outsiders, but the context in which they had visited the island. Now they were on holiday, and therefore keen to shed the self-controls that are normal in daily living, but which are often perceived to spoil the fun of a holiday. New social mores were now projected as 'fun' to a much wider number of

Maltese, young and old, who themselves started unconsciously to compare their own rather restricted traditions with those of the seemingly more liberated and 'modern' visitors. These mores affected erstwhile taboo areas like sexual activity, family life, religious practices and socialisation patterns. They influenced all spheres of life and the value system traditionally upheld by the Maltese. The novel 'culture of contentment' gradually started to root itself among an increasingly large number of locals.

Tourism, education and national politics were of course not the only agents which produced such changes. Television and the new media, together with the gradual but steady increase in the propensity of the Maltese to travel abroad, continued to contribute to the gradual melting of traditional values and modes of behaviour. Secularisation became a very visible phenomenon, and one that was deeply felt in both clerical and outside circles. In the process, enforced secularisation became a not-so-hidden agenda of one of the main local political parties which, especially through its hot debates with the Church, both when in government and outside, had introduced some novel notions of the role of conscience, of the distinction between religion and the Church, of secular and religious spheres, which had been completely alien to previous generations of Maltese (Vassallo 1975a; 1975b; 1977; 1979).

Even when Malta experienced a massive rallying around the Church in the early 1980s, when the Labour administration undertook measures to take over control of Church schools, the de-secularisation trend that was noticeable was basically secular in nature. The process of 'secularised secularisation' is documented in Vassallo (1981b). The rallying around the Church against the Labour government was a classical case that resulted from the need which many parents felt: they had to affront a strong national government which was seemingly eroding what was perceived as a natural right. Vassallo analyses how, in those circumstances, established religion met all the conditions for it to be instrumentalised by the Maltese to achieve their aims. Once this necessity existed no more, the broader pattern of secularisation continued, and still continues.

The questions that arise are obvious ones: does this mean that religion is no longer relevant to the Maltese? Does religion contribute anything to cohesion and control in contemporary Malta? Vella (1996) argues that *"the emergence of a more assertive secular presence in Malta is the more remarkable given the preponderance of strong Catholic values shared by its conservative population"*. Vella asserts that the trend is however in lock step with a more permissive and questioning lifestyle observed by

other Western countries, even though he admits that there are those who will argue with strong moral conviction against the lessening of restrictive codes of conduct, governing family institutions and civil responsibilities. Vella suggests that for these, the church remains a bastion of strength and renewed spirituality, a port of haven providing shelter against the onslaught of human license seemingly gone wild. He further claims, without providing hard data to prove himself however, that:

*The demographic profile of the conservative element in Malta favouring continuation of a strong elitist church is largely constituted of senior people. They are mostly female, followers rather than leaders, who welcome the embrace of the mother church and feel spiritual security through blind observance of dogmatic discipline. For this dedicated group, religious observance is not a question of choice. It constitutes an imperative (Vella 1996).*

A number of attempts have been made to reconceptualise the notion of social control and to identify the role of religion. Long (1980) describes social control as “*that mode of action which aims at protecting human life from threats of illegitimate conduct and impotent structure*”. According to him it takes two reciprocal forms: (i) the regulation of individual deviance and (ii) the reinforcement of cultural rules against social dissidence. In Malta, there has not been any measure of tightening up of control through formal legal structures, but there has been extensive direct and indirect public discussion on domains which previously were tightly controlled by both law and religion. This has definitely affected values especially among the younger generations, as documented by Abela (1995) in the same pattern extensively documented for other societies (see e.g. Gonzalez: 1987 and Milanesi: 1993).

### **University students in Malta**

An indication of where Maltese society is heading can perhaps be obtained through an analysis of the results of a survey conducted among a sample of 450 University students during 1998. University students are known world wide normally to be at the forefront of change and if this applies to Malta, the indications are that further changes are bound to take place in the role of religion on the island.

**Table 1: Religiosity – Self-Perception**

|     | TOTAL | GENDER |        | NATIONALITY              |                         |                | YEAR            |                 |                 |                 |                 |
|-----|-------|--------|--------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|     |       | MALE   | FEMALE | MALTESE<br>BORN<br>MALTA | MALTESE<br>BORN<br>GOZO | NON<br>MALTESE | 1 <sup>ST</sup> | 2 <sup>ND</sup> | 3 <sup>RD</sup> | 4 <sup>TH</sup> | 5 <sup>TH</sup> |
| N=  | 450   | 227    | 223    | 407                      | 26                      | 15             | 133             | 122             | 99              | 70              | 26              |
|     | %     | %      | %      | %                        | %                       | %              | %               | %               | %               | %               | %               |
| NA  | 1.6   | 1.8    | 1.3    | 1.5                      | -                       | 6.7            | 2.3             | 1.6             | 1.0             | 1.4             | -               |
| NO  | 32.0  | 33.5   | 30.5   | 32.2                     | 19.2                    | 53.3           | 30.1            | 37.7            | 32.3            | 32.3            | 32.9            |
| YES | 66.4  | 64.8   | 68.2   | 66.3                     | 80.8                    | 40.2           | 67.7            | 60.7            | 66.7            | 65.7            | 67.1            |

Table 1 clearly shows that 32% of University students do not consider themselves to be 'religious' at all, whilst 66.4% state that they do. The remaining 1.6% did not answer a direct question on the matter. Although absolute numbers are very small, it is somewhat significant that students born in the smaller sister of Gozo, where the traditional church-centred parish is much more effective, state that they are religious in a higher proportion than those born on the main island (religious: 80.8% vs. non-religious 19.2%). Conversely, the proportion of non-religious students from among foreign students is higher than that of those who confess that they are religious (religious: 40.2% vs. non-religious 53.3%). Of interest too is the fact that slightly more females state that they are religious than males (68.2% females vs. 64.8% males). The breakdown of these figures by 'year of course currently followed' suggests that students do not tend to change their religiosity much as they go through their University studies. Those who considered themselves to be 'religious' were in turn asked why they do so. A full range of answers was elicited by this open-ended question. The more frequent answers were:

**Table 2: Reasons why students perceive themselves to be 'religious'**

| N=299                                         | %    |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|
| I believe in God                              | 31.1 |
| I believe in and abide by my religious creeds | 20.7 |
| Christianity has an important role in my life | 11.0 |
| I attend Mass                                 | 8.7  |
| I practise my religion                        | 6.0  |
| I follow my upbringing                        | 5.4  |

The striking fact about these frequent responses is that reference to specific Church structures and the attendant rituals are mentioned only by a very small number of respondents. Similarly, students who did *not* perceive themselves to be religious were asked to explain their answers. The main reasons for their non-religiosity were:

**Table 3: Reasons why students do *not* perceive themselves to be 'religious'**

| <b>N=144</b>                                           | <b>%</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| I am not interested                                    | 25.5     |
| My interest fluctuates                                 | 17.4     |
| I do not believe in God/anything                       | 14.6     |
| My principles do not depend on any particular religion | 6.3      |
| I believe in a new spirituality/morality               | 5.6      |
| I do not believe in the Church                         | 4.2      |

Other reasons were added, and negative feelings towards institution-alised religion were not absent. If one groups this sub-group of reasons together, it becomes clear that a good number of reasons for non-religiosity is either disillusionment or resentment towards the Church itself and not towards 'belief in God' as such. Interestingly too, none of the Law students gave any of these reasons for non-belief. Could this possibly be because law students feel comfortable with a law-making institution?

**Table 4: Church-related reasons why students do *not* perceive themselves to be 'religious'**

| <b>N=144</b>                                    | <b>%</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------|
| I do not believe in the Church                  | 4.2      |
| I am against the Church and Priests             | 3.5      |
| I cannot relate to a male-dominated institution | 2.1      |
| The Church is hypocritical                      | 2.8      |

The level of attendance at religious activities can be taken as an important indicator of commitment to organised religion. Table 5 confirms the statement about how students perceive their own religiosity. The levels of 'rare' and 'never' attendance add up to 37.5%, which is just 5.5% more than what had been registered as being 'non-religious'.

**Table 5: General participation in Religious Activities  
by Gender and Nationality**

|              | TOTAL | GENDER |        | NATIONALITY              |                         |                |
|--------------|-------|--------|--------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
|              |       | MALE   | FEMALE | MALTESE<br>BORN<br>MALTA | MALTESE<br>BORN<br>GOZO | NON<br>MALTESE |
| N=           | 450   | 227    | 223    | 407                      | 26                      | 15             |
| %            | %     | %      | %      | %                        | %                       |                |
| NA           | 0.4   | 0.4    | 0.4    | 0.5                      | -                       | -              |
| Frequently   | 27.6  | 29.5   | 25.6   | 28.0                     | 26.9                    | 13.3           |
| Occasionally | 34.4  | 33.0   | 35.9   | 33.4                     | 53.8                    | 26.7           |
| Rarely       | 25.1  | 23.8   | 26.5   | 25.6                     | 15.4                    | 33.3           |
| Never        | 12.4  | 13.2   | 11.7   | 12.5                     | 3.8                     | 26.7           |

Interestingly too, although the percentage of 'never attending' religious activities is slightly lower among females, when 'rarely' and 'never' are added, the difference across gender becomes minute. The figures for Gozitan students in respect of non-attendance are again very low. When the same figures are broken down by the students' Faculty or Institute, it emerges that the highest number of 'never' and 'rarely' are true of Science students and those attending courses at the Institute of Health Care (IHC). The extent of the difference between IHC students and those attending the Faculty of Medicine is interesting and significant, given the fact that both groups of students follow broadly disease-related courses and are, consequently, often in contact with persons in situations in their life-time where religion traditionally re-acquires importance even if it had been neglected during a person's lifetime.

**Table 6: General participation in Religious Activities  
by Faculty or Institute**

|              |    | NA  | FREQUENTLY | OCCASIONALLY | RARELY | NEVER |
|--------------|----|-----|------------|--------------|--------|-------|
|              | N= | %   | %          | %            | %      | %     |
| Arts         | 61 | -   | 18.0       | 39.3         | 29.5   | 13.1  |
| Theology     | 30 | -   | 86.7       | 13.3         | -      | -     |
| Medicine     | 59 | -   | 33.9       | 39.0         | 15.3   | 11.9  |
| Law          | 60 | -   | 20.0       | 35.0         | 35.0   | 10.0  |
| Architecture | 30 | -   | 13.3       | 40.0         | 30.0   | 16.7  |
| Engineering  | 26 | -   | 26.7       | 23.3         | 40.0   | 10.0  |
| Science      | 30 | -   | 26.7       | 23.3         | 40.0   | 10.0  |
| IHC*         | 30 | -   | 10.0       | 30.0         | 36.7   | 23.3  |
| Education    | 60 | 3.3 | 25.0       | 36.7         | 16.7   | 18.3  |
| FEMA**       | 60 | -   | 35.0       | 30.0         | 25.0   | 10.0  |
| Others       | 4  | -   | 25.0       | 50.0         | 25.0   | -     |

\* IHC= Institute of Health Care, which caters for Nursing and other allied health courses; FEMA= Faculty of Management and Accountancy.

Religious beliefs can be grouped in different ways. Notions can be concept-related or institution-related. When University students were asked whether they believed in a set of 'religious facts', the results confirm that those facts which are more specifically related to Church structures were less believed in. Table 7 shows that belief in the saints and in the sacraments is relatively low at 68.4% and 71.8% respectively, when compared to belief in God, which registered a high 91.6%.

**Table 7: Belief in a Set of Spiritual Notions\***

|            | NA  | NO   | YES  |
|------------|-----|------|------|
|            | %   | %    | %    |
| God        | 0.7 | 7.8  | 91.6 |
| Sin        | 1.3 | 19.1 | 79.6 |
| Heaven     | 2.0 | 18.4 | 79.6 |
| Hell       | 3.1 | 28.0 | 68.9 |
| Saints     | 4.0 | 27.6 | 68.4 |
| Sacraments | 2.9 | 25.3 | 71.8 |

\* Base=All



What Maltese students seem to be saying is that their religiosity is moving away from structures and ritual into the more personal areas of their lives.

To test the extent to which this could be true, University students were further asked two separate but related questions on the extent to which religion and the Church affected their views and behaviour on a number of important areas. Table 8 summarises the findings:

**Table 8: Perceived Influence of Religion and of the Church on a Set of Issues related to the Private Sphere\***

|                       | Religion |        |           |       | Catholic Church |        |           |       |
|-----------------------|----------|--------|-----------|-------|-----------------|--------|-----------|-------|
|                       | NA       | Always | Sometimes | Never | NA              | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|                       | %        | %      | %         | %     | %               | %      | %         | %     |
| Relations with others | 0.7      | 18.0   | 48.7      | 32.7  | 0.4             | 13.8   | 43.3      | 42.4  |
| Work                  | 0.2      | 12.9   | 44.2      | 42.7  | 0.4             | 9.6    | 41.3      | 48.7  |
| Sex Life              | 0.4      | 22.9   | 39.6      | 37.1  | 0.2             | 20.0   | 40.7      | 39.1  |
| Your Family           | -        | 24.7   | 43.8      | 31.6  | 0.2             | 18.0   | 42.2      | 39.3  |
| Choice of Friends     | 0.2      | 11.1   | 34.9      | 53.8  | 0.4             | 8.9    | 32.9      | 57.8  |
| Choice of Partner     | 0.9      | 14.9   | 35.8      | 48.4  | 1.3             | 11.3   | 34.9      | 52.4  |

\*Base=All

What these figures emphasise is the loss of influence of religion on important aspects of daily living. The percentages for 'never' are consistently higher than the figures for non-religiosity given in Table 9 and conversely the figures for 'always' are consistently very low. In turn, the figures regarding the influence of the Catholic Church on the same set of areas are even higher for 'never'. The extent of control and influence of religion and the Catholic Church on the decision making process of Maltese University students in areas which are considered core domains in which religious commitment would 'always' tend to have an influence, is indeed quite low.

Students were further asked about their views on a set of usually controversial issues: *divorce, pre-marital sex, abortion, married clergy, contraception, euthanasia* and the *illicit use of drugs*. Table 9 summarises the findings. In this Table 'No' means that respondents do not agree with; 'Yes' means that they disagree with the issue or practice concerned.

The data in this Table point to a number of important deviations from 'received value-systems' and from the official position of the Church. The

highest overall rating of 72.2% in favour of contraception is perhaps not as striking as the widespread acceptance, especially among members of certain faculties, of pre-marital sex (overall total in favour at 55.6%, but with a rating of 76.6% among Law students; 73.8% among Arts students; 73.3% among Science students and 70% among Architecture students); of divorce (with an overall rating in favour of 44.9%, but a high 66.7% among Architecture students); euthanasia (with 30% overall average but with a strikingly high 46.7% each for Science and Institute of Health Care students). Even in the Faculty of Theology, attended primarily but not exclusively by seminarians preparing for the priesthood, views not exactly in tune with those of the Church do exist: 53.3% are in favour of a married clergy; 16.7% are in favour of contraception; 6.7% are in favour of pre-marital sex and 3.3% are in favour of divorce. What is also striking in Table 9 is that there is not much difference across gender, even though females register slightly lower figures 'in favour' of these controversial issues than their male counterparts.

**Table 9: Views on a number of Controversial Issues\***

| TOTAL GENDER         |      |      |        | FACULTY |        |      |      |       |        |        |      |       |      |        |  |
|----------------------|------|------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|------|-------|------|--------|--|
|                      |      | Male | Female | Arts    | Theol. | Med. | Law  | Arch. | Engin. | Scien. | IHC  | Educ. | Fema | Others |  |
| N=                   | 450  | 227  | 223    | 61      | 30     | 59   | 60   | 30    | 26     | 30     | 30   | 60    | 60   | 4      |  |
|                      | %    | %    | %      | %       | %      | %    | %    | %     | %      | %      | %    | %     | %    | %      |  |
| Divorce              |      |      |        |         |        |      |      |       |        |        |      |       |      |        |  |
| NA                   | 1.1  | 1.3  | 0.9    | -       | -      | 1.7  | 1.7  | -     | -      | -      | -    | 3.3   | 1.7  | -      |  |
| NO                   | 54.0 | 53.3 | 54.7   | 45.9    | 96.7   | 52.5 | 51.7 | 33.3  | 88.5   | 16.7   | 53.3 | 56.7  | 60.0 | -      |  |
| YES                  | 44.9 | 45.4 | 44.4   | 54.1    | 3.3    | 45.8 | 46.7 | 66.7  | 11.5   | 83.3   | 46.7 | 40.0  | 38.3 | 100.0  |  |
| Pre-marital sex      |      |      |        |         |        |      |      |       |        |        |      |       |      |        |  |
| NA                   | 1.6  | 1.3  | 1.8    | -       | 3.3    | 1.7  | -    | -     | 7.7    | -      | -    | 5.0   | -    | -      |  |
| NO                   | 42.9 | 41.9 | 43.9   | 26.2    | 90.0   | 49.2 | 23.3 | 30.0  | 50.0   | 26.7   | 56.7 | 43.3  | 56.7 | -      |  |
| YES                  | 55.6 | 56.8 | 54.3   | 73.8    | 6.7    | 49.2 | 76.7 | 70.0  | 42.3   | 73.3   | 43.3 | 51.7  | 43.3 | 100.0  |  |
| Abortion             |      |      |        |         |        |      |      |       |        |        |      |       |      |        |  |
| NA                   | 1.8  | 1.8  | 1.8    | -       | -      | 1.7  | 1.7  | 6.7   | -      | -      | -    | -     | 3.3  | 50.0   |  |
| NO                   | 87.1 | 85.9 | 88.3   | 78.7    | 100.0  | 86.4 | 88.3 | 93.3  | 96.2   | 76.7   | 96.7 | 86.7  | 85.0 | 50.0   |  |
| YES                  | 11.1 | 12.3 | 9.9    | 21.3    | -      | 11.9 | 10.0 | -     | 3.8    | 23.3   | 3.3  | 13.3  | 11.7 | -      |  |
| Married Clergy       |      |      |        |         |        |      |      |       |        |        |      |       |      |        |  |
| NA                   | 2.4  | 2.6  | 2.2    | -       | -      | 1.7  | 3.3  | 6.7   | 7.7    | -      | 6.7  | 1.7   | -    | 25.0   |  |
| NO                   | 48.2 | 46.3 | 50.2   | 55.7    | 66.7   | 35.6 | 41.7 | 33.3  | 50.0   | 40.0   | 60.0 | 48.3  | 56.7 | 25.0   |  |
| YES                  | 49.3 | 51.1 | 47.5   | 44.3    | 53.3   | 62.7 | 55.0 | 60.0  | 42.3   | 60.0   | 33.3 | 50.0  | 43.3 | 50.0   |  |
| Contraception        |      |      |        |         |        |      |      |       |        |        |      |       |      |        |  |
| NA                   | 1.3  | 1.3  | 1.3    | -       | -      | 1.7  | 1.7  | 10.0  | -      | -      | -    | 1.7   | -    | -      |  |
| NO                   | 26.4 | 25.6 | 27.4   | 29.5    | 83.3   | 32.2 | 13.3 | 3.3   | 11.5   | 13.3   | 13.3 | 20.0  | 41.7 | -      |  |
| YES                  | 72.2 | 73.1 | 71.3   | 70.5    | 16.7   | 66.1 | 85.0 | 86.7  | 88.5   | 86.7   | 86.7 | 78.3  | 58.3 | 100.0  |  |
| Euthanasia           |      |      |        |         |        |      |      |       |        |        |      |       |      |        |  |
| NA                   | 3.6  | 2.6  | 4.5    | 3.3     | -      | 6.8  | 5.0  | 6.7   | -      | -      | -    | 5.0   | 1.7  | 25.0   |  |
| NO                   | 64.4 | 68.3 | 64.6   | 65.6    | 96.7   | 69.5 | 56.7 | 53.3  | 84.6   | 53.3   | 53.3 | 61.7  | 78.3 | 25.0   |  |
| YES                  | 30.0 | 29.1 | 30.9   | 31.1    | 3.3    | 23.7 | 38.3 | 40.0  | 15.4   | 46.7   | 46.7 | 33.3  | 20.0 | 50.0   |  |
| Illicit Use of Drugs |      |      |        |         |        |      |      |       |        |        |      |       |      |        |  |
| NA                   | 1.3  | 0.9  | 1.8    | -       | -      | 1.7  | 1.7  | 3.3   | -      | -      | -    | 5.0   | -    | -      |  |
| NO                   | 88.7 | 85.9 | 91.5   | 91.8    | 100.0  | 91.5 | 90.0 | 86.7  | 76.9   | 76.7   | 96.7 | 81.7  | 91.7 | 75.0   |  |
| YES                  | 10.0 | 13.2 | 6.7    | 8.2     | -      | 6.8  | 8.3  | 10.0  | 23.1   | 23.3   | 3.3  | 13.3  | 8.3  | 25.0   |  |

\*Base=All

The figures relating to the two life issues of abortion and euthanasia among students following health-related are also very illuminating. In contrast to Science students who traditionally were considered to be more liberal, Medicine and Nursing students (the latter following IHC courses) have traditionally supported notions of the sanctity of life and promoted their professions as the ones safeguarding it. But the figures in Table 9 suggest that other currents of thought are now prevalent: 11.9% of Medicine students and 3.3% of IHC students favour abortion; 23.7% of Medicine students and 46.7% of IHC students favour euthanasia in contrast to the views of science students on the same two issues (Euthanasia 46.7%; Abortion: 23.3%). Illicit use of drugs is only favoured by a relatively low 10% of the total student population, but registers 23.1% among engineering students. In contrast, Medicine students registered 6.8% in favour and IHC students 3.3%.

In order to further test students' views on the role of religion in their lives and the way it relates to other spheres of life as they perceive them, they were asked to state their agreement with a number of statements, some of which were purposely made to offset others, on a five-point Lickert scale. The results are presented in Table 10.

Interestingly enough, what emerges is not opposition to the Church, but distance. Taken together, students seem to be suggesting that the Church, and what it stands for, is not quite irrelevant to them, but not all that it stands for is relevant. Neither are they prepared to follow its leadership blindly. The clergy are relevant, but not necessarily as a group: there could be individual members of the clergy who have earned esteem and are therefore listened to and liked, but as a 'social class' the clergy is not ranked very highly.

**Table 10: Agreement with a set of Statements\***

|                                                                                      | NA  | TOTALLY<br>AGREE | AGREE | INDIF-<br>FERENT | DISAGREE | DISAGREE<br>TOTALLY | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------|-------|------------------|----------|---------------------|-------|
|                                                                                      | %   | %                | %     | %                | %        | %                   | %     |
| The Catholic Church in Malta influences me a lot                                     | 1.6 | 7.6              | 27.6  | 23.3             | 20.7     | 19.3                | 100.0 |
| I do not like all priests                                                            | 0.2 | 18.9             | 38.9  | 19.8             | 13.6     | 8.7                 | 100.0 |
| Some priests influence me a lot                                                      | 0.7 | 10.4             | 30.7  | 23.8             | 21.1     | 13.3                | 100.0 |
| I enjoy religious activities                                                         | 1.1 | 11.1             | 26.7  | 32.2             | 14.0     | 14.9                | 100.0 |
| You do not need to go to Church to be religious                                      | 1.3 | 25.8             | 30.7  | 10.2             | 23.1     | 8.9                 | 100.0 |
| Helping others is enough to love God                                                 | 1.3 | 17.3             | 28.4  | 18.0             | 27.3     | 7.6                 | 100.0 |
| I do listen to the Church, but then I decide on my own                               | 0.7 | 12.9             | 33.6  | 23.1             | 19.1     | 10.7                | 100.0 |
| The Church should not talk about sexual matters                                      | 0.7 | 8.7              | 10.7  | 23.1             | 29.8     | 27.1                | 100.0 |
| My conscience is more important than what the Church says                            | 1.3 | 21.3             | 26.4  | 20.9             | 21.3     | 8.7                 | 100.0 |
| Most of what the Church does/says is outdated                                        | 1.1 | 14.2             | 21.3  | 24.0             | 28.0     | 11.3                | 100.0 |
| I do not feel that if I do not follow what the Church says I suffer social exclusion | 1.1 | 21.8             | 29.3  | 25.6             | 15.3     | 6.9                 | 100.0 |
| When I do not follow what priests say I am more popular                              | 0.9 | 1.6              | 5.6   | 36.0             | 32.9     | 23.1                | 100.0 |
| The Church in Malta controls me                                                      | 0.2 | 1.3              | 6.9   | 20.0             | 38.2     | 33.3                | 100.0 |
| The Church in Malta only controls old-fashioned persons                              | 0.4 | 10.2             | 15.1  | 26.2             | 31.8     | 16.2                | 100.0 |
| Politics and religion have nothing to do with each other                             | 0.4 | 16.0             | 16.7  | 21.6             | 27.1     | 18.2                | 100.0 |
| Politics and business have nothing to do with each other                             | 0.9 | 5.8              | 7.1   | 15.8             | 34.2     | 36.2                | 100.0 |
| I never think about death                                                            | 0.9 | 4.9              | 3.3   | 14.9             | 44.2     | 31.8                | 100.0 |
| I am not worried about what happens after death                                      | 1.3 | 9.3              | 10.4  | 21.3             | 34.4     | 23.1                | 100.0 |
| The Church has nothing to tell me about suffering                                    | 1.1 | 8.9              | 7.1   | 26.9             | 30.7     | 25.3                | 100.0 |
| I think that religion is the opium of the oppressed                                  | 2.0 | 8.7              | 13.1  | 25.1             | 28.9     | 22.2                | 100.0 |
| Children are made to believe that religion is too important                          | 1.1 | 19.3             | 26.9  | 20.0             | 24.2     | 8.4                 | 100.0 |
| Religion was given too much importance in my upbringing at home                      | 0.4 | 15.1             | 28.2  | 19.1             | 27.8     | 9.3                 | 100.0 |
| I would prefer my children not to be brought up as Churchgoers                       | 0.9 | 7.3              | 9.3   | 23.8             | 30.2     | 28.4                | 100.0 |
| Most of my closest friends do not care much about religion                           | 1.8 | 8.4              | 18.9  | 20.0             | 36.0     | 14.9                | 100.0 |

\* Base=All

The above data were used to compute two sets of indices for each statement, and the results are reproduced in Table 11. The first index is based on all the respondents, the second statement is based only on those who actually offered an opinion on that specific statement. Theoretically, each statement could register a maximum 100 points or a minimum of -100 points.

**Table 11: Indices for a Set of Statements**

|                                                                                      | BASE=ALL | BASE=REPLIES |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| The Catholic Church in Malta influences me a lot                                     | 1.11     | 0.60         |
| I do not like all priests                                                            | 33.78    | 33.78        |
| Some priests influence me a lot                                                      | 11.63    | 11.48        |
| I enjoy religious activities                                                         | 15.78    | 15.58        |
| You do not need to go to Church to be religious                                      | 25.78    | 25.68        |
| Helping others is enough to love God                                                 | 16.96    | 16.74        |
| I do listen to the Church, but then I decide on my own                               | 19.78    | 19.69        |
| The Church should not talk about sexual matters                                      | -23.26   | -23.64       |
| My conscience is more important than what the Church says                            | 23.48    | 23.35        |
| Most of what the Church does/says is outdated                                        | 6.81     | 6.52         |
| I do not feel that if I do not follow what the Church says I suffer social exclusion | 33.11    | 33.11        |
| When I do not follow what priests say I am more popular                              | -27.48   | -28.03       |
| The Church in Malta controls me                                                      | -46.15   | -46.33       |
| The Church in Malta only controls old-fashioned persons                              | -8.22    | -8.41        |
| Politics and religion have nothing to do with each other                             | -1.85    | -2.01        |
| Politics and business have nothing to do with each other                             | -42.96   | -43.65       |
| I never think about death                                                            | -48.89   | -49.63       |
| I am not worried about what happens after death                                      | -22.22   | -22.97       |
| The Church has nothing to tell me about suffering                                    | -22.81   | -23.45       |
| I think that religion is the opium of the oppressed                                  | -15.04   | -16.02       |
| Children are made to believe that religion is too important                          | 19.70    | 19.55        |
| Religion was given too much importance in my upbringing at home                      | 12.59    | 12.50        |
| I would prefer my children not to be brought up as Churchgoers                       | -26.81   | -27.35       |
| Most of my closest friends do not care much about religion                           | -10.59   | -11.39       |

Undoubtedly, the most striking feature resulting from the responses to the statements is the negativity expressed in the answers given by the students. A positive 50 points was not reached by any of the 'positive' statements; nor a negative 50 points was reached by the 'negative' statements. On the second index (based on replies) the highest positive rating was given to the statement *'I do not like all priests'* (33.78 points). Since the statement is a negative statement it effectively means that there is more agreement with this statement than disagreement, as can be confirmed by the percentages in the preceding Table 10. A number of statements result in a negative index rating, thus implying that there is a rejection of the statement. Thus the rating of the statement *'I never think about death'* - 49.63 implies that students do think about death sometimes.

A careful analysis of the indices shows that there exists an anti-church approach and lack of appreciation of the role of priests. In fact, the statement *'The Catholic Church in Malta influences me a lot'* was rated only 0.60 points out of maximum of 100. Similarly *'I do not like all priests'* registered 33.78 points whilst *'Some priests influence me a lot'* registered a low 11.48 points.

The existing dichotomy and uncertainties in Church related matters is also disclosed by students in other statements: *'You do not need to go to Church to be religious'* registered 25.68 points whilst the statement *'The Church should not talk about sexual matters'* registered -23.64 points. The last rating suggests that the Church is expected to talk about sexual matters. In the same way Maltese University students are not against a Christian environment and upbringing, as confirmed by the negative rating (-27.35 points) given to the statement *'I would prefer my children not to be brought up as Churchgoers'*. And this despite the fact that quite a few thought that too much importance was given to religion during their own upbringing, as attested by the rating 12.50 points registered for the statement *'Religion was given too much importance in my upbringing at home'*.

If willingness to listen exists, there is evident reluctance to be controlled. The statement *'The Church in Malta controls me'* registered a negative rating of -46.33. The negative rating clearly suggesting that the Church is not perceived to have the power to control the respondents. This was confirmed by the rating achieved by the statement *'I do not feel that if I do not follow what the Church says I suffer social exclusion'*, obtaining an index rating of 33.11 points. The whole trend is probably best encapsulated in the rating given to the two statements *'I do listen to the Church,*

*but then I decide on my own'* and *'My conscience is more important than what the Church says'* which respectively registered 19.69 and 23.35 points on the index.

## Conclusion

In most European nations, and even in the United States where attendance at religious celebrations is relatively stronger than it is in Europe, very deep changes in the religiosity of the population have been noticed and documented. The relevance of ecclesiastical and other religious structures in an open society, in which organised religion does not offer a rallying point for a distinctive cultural or ethnic identity, is on the decline and the practice of religion has moved into areas which affect the individual person more intimately. This was for a long time thought to be the effect of a forceful tidal wave of secularisation that was gradually destroying the remnants of a past religious civilisation (see Vassallo 1996). Gradually, however, it was realised that what was happening was not the advent of the death of religion, but a process of transformation which was ascribing to religion those areas where religion alone had something to offer, namely issues related to the meaning of life and problems of ultimate meaning. These issues have to be dealt with in the private sphere, areas which traditionally religion had indeed given importance to, but ones which had been eclipsed by the massive presence of religion and the churches in the public sphere.

The changes that have been documented elsewhere in Europe are gradually but very forcefully making their way into Maltese culture. The data derived from the study conducted among University students in 1998 certainly does not capture the full reality of Maltese society, but it does seem to capture important trends which manifest themselves elsewhere, albeit in different ways. Malta has recently experienced an upsurge in the popularity of new religious movements, particularly in through the Neocatechumenal, the Charismatic and the Focolarini movements. It has also witnessed non-Maltese sectarian groups finding niches in which to establish themselves, something which was unheard of even two decades ago. The current multiplicity of religious and para-religious groups is indeed a far cry from the stoning of those participating in the first Protestant organised procession under the British in Malta!

What all this points to is that the issues confronting individuals living in bigger nations and more diversified cultures are also confronting the



Maltese, and that the way these issues are being resolved is not dissimilar to the way that they are being confronted elsewhere. Naturally, the fact that Malta is a small island state makes it more difficult for foreign structures to penetrate and establish a strong foothold, but the strong feeling expressed by University students that they do not suffer social exclusion if they do not follow what the Church has to say shows that there has been a radical transformation of the role of religion in Malta. Social mores are changing, and new ones are developing. If University students are a good indication of what is happening in wider society to date, it can be said that the Maltese are prepared to listen to what 'mother church' has to say, but the market for ideas is wide open, and the sources for social cohesion and control are no longer restricted to what the priests have to say from their pulpits. The market place has been considerably liberalised, and although there is a place for the Church, even a pre-eminent one, as the new millennium approaches the pressure on the Church for it to compete on the open market is bound to increase. And unless the Church realises this, it will perhaps continue to provide occasions where jollification and celebration provide magnificent occasions for extended socialisation through its deeply ingrained village festa structures. It will also continue to provide other similar occasions for social interaction on a large scale when the different emotional outbursts, typical of life's climaxes through the celebration of its rites of passage (Vassallo 1981a). But it might miss the opportunity to provide solutions to the more devastating problems of meaning which modern man is faced with. The contemporary trend affirms a newly found link between conscience and the Deity. A modicum of sacramental intervention will probably persist but devoid of the need for intervention through highly differentiated hierarchies with their feudal-like systems of rank and privilege.

The type of social control enjoyed by the church when Malta was a colony and a rallying point for national identity is practically lost for the Church in Malta. Whether the church will further lose its ability to maintain social cohesion seems to depend on the extent to which it understands social change. Without necessarily condoning all the attendant derivatives of social change, the Maltese Church still captures enough 'listening ears'. In future it might still manage a measure of control and bring about social cohesion of a different but more individually meaningful kind. But to do so, it seems that the Church would need to re-direct its energies first and foremost to understand modern man's deepest needs for recognition and interpersonal communication, and to provide meaningful structures

and meaning systems that the individual would be prepared to 'buy' on the open ideological market place because they are appealing for him because they are perceived to be logically consistent and 'good value', and not because if he does not bow his head in devoted obedience he would suffer stigma or social seclusion.

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# FILMING BRONTË'S MOORISH SOUNDSCAPE : AN AURAL ANALYSIS OF FIVE *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* FILM ADAPATIONS

SAVIOUR CATANIA

*Abstract - This paper dissects the sound-effects codes of the Wuthering Heights film versions directed by Wyler, Buñuel, Fuest, Yoshida and Kosminsky in order to determine to what extent these film adaptors succeed in echoing thematically the novel's essential 'wuthering'. What such an analysis reveals is that, while Kosminsky's soundtrack is more consistently analogous to Brontë's moorish soundscape in its recreation of such crucial aural motifs as canine baying, avian trilling and gusty wind, even the soundtracks devised by Wyler, Yoshida, Fuest and Buñuel have their enviable moments of undoubted Brontëan significance.*

## Introduction

*"Real sound does not merely add to the image,  
it multiplies it"* Kurosawa (Richie 1984 : 226).

Studies of *Wuthering Heights* film adaptations, like those of other filmed fiction, usually concentrate almost exclusively on the problem of whether the novel's vital themes have been recreated analogously in predominantly visual images. While such an approach is understandably rooted in an essentially visual concept of film, it has been regrettably conducive to the underestimation of the medium's potential to enrich its visual appropriation of literary fiction by integrating it with what Bettetini (1973 : 111) calls "*sonic intervention*". To redress the balance, I intend to analyse some key features of the sound-effects tracks of the *Wuthering Heights* film versions directed by Wyler, Buñuel, Fuest, Yoshida and Kosminsky in order to determine what Brontëan thematic signification has been generated through what Metz (1982 : 189) describes as the "*association [of] an image and a sound, a background noise and a word, etc.*". In what follows, then, I would like to establish not simply whether the sound-effects codes of these five *Wuthering Heights* adaptations are reinforcing or counterpointing the words and images, but whether they are doing so in order to imbue the film proceedings with further intimations of Brontë's meaning.

## The moorland soundtrack of *Wuthering Heights*

Of the five *Wuthering Heights* film-makers in question, Kosminsky strikes me as having created a soundtrack of a denser Brontëan nature, though I am not thereby denying the Brontëan implications of the soundtracks devised by Yoshida, Fuest, Buñuel and Wyler. For the latter soundtracks, though evidently less thematically comprehensive, are similarly Brontëan in their atmospheric and psychological suggestions. In his own way, then, each of these *Wuthering Heights* adaptors has succeeded in exploiting what Giannetti (1987 : 156) terms the "*symbolic functions [of] sound effects*" by intermeshing the latter with both visual and other aural elements in order to recreate crucial aspects of Brontë's thematic network. What I intend to demonstrate, in fact, is the extent of these film-makers' success at thematizing such recurrent sound-effects like whistling wind, cawing crows and/or baying hounds — the three major components of what I have called the moorish soundscape of *Wuthering Heights*.

As might be expected, all the five *Wuthering Heights* filmmakers concerned are most attentive to wind-effects in their aural recreation of the novel's moorish atmosphere. This is certainly in accordance with what Woolf (1929 : 204) rightly says about Brontë — that she could "*by speaking of the moor make the wind blow and the thunder roar*". Wyler, for instance, opens with a blinding blizzard, thereby exposing us in medias res, using Brontë's Lockwood's words, to "*the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge*" (1972 : 14)<sup>1</sup>. More importantly, Wyler literally dramatizes Brontë's Lockwood's definition of 'Wuthering' as "*a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which [the house's] station is exposed in stormy weather*" (p.14) by having the snow whirl wildly into the Heights when his Lockwood steps inside. The snow's invasion of the Heights is clearly an ominous anticipation of Lockwood's grisly encounter with Catherine's snow-phantom, where Wyler dramatically integrates the moor-ghost's wail "*Let me in*"<sup>2</sup> with the banging shutter and the moaning wind. Wyler's emphasis on what may be termed a melancholic windiness indicates that the snowstorm is nothing but an anguished externalization of the ghostly Catherine's frozen heart

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<sup>1</sup> All references to Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* are taken from the 1972 Norton edition.

<sup>2</sup> All quotations from Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* are taken from the sound-track of the Video Gems Ltd. Version (No. 9985/VHS).

raging for Heathcliff's love. Wyler's notion of transforming aurally the initial howling blizzard into an emotional whirlwind is, of course, essentially Brontëan. For as Miller (1963 : 166) remarks of Brontë's own windy introduction of the Heights : "*The storm which blows at the exterior of the house and gives it its name is echoed by the storm within the house, a tempest whose ultimate source, it may be, is the people living there*".

Miller's conjecture is deadly accurate. For Brontë's Catherine's dream-ghost, wailing "*Let me in — Let me in!*" (p.30), too assails Heathcliff's abode with "*the gusty wind, and the driving of the snow*" (p.30). Brontë's assimilation of dream-wraith and blizzard is undoubtedly of central significance, since it corroborates one of Davies' (1983 : 72) key statements : "*The root of the word 'wind' in Hebrew has the same meaning as our word 'spirit', and this fruitful pun which is traditional in Christian tradition, is a coincidence on which Emily Brontë drew*". Wyler clearly draws then on Brontë's Christian vision of the soul as windy spirit; and though he unfortunately mars Brontë's ambiguous effect by changing her Catherine's dream-ghost into an actual wraith, he at least reworks his Catherine's apparition in terms of what Williams (1987 : 19) calls "*[her] internal wild moor*" — that "*other world within [herself]*" (Williams 1987 : 12) where she dematerializes into a windy element. That Wyler embraces Brontë's concept of the wind as some kind of spiritual force is reaffirmed by his handling of Catherine's death-scene at the Grange. Powell (1989 : 12) rightly points out in fact that detail about "*the curtain stirring in the wind from the moors as Cathy lies dying*". What Powell fails to mention, however, is the more crucial suggestion that the gust of wind blowing through the curtain is an aural-visual metaphor for Catherine's gasping spirit breaking through the Linton manor. Wyler's integration of moor-wind and curtain becomes a most dramatic indication of Catherine's windy nature. The Catherine whom Wyler's Lockwood significantly confronts is a gusty ghost — a phantasmal embodiment of the spirit of the moor.

Wyler's Catherine anticipates in this respect her Fuest equivalent. Fuest follows Wyler closely, in fact, for though he sacrifices Lockwood's stormy encounter with Catherine's wraith, he presents the latter when he finally introduces her at the very end as an actual shade haunting her moor-grave. Like Wyler, then, Fuest changes Brontë's Catherine's dream-apparition into a spectral manifestation; and even more importantly, he likewise portrays Catherine's beckoning ghost as an uncanny wind-force. Hence Fuest's Catherine's billowing hair and dress, suggestive of the same moorish spirit

that stirs her Wyler equivalent's curtain. Again, Fuest echoes Wyler's handling of Catherine's wind-ghost in the initial Lockwood episode by reworking this integration of Catherine and the moor-wind in his singular opening sequence depicting Catherine's burial. For Fuest's pre-credits funeral scene establishes an appropriate ill-omened beginning reminiscent of Robert Browning's (1970 : 562) introductory verse : "*Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead*". Like Evelyn, in fact, whose untimely death the poet evokes in terms of a "*geranium-flower/ Beginning to die too*" (p.562), Catherine becomes in Shielders' memorial speech a flower ravaged by a stormy wind : "*The days of man are but as grass, for he flourisheth as a flower of the field, for as soon as the wind goes over it, it is gone*".<sup>3</sup> Fuest's Catherine is definitely dead but, like Evelyn whom we are told "*will wake*" (1970 : 564), she returns ironically as wind-wraith in elemental fulfilment of what she has promised Heathcliff : "*When I'm dead I think I'll come and haunt you at sunset*". When viewed in this perspective, the wild wind tearing at Fuest's Heathcliff's black cloak during Catherine's interment accrues a supernatural suggestiveness which Fuest clearly exploits in counterpoint to Shielders' obituary vision of Catherine's corpse as a flower destroyed by a windy storm. What Fuest's Shielders fails to recognize, it seems, is that what reaps Catherine in the flower of her youth is, to quote Williams (1987 : 10) again, that "*internal storm[...]*", which she shares with her Wyler and Brontëan equivalents. Where both Wyler and Fuest differ from Brontë then is in their unequivocal attitude to Catherine's wind-wraith.

Not so Kosminsky whose treatment of Catherine as wind-wraith departs from Wyler's and Fuest's by retaining an essential Brontëan ambivalence. Consider, for example, Kosminsky's Lockwood's nightmare where the branches of a wind-tossed tree crash through the casement and change into Catherine's ghostly arms accompanied by her voice wailing '*Let me in!*'<sup>4</sup> That Kosminsky adheres strictly to Brontë by presenting Catherine's apparition within a dream-frame is, however, only half the point. More significantly, Kosminsky renders this dream-episode highly ambiguous by making it echo in aural-visual terms, not Catherine's delirium at the

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<sup>3</sup> All quotations from Fuest's *Wuthering Heights* are taken from the sound-track of the Congress Video version (No. 60900/VHS).

<sup>4</sup> All quotations from Kosminsky's *Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights* are taken from the sound-track of the Paramount Pictures Video version (No. VHR 2749/VHS).



Grange like Brontë does, but the scene of Heathcliff's despair at Nelly's news of Catherine's death. As in Brontë, however, where Catherine's aural-vision of "*that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice*" (p.106) echoes Lockwood's dream of "*the fir bough repeat[ing] its teasing sound [...] as the blast wail[s] by*" (pp.30, 29), so in Kosminsky the unfathomable connection involves the wind/tree interaction. For Kosminsky aptly sets the scene of Nelly's sad tidings to Heathcliff on the windy heath, with the latter clutching a wind-lashed tree and invoking Catherine's phantom to haunt him, like his literary counterpart does among the larches. In Kosminsky's film, however, the supernatural resonances of the wind-thrashed tree are greater. For Kosminsky, it must be said, interpolates at one point a love scene at the Crag where Heathcliff ominously tells Catherine : "*I'll send your spirit into that tree*". Not surprisingly, then, Catherine's wraith is wind-tossed back into the Heights in arboreal disguise. But this is not meant to imply that what Kosminsky gains thematically by his integration of Catherine and the wind-whipped tree ruins the Brontëan ambiguity. For such an integration, it must be stressed, rightly finds its aural-visual culmination in Lockwood's nightmare, thereby retaining its baffling nature. Catherine's dream-apparition constitutes indeed a central source of ambiguity in Kosminsky's *Wuthering Heights*, with echoes of it resounding in many parts. To give another example : that moment at the Heights where Catherine blows into Heathcliff's hair and tells him : "*Don't you know I'll always come back?*" To add that Catherine utters this statement with the moor-wind blowing through the gables is to underline the scene's aural echoes of Catherine's dream-apparition, thereby heightening Kosminsky's Brontëan approach to the ambiguity of Catherine's wind-ghost.

But no such ambiguity haunts Buñuel's treatment of Brontë's wind-motif in his characterisation of the tragic heroine. Buñuel's is indeed a windy world as the film's other title *Cumbres Borrascosas* or *Stormy Heights* clearly indicates, but this terrain is totally lacking in wind-wraiths, or the possibility of such supernatural entities. Consider, for instance, that sequence where Alejandro (Heathcliff) implores Catalina (Catherine) to haunt him in elemental harmony with what Hoberman (1984 : 52) calls "*the wind whistl[ing] through the palm [sic] trees*". This is evidently Buñuel's reworking of Brontë's Heathcliff's similar prayer under the larches, but with Kosminsky-like wind-effects added brusquely in evocation of what Brontë's Nelly says about the sudden "*wind shift[...] from south to northeast*" (p.140) after Catherine's death. Admittedly, the abrupt-

ness with which Catalina's death erupts into anguished waves of gusty monstera and banana branches is extremely weird; but nothing of an unnatural nature manifests when Alejandro begs Catalina to "*show [her]self*".<sup>5</sup> Not even a hallucinated wraith. Just tossing foliage and swirling leaves indicating that, like Macbeth's, Alejandro's life "*is fall'n into the sere*" (Shakespeare 1970 : 152). What blows Alejandro to Catalina's — and Death's — way is then the wind of fate, that same wind which, Brontë's Nelly observes, "*makes the lattice [...] flap [...] to and fro*" (p.264) at Heathcliff's death. This is, I think, the Brontëan wind to which Sylvia Plath's 'Wuthering Heights' draws our attention as it "*Pours by like destiny, bending / Everything in one direction*" (1981 : 167). For Brontëan destiny is clearly the wind's own as 'High waving heather' demonstrates in its windy vision of "*Man's spirit [...] / Shining and lowering and swelling and dying*" (Brontë 1941 : 31) — a vision which makes Plath's "*one direction*" an elegiac euphemism for Brontë's 'mooryard', that graveyard of the heath to which "*the life-giving wind*" (Brontë 1941 : 31) inevitably leads. Buñuel's notion of superimposing Catalina's flickering funeral candle on stormy clouds becomes then a most fitting way of reaffirming Brontë's concept of human life as tragic windy strife.

Similar thematic preoccupations characterise Yoshida's Brontëan vision. For Yoshida's world, though wraithless like Buñuel's, is even more windswept, and in constant wail. Like Buñuel, in fact, Yoshida, while doing away with the Brontëan possibility of wraiths, reworks the image of Brontë's Catherine as tragic wind-waif. Consider, for instance, that sequence where Kinu's (Catherine's) conversation with Sato (Nelly) concerning the necessity of her becoming a vestal virgin is accompanied throughout by the wind's mournful sound. The moaning wind functions here, through its interaction with Kinu's doleful words, as an aural register of the latter's unvoiced sobbing at the dismal prospect of Onimaru's (Heathcliff's) loss, thereby recreating analogously that "*night of weeping*" (p.107) Brontë's Catherine experiences when Hindley separates her from Heathcliff. What makes the wind the major aural element in Yoshida's film — whose title *Arashi Ga Oka* significantly translates as *The Hill of the Storm* — is therefore not its ubiquitous presence, but its unfailing evocative power. This is a result of Yoshida having succeeded in imbuing the

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<sup>5</sup> All quotations from Buñuel's *Abismos de Pasión* are taken from the English subtitles of the Media Home Entertainment video version (No. CC5038).

wind with an emotional awareness corresponding to that of a fatal mourner. Hence Mitsuhiro's (Edgar's) assimilation in Kinu's death-scene of her clattering Onimaru with the wind, an equivalence that acts like a shivering echo of his earlier warning to Sato: "*The wind isn't good for her [Kinu's] health. One shouldn't open the door like that*".<sup>6</sup> Yoshida's association of the wind with Kinu's aural vision of Onimaru as horseman of death is further affirmed by having the wind wail on the latter's reaping trail in moaning interplay with a flickering oil-lamp suggestive of a life in imminent danger of being blown out. One cannot help recalling here Catalina's funeral taper looming in the stormy skyscape, and Catherine's and Joseph's attic candles flickering in the windswept eyes of Mrs. Linton's delirious mind. Like Catherine and Catalina, then, Kinu is rightly conceived as a fragile flame exposed to the vagaries of the heath-wind.

But if Catherine's filmic realisation depends to a great extent on an aural recreation of her as a windy waif, so does Heathcliff's depend for the most part on an aural recreation of him as a baying hound. Wyler strikes the right note in fact when, Brontë-like, he integrates Heathcliff's snapping tone with his dogs' barking at Lockwood's intrusive arrival. What Miller (1963 : 166) says about Brontë's Lockwood then, that his "*encounter with Heathcliff's dogs is really his first encounter with the true nature of their owner*", is equally applicable to his Wyler equivalent. Wyler's Heathcliff implicitly admits this when, rephrasing his Brontëan counterpart's words, he allies himself with the Heights ferocious cur: "*Guests are so rare in this house that I hardly know how to receive them — I and my dog*". Significantly, Wyler departs from Brontë's depiction of Heathcliff's unexpected reappearance on the Linton porch by reworking his script-writers' interpolated scene showing Heathcliff "*in the gathering twilight, while the dogs sniff and growl around his feet*" (Hecht & MacArthur 1943 : 316). No such scene exists in Wyler's film, but what announces Heathcliff's sudden return is the barking of the Grange curs. "*What's the matter with the dogs ?*", Catherine ominously asks before Heathcliff snarls his way back into her life. But why should Wyler, one might ask, initiate the lovers' reunion in terms of strange dog barks? The reason is, I think, Wyler's fidelity to the canine aspect of Brontë's

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<sup>6</sup> All quotations from Yoshida's *Arashi Ga Oka* are taken from Tomoko Cassar's translation of the dialogue from the Pony Canyon Japanese video version (No. V148F1773/VHS).

Heathcliff's moorish nature — that element in his personality which Catherine instinctively adopts despite Hindley's repulsive response : "*Off, dog!*" (p.41). What Lockwood reads in Catherine's diary, in fact, about Heathcliff and her hiding "*snug[ly] [...] in the arch of the dresser*" (p.27), hints unmistakably at their canine instinct by evoking Lockwood's earlier observation that the Heights curs haunt exactly the same place : "*In an arch under the dresser, reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies [...]*" (pp.14-15). Hence Isabella's biting remark when she quarrels with Catherine about Heathcliff's love : "*You are a dog in the manger, Cathy, and desire no one to be loved but yourself!*" (p.89).

Heathcliff's canine relationship with Catherine reaches, however, a snarling climax in Catherine's death-chamber where Nelly observes him caressing her while "*grinding his teeth*" (p.133), which he does again when she tries to intervene : "*he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog*" (p.134). Isabella bites then into canine flesh again when, after Catherine's death, she taunts Heathcliff with his fawning obeisance to her : "*[...] if I were you, I'd go stretch myself over her grave and die like a faithful dog*" (p.146). So Wyler hits the thematic nail on its head when he juxtaposes Catherine's query about the barking dogs to the latter's growling message that Heathcliff has come home. Regrettably, however, Wyler fails to develop this essential canine connection. At no point, for instance, does Wyler include, like Brontë does, a watch-dog under Catherine's bedroom window, suggestive of Cerberus guarding the portals of Hades, and hence of Catherine's approaching passage to the nether world. Nor does Wyler interpolate any howling in canine sympathy with Catherine's and/or Heathcliff's death, like Saki (1982 : 410-414) does with his lupine requiem for the governess' demise in 'The Wolves of Cernogratz'. Brontë's canine motif finds then no aural-visual treatment in the latter half of Wyler's film.

Still, the Heathcliff/dog connection which Wyler aurally establishes in Heathcliff's return sequence is of thematic centrality, and is arguably the only aural key moment for which Buñuel is clearly indebted to Wyler. For Buñuel, it must be said, recreates Wyler's Heathcliff/dog effect by having Eduardo's (Edgar's) question "*Why is that dog barking?*" function as an aural premonition of Alejandro's subsequent arrival. Buñuel differs from Wyler, however, in making the underlying Alejandro/dog connection evoke the white barking dog running at Isabel's (Isabella's) feet, thereby hinting at the latter's, and not Catalina's, appropriation of

Alejandro's canine nature. But Buñuel's approach, it must be stressed, is equally valid in Brontëan terms. For Brontë's Isabella is indeed a biter bit. Consider, for example, Brontë's Heathcliff's admission to Nelly: "*Now, was it not the depth of absurdity — of genuine idiocy — for that pitiful, slavish, mean-minded brach to dream that I could love her?*" (p.127). So Buñuel, while departing from Wyler's Brontëan vision of Heathcliff's and Catalina's canine relationship, focuses instead on Brontë's concept of Isabella as Heathcliff's bitch-mate.

Like Wyler, however, Buñuel fails to develop Brontë's dog-motif in the film's other sequences, since at no moment do dogs ever cross Alejandro's and Isabel's path again in any aural and/or visual way. I cannot help feeling then that Hoberman overstates the case when he claims that "*Abismos de Pasión resounds with the music of unmotivated dog barks*" (1984 : 52). Like Wyler, in fact, Buñuel refrains from underscoring Isabel's elopement with Alejandro by means of symbolic canine references. Still, Buñuel's notion of prefiguring Isabel's fate in Alejandro's jaws in terms of ominous barking is of vital thematic importance, and seems to have influenced Kosminsky's elopement sequence. For Kosminsky underlines Isabella's tragic plight by the faint baying of the manor hounds, thereby evoking what his Catherine, echoing Brontë's, tells Isabella about Heathcliff: "*he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man*". Unlike Wyler, then, Kosminsky makes Heathcliff's betrayal of Catherine *sound* as if it were an aural echo of Catherine's maiming by the Linton hounds. Kosminsky betters Wyler then in his thematic reworking of Skulker's attack on Brontë's Catherine — an episode which Buñuel discards by his excision of the first nine chapters of *Wuthering Heights*. Like Wyler and Buñuel, however, Kosminsky fails to develop Brontë's reiterative dog-motif into one of the thematic networks of his film.

Much weaker is Fuest's handling of the novel's canine element. For while staging, like Wyler and Kosminsky do, the growling hound attack on Catherine at the Grange, Fuest includes no other aural and/or visual evocation of Brontë's dog-theme. At no point, in fact, does Fuest develop the thematic possibilities of the Grange dog-scene, thereby denuding his depiction of Heathcliff's relationship with both Isabella and Catherine of much of its moorish savagery. Significantly, Fuest's Catherine, unlike the Catherine's of Brontë and Kosminsky, refrains from describing Heathcliff to Isabella as a human incarnation of the most lethal member of the canine family. Brontë's dog-motif loses consequently its thematic vitality in Fuest's film. Wyler, Buñuel and Kosminsky are more thematically successful

than Fuest in this respect; and so is Yoshida who likewise retains something of Brontë's dog-motif but without including any barking canines in his film. I am referring here to that chilling sequence where Tae (Isabella), after being anally raped by Onimaru in dog-like fashion, kills herself by hanging. This is actually Yoshida's subtle reworking of Brontë's Heathcliff's symbolic hanging of Isabella Linton through the sadistic act of strangling Fanny, her pet springer :

*The first thing that she [Isabella] saw me do, on coming out of the Grange, was to hang up her little dog, and when she pleaded for it, the first words I uttered were a wish that I had the hanging of every being belonging to her [...] (p.127).*

I cannot help recalling here Klingopulos' remark that "*Heathcliff's cynical cruelty to the dog is an extension of his treatment of Isabella*" (1947 : 279). Isabella's hanged-bitch fate threatens, in fact, again when she witnesses Hareton "*hanging a litter of puppies from a chair-back*" (p.150), thereby justifying Miller's (1963 : 168) view that the Heights people "*live like ferocious dogs*". Hence the thematic aptness of Tae's dog-like rape and suicide by hanging — two unbearably painful events that bring to a tragic realisation Brontë's Heathcliff's perverse wish to kill Isabella by hanging her like her pet bitch. Having said this, I feel it necessary to add, however, that without prior knowledge of Brontë's dog-motif, a viewer of Yoshida's film might easily miss the Brontëan canine implications underlying Tae's rape and hanging. For these two terrible events do not evoke each other as self-sufficient visual symbols of a Brontëan-like canine existence, since nowhere does Yoshida rely for such a thematic effect on the visual and/or aural presence of curs. This is, I think, what weakens Yoshida's otherwise inventive reworking of Brontë's dog-theme.

Yoshida redresses, however, the thematic mistake of *not* including barking canines in his world by filling it with chattering birds. Admittedly, Yoshida's birds are largely invisible, but they are certainly present *aurally*. Yoshida's mountainous terrain constitutes, in fact, a soundscape teeming with unseen birds of dread, harbingers of ill-fate. Significantly, Onimaru's and Kinu's stoning in the forbidden village is eerily predicted by the raucous ravens whose off-screen cawing renders their aural presence even more conspicuously ominous by its evocation of the lovers viewed through the imprisoning bars of a wooden gate, caged in a frame within a frame. Portentous, too are the off-screen owls that herald the lovers' fare-



well tidings with their mournful hooting in the darkness. Yoshida often creates then what Nasta (1991 : 101) would term "*an unseen but heard additional meaning space*" by exploiting the aural fatality of invisible birds. But this central avian motif is, I think, Yoshida's reworking of Brontë's pillow episode where Catherine transforms her Linton chamber into a moorland aviary haunted by the feathery spectres of killed lapwings, moorcocks and wild ducks, or what Allott (1958 : 40) calls the birds "*of winter and death*" — flying omens of a foreboding fate, like the hanged hawks and crows of Hughes' 'November' whirling in torrential rain (Hughes 1972 : 48). At no point does Yoshida include a similar scene in *Arashi Ga Oka*, but he certainly recreates in predominantly aural terms Brontë's association of birds with tragic human waste. Hence Yoshida's emphasis on the doves' frenetic fluttering over the dead Shino's (Frances's) body and their alarming cooing after Hidemaru's (Hindley's) stoning. The cooing doves are typically left off-screen in affirmation of Yoshida's concern with the invisibility of the avian emissary of death. But Yoshida could have been influenced in this regard by Buñuel whose film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* which he admires so much (Collick 1993 : 40) likewise associates the sounds of unseen birds with the characters' doomed fates. A case in point is Buñuel's reworking of Brontë's Catherine's statement about Heathcliff's moorish instinct to "*crush [Isabella] like a sparrow's egg*" (p.90) into invisible birds piping heedlessly of Isabel's similar predicament at El Robledal (*Wuthering Heights*) when she arrives there as Alejandro's battered wife. The unseen birds' trilling serves here as an ominous prolepsis of their chirping obliviousness of Eduardo's subsequent rejection of his sister. Again, such uncaring off-screen lilting prior to Catalina's fatal childbirth hints at Buñuel's atheistic notion of humanity's ultimate aloneness. Buñuel certainly prefigures Yoshida then in his reliance on non-diegetic or asynchronous sound-effects that function like a tolling avian knell.

Fuest, too, shares Buñuel's predilection for exploiting avian sound-effects as portents of chaos or death. Fuest initiates, for instance, Heathcliff's stable-quarrel with Catherine about her planned visit to the Lintons by the discordant notes of off-screen croaking crows. Fuest's invisible crows presiding aurally over the lovers' conflict recall undoubtedly that Brontëan sequence where Linton Heathcliff pits his avian concept of heaven as "*larks singing high up over head*" (p.198) against the younger Catherine's where "*not only larks, but throistles, and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pour[...] out music on every side [...]*" (p.198).

What the younger Catherine's chanting birds clearly suggest is that her world is more "*awake and wild with joy*" (p.199) than Linton Heathcliff's, as she herself recognizes. But so is Fuest's Catherine's world when compared to Heathcliff's, given the latter's incapacity to integrate with the refined Lintons, like his literary equivalent. Hence Fuest's off-screen crows whose jarring cawing untunes the lovers' stable-meeting and intensifies their existential disagreement. So like Brontë, Fuest exploits avian sounds to dramatise the clash between two lovers falling out due to their conflicting outlooks on life. Fuest certainly demonstrates then in an analogous way Brontë's power of harnessing what Davies (1983 : 101) describes as the "*birds' [...] inhuman music call[ing] like an agent of destiny into the human world*". Also worth noting here is the aural basis of Linton's lark exaltation, for as Traversi (1949 : 166) points out "*Linton's larks [are] invisibly suspended in the heights of a uniform blue sky*". The episode's avian invisibility is a crucial factor in this context, since its unmistakable echo of the Tennysonian (1969 : 233) lark's "*sightless song*" might well be the real source of these *Wuthering Heights* film adaptors' preoccupation with bird sounds of a non-diegetic nature. What is certainly undeniable, however, is that Fuest recalls again Brontë's 'unseen larks' episode at Catherine's death. For Fuest clearly evokes the invisible crows croaking beyond the Heights stable by modulating the off-screen Catherine's death-cry at the Grange to *sound* like an unseen crow cawing her last.

Nowhere does Kosminsky resort to such an "*aural exchange[...]*", to use Weis' phrase (1982 : 145); but he does share Fuest's concern with the sounds of off-screen birds. Kosminsky's unseen birds recall, however, Buñuel's rather than Fuest's due to their incongruous joyful chirping in times of death or danger. Such avian lilting accompanies, in fact, the deceptively romantic sequence where Kosminsky's Heathcliff courts the doomed Isabella. Again, Kosminsky reinforces Edgar's aloneness at his final moments by evoking the lonely death-bed scene of Tennyson's 'Tears, idle tears' where unseen dawn birds, heedless of humanity's "*dying ears*" (1969 : 233), break into their ecstatic matins. The feeling of utter desolation which Kosminsky achieves by filling Edgar's death-chamber with melodious twitterings is not unlike that which Brontë's younger Catherine envisages for a dying Heathcliff when she tells him: "*Nobody loves you — nobody will cry for you, when you die!*" (p.228). So Kosminsky follows other *Wuthering Heights* adaptors in utilising off-screen bird sounds to create a moorish sound-track reeking of an avian apprehension worthy of Thomas' (1993 : 445) inauspicious statement: "*Fly, children, antici-*



*pate the nightingale's migration*". Wyler's sound-track is glaringly the only exception. For Wyler, it must be said, exploits no (non-) diegetic bird sounds for such thematic effects. Thematically speaking, this is one of Wyler's most regrettable aural omissions, for as Davies (1983 : 100) says: "*One of Emily Brontë's profoundest affinities is with the wild birds who are almost the sole living inhabitants of the moors*". True, Wyler (1939 : 243) does show, unlike Kosminsky, the Linton peacocks during Catherine's convalescence; and they do squawk when Isabella stumbles into them. But their squawking functions simply as a natural reaction that connotes nothing equivalent to the "*reflective, elegiac*" mood which Davy (1939 : 243) finds prevailing in Brontë's Linton manor. At no point, for instance, does Wyler include, like Kosminsky, the Grange peacocks' plaintive cry in fitting foreboding of Catherine's lament upon Heathcliff's return. Wyler is less thematically successful in this respect than Yoshida, Fuest, Kosminsky and Buñuel whose sound-tracks deftly exploit the off-screen chattering of Brontëan birds to imbue the interior settings with an almost palpable moorish atmosphere.

## Conclusion

Of crucial importance, then, in any film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* is the necessity to make the sound-effects meaningful in terms of Brontëan character relations and affairs. This implies that the film adaptor of *Wuthering Heights* should strive to integrate the film's sound-effects with its visual images thereby creating what may be termed organic Brontëan significance. At no point, for instance, should the film adaptor be caught making up aurally for any absence of Brontëan visual meaning, just like the younger Catherine does when she "*lilt[s] a tune to supply [her] lack of conversation*"(p.177) with Hareton. Conversely, the film adaptor should demonstrate Nelly's ability to transform the "*murmur of the summer foliage*' [and the] '*full, mellow flow of the beck*' [into the] '*music [of] the Grange*'"(p.131). To conclude, then, the sound-effects track of a *Wuthering Heights* film should echo the heath's symbolic blasts and evoke the metaphoric implications of the ominous and savage music of cawing crows and baying hounds. Only such a moorland soundtrack fits *Wuthering Heights*. It is indeed of vital necessity that the film adaptor of *Wuthering Heights* should utilise the resources of the sound-effects track to decode Brontë's moorish moan symbolised pre-eminently by that windy wail whose mystical suggestiveness affirms Yoshida's belief

that Brontë is the "Delphic oracle" (Collick1993 : 46) of the West Riding heath. If not, the film's sound-effects code would be deprived of its essential Brontëan heart. And this is equally applicable to any other film adaptation whose sound-effects track should likewise voice its literary source's thematic soul.

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# THE GLASS CEILING: MALTESE WOMEN IN ACADEMIA

LYDIA SCIRIHA

***Abstract** – This paper discusses the current status and role of the Maltese woman in education. Nowadays, many Maltese women are taking up the challenge to further their studies at the University of Malta. Which degrees do females obtain and which areas of study are favoured by most of the female students at the University of Malta? What is the profile of academic women in the ten Faculties at the University of Malta? Why are there so few female academics and why is it that they stand overwhelmingly at the bottom of the academic hierarchy? This paper seeks to provide answers to these questions and analyses the effect current social change has on the role of women in contemporary Maltese society.*

## Introduction

Folktales, folksongs, novels and plays are particularly insightful as to the changing role the Maltese woman has undergone throughout the ages. These literary sources which reveal man's chauvinistic attitude vis-à-vis his female counterpart are an indication as to why such attitudes have had a lasting effect on the status of Maltese woman today.

As one would expect, these folk tales do not usually give much prominence to the Maltese woman and in the instances when women are mentioned, these tales serve to reinforce the idea that the woman's role in society is limited to her home. She is the dutiful, loving, patient and caring wife who is there to look after the needs of her husband and children. The woman is depicted as utterly vulnerable and dependent on men and for this reason, women needed to marry as quickly as possible, to obtain the security they so desired (Xuereb: 1992).

## The Maltese woman in novels and plays

The image that surfaces from the above-mentioned tales is that the Maltese woman is subservient to man and is utterly dependent on him. This

view has also been perpetuated in Maltese novels, which were heavily influenced by Italian literature. In *Ineż Farruġ* Caruana (1891) follows Manzoni's pattern in *I Promessi Sposi*. Quite surprisingly *Ineż*, who is expected to be the main character in the novel, as the title of the novel would suggest, disappears from the scene after the first few chapters and only reappears towards the end and then under tragic circumstances.

Following the Second World War the historical novel was taken over by social and political fiction. Even then, the Maltese woman was portrayed in very much the same way as in the folktales and ballads. Besides, in these novels, the Maltese woman is rarely the main character in the novel:

*More often than not she forms part of the wider canvas in the gallery of characters portrayed and serves as a prop for the actions of the male protagonist. The poorer village girl, intelligent but with a low level of education (education and the town were often viewed as corrupting influences on a girl) is glorified. She is modest, withdrawn, courageous but submissive, often the victim of an unscrupulous male seducer (Xuereb 1992 : 4).*

Slowly, these stereotypical notions regarding the Maltese woman started to be questioned by Maltese playwrights. Diacono (1952) in his play *L-Ewwel Jien* debates the idea as to whether a woman should go out to work. The widely held belief that the husband is the sole breadwinner and that the woman's place is in the home is questioned. In this play, Victor, an ornery character, adamantly refuses to allow his fiancée to find a job, even though he is overcome with sloth and is really unable to provide for her adequately. Victor argues that no well meaning employer would give a job to his fiancée.

Although nearly half a century ago Diacono's play touched on quite a sensitive topic, only recently has this stereotypical image of the female undergone changes by playwrights like Joe Friggieri and Oreste Calleja. In their works, both man and woman are considered equal and the woman is given her own personality. She has a mind of her own and is able to take decisions just like men (Xuereb 1992).

### **Female university graduates**

As is evident from the above-mentioned folk tales, novels and plays,

the Maltese woman has, up to some time ago, been depicted as uneducated, very submissive and often the object of derision. The only way such a mentality could be countermanded was by giving women greater access to education. In fact, over the past two decades education has become available to all and there are significantly higher numbers than ever before of Maltese women following courses at the University of Malta. Besides, it is not merely the arts subjects that female university students study but there is a growing tendency for them to read science, medicine, architecture and engineering too. This change in reasoning however, did not occur overnight. Whereas previously, on the one hand, most Maltese parents would openly declare that they prize education, nevertheless, on the other hand, they really did not think their daughters needed to be highly educated, though chauvinistically so, such a stance was not adopted towards their sons. One needs to address a constellation of factors as to why parents held such negative attitudes towards their daughters' education. The salient reason they would cite was the fact that tertiary education for their daughters was a sheer waste of time and money. Indeed, most women end up marrying and setting up a home with their husband and children. Such a mentality, though not to be condoned, was quite understandable. After all, in Malta until 1981, female government employees were compelled to resign once they got married and so their careers came to a grinding halt once they tied the knot.

Following the 1981 change in working conditions, coupled with the introduction first of the University Student-Worker scheme (1989-1987), and then the stipend system (1987-), there has been a growing positive change in mentality towards tertiary education since students are no longer a financial burden on their parents. Such a measure proved decisive not only because it has bolstered the student body at the University of Malta, but also the numbers of female university students registered remarkably high increases when compared to the 1970's as is evident from the following tables.

Table 1 illustrates the number of male and female students who obtained the doctorate, master and bachelor degrees as well as those who were awarded Diplomas during the academic year 1973. Whereas in 1973 a total of 55 students obtained doctorates, of these only four were females. The overwhelming majority of females did not go beyond the bachelor's degree (41 out of a total of 53 females).

**Table 1: Degrees and Diplomas Awarded 1973**

|          | Male | Female | Total |
|----------|------|--------|-------|
| Doctor   | 51   | 4      | 55    |
| Master   | 8    | 3      | 11    |
| Bachelor | 155  | 41     | 196   |
| Diploma  | 6    | 5      | 11    |

Table 2 gives a breakdown of those who graduated in 1979 by gender. The number of female graduates was then still very small and displayed only a slight increase over the previous six years. Besides, the majority of the female graduates (45) obtained a bachelor's degree. Eight females were awarded the degree at the Master's level and another four females were awarded the Doctorate.

**Table 2: Degrees and Certificates Awarded in 1979**

|           | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------|------|--------|-------|
| Doctorate | 58   | 4      | 62    |
| Master    | 23   | 8      | 31    |
| Bachelor  | 101  | 45     | 146   |

More recent data on graduates (1980-1990) are given in Table 3. What is immediately striking is the steep increase in the number of female graduates in 1990 when compared with the figures in 1973 and 1979. Even though in 1980 only 45 females as opposed to 137 males graduated out of a total of 182 graduates and in 1983 there were only five females in contrast to 78 males who graduated out of a class of 83, the numbers of female graduates started to increase significantly in subsequent years. In fact, in 1990 slightly less than half the total number of graduates (409) were females (174) and 235 were males.



**Table 3: Number of graduates by Gender**

|      | Male | Female | Total |
|------|------|--------|-------|
| 1980 | 137  | 45     | 182   |
| 1982 | 311  | 121    | 432   |
| 1983 | 78   | 5      | 83    |
| 1984 | 111  | 23     | 134   |
| 1985 | 170  | 49     | 219   |
| 1986 | 193  | 74     | 267   |
| 1987 | 184  | 68     | 252   |
| 1988 | 267  | 155    | 422   |
| 1989 | 253  | 134    | 387   |
| 1990 | 235  | 174    | 409   |

### **Academia and the Maltese Woman**

The previous three tables clearly illustrate the alarming dearth of female graduates before 1988. In view of such statistics, it is thus hardly surprising that female academic members of staff at the University of Malta who hold doctorates are very conspicuous by their absence. Furthermore, as expected, most of these academics are attached to the Humanities.

Table 4 gives a breakdown of full-time members of staff by gender in

**Table 4: Full-time members of Staff by Gender**

|                | Professor |        | Associate Prof. |        | Senior Lecturer |        | Lecturer |        | Assistant Lecturer |        |
|----------------|-----------|--------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|----------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| Faculties      | Male      | Female | Male            | Female | Male            | Female | Male     | Female | Male               | Female |
| Architecture   | 1         | -      | -               | -      | 10              | -      | 3        | -      | 1                  | -      |
| Arts           | 9         | -      | 3               | -      | 10              | 1      | 6        | 1      | 4                  | 3      |
| Dental Surgery | 1         | -      | 2               | -      | -               | -      | 2        | -      | 1                  | 1      |
| Economics      | 4         | -      | 2               | -      | 12              | -      | 4        | -      | 7                  | 1      |
| Education      | 2         | -      | 3               | -      | 9               | 3      | 5        | 5      | 9                  | 11     |
| Engineering    | 4         | -      | 2               | -      | 12              | 1      | 3        | -      | 14                 | 1      |
| Laws           | 5         | -      | 2               | -      | 6               | -      | 18       | 3      | 6                  | 3      |
| Medicine       | 12        | 1      | 2               | -      | 19              | -      | 41       | 8      | 2                  | 4      |
| Science        | 6         | -      | 6               | -      | 10              | -      | 6        | 2      | 6                  | 1      |
| Theology       | 3         | -      | 1               | -      | 1               | -      | 11       | -      | 4                  | -      |
| Total          | 47        | 1      | 23              | 0      | 89              | 5      | 99       | 19     | 54                 | 25     |

ten different Faculties at the University of Malta (University Calendar 1996-97).

Of the 362 academics, the number of male academics (312) is staggering when compared with their female counterparts (50). Not only are there so very few females (13.8%) but even their position in the academic hierarchy is quite low. In fact, of these 50 female academic members of staff, only one is a full rank professor, there are no associate professors and five are senior lecturers. Most of the female academics either are lecturers (19) or assistant lecturers (25). It is indeed striking that overwhelmingly, female academics stand at the bottom of the scale. Furthermore there are no female academics occupying posts in certain faculties such as Architecture and Dental Surgery and even though there is one female senior lecturer in Engineering, one needs to underline the fact that she is a foreigner. Traditionally, Maltese women have chosen to study languages and it is understandable that in the late 1960s the first female assistant lecturer at the University of Malta held her post in the Department of English. Interestingly so, in this same Department, at present, there are more female academics than males, but then this is in keeping with the trend for females to study English and other languages more than males.

Furthermore, out of a total of 312 male academics only 54 are assistant lecturers, that is only 17.3% of all males but there are 25 female assistant lecturers (50% of the total female population). This in itself is very telling and is a clear reminder that the past cannot be relegated into oblivion. After all, a closer look at the University calendar's list of female academics and their concomitant qualifications reveals that just one third of them hold doctorates; the rest are at most in possession of a degree at the master's level.

### **The importance of social capital**

The data (Table 4) cited above, are a stark reminder that even though women are given the opportunities to advance, it is difficult for them to break the invisible barrier or what Abdela (1994) has dubbed 'the glass ceiling'. Quite often, the main hurdles females need to overcome are strictly cultural. In the academic arena in Malta, the majority of the females are not in possession of a doctorate, even though they are now required to obtain such a qualification.

Problems arise not because they are intellectually unable to proceed

with post-graduate studies, but because most of them have familial commitments, which are either incompatible or not easy to reconcile with an academic career that requires long hours of research and teaching. On account of these family obligations, women also tend to take shortcuts to balance their career and their family life. Most of them opt to continue their studies in Malta rather than abroad. They thus inevitably miss out on the unique and stimulating opportunity of living and studying in a foreign university. Throughout history, women have always faced this dilemma. Their family connections are understandably so important that women feel compelled to make a choice between what they really wish to achieve and their obligations to their husband and children. It is also important to point out the fact that indirectly, Maltese society in general has an effect on young women who are goaded by their parents and their peers to marry when still in their early twenties. Surprisingly so, as we are on the threshold of a new millennium, this mentality has not changed as drastically as one might have expected. Furthermore, the reason why two-thirds of the female academics have not yet obtained a PhD is itself quite telling as to the role these women have at the University. It could be that even a policy of positive discrimination through which females are recruited with lower qualifications will eventually work against the full development of females in academia. At present, 50% of female academics stand at the bottom of the totem pole whereas only 17% of their male counterparts occupy such a position. Strategic decisions are now required to ensure that official policies of equal opportunities are indeed possible.

Somewhat paradoxically, it seems that Maltese academic women are being instrumentalised in a very subtle way. Although they have the intellectual ability to achieve as much as men, yet they need the backing of their significant others. Besides, being women in an overwhelmingly male dominated university can be quite daunting especially for those who are still very young and inexperienced in this particular environment. Most women are indirectly disadvantaged because owing to their many commitments, they tend to spend less time discussing university politics. Consequently, their social capital within the organisation is virtually insignificant.

Tannen (1994) provides an example which is both apt and applicable to the local scene. Her research has revealed a growing tendency for females to have their lunch in their office, while males go to lunch with their immediate superiors. A cursory look at the patrons of the senior common room at the University of Malta is quite enlightening and reinforces

Tannen's example. Few female academics lunch there and when they do, they all huddle next to each other; they do not really mix with other male academics especially those who hold high positions in the academic hierarchy. It is not that these females specifically want to distance themselves from their male colleagues. But it is usually their male colleagues who make these women uncomfortable with their patronising attitudes. Thus, females adopt different coping strategies to counteract such uncomfortable situations. Women dine together as a group, or else opt out of such an embarrassing situation and have their lunch in their office. In effect, what is really happening in the situation described is that these male academics are acting as gatekeepers. They want to retain the power that the information they derive from interacting with influential members of the academic hierarchy provides them with and which is not available to others outside the inner circle. Thus, they get to know information that serves as a prop to boost their academic careers. Their interactions with influential members of the academic hierarchy serve them well. They manage to glean information regarding what best to emphasise in their applications for resources of whatever kind; they enjoy power because they are aware of developments prior to official communication. This is confirmed by the fact that at the University of Malta, the same academics who ritually complain about their heavy work load, quite surprisingly, regularly attend the 10 am coffee break in the senior common room, because the Rector of the University might drop by. They are all too cognisant of the fact that their very presence provides an occasion for extended socialisation with the authorities, thereby facilitating links of communication when required. For the same reason too, females present on these occasions at times adopt radical stances in the belief that they can so leave an imprint. In view of the foregoing, it is hardly surprising that women are not in a position to mobilise a network of social relations at University that provides them with recognition of their achievements and thus rendering their chances to obtain assistance and support quite slim.

### **Double bind situations**

The disadvantaged position of women does not only arise because most women work in a male dominated environment and have many roles to play but also because women's mode of verbal interaction is quite different from men's. Tannen (1994) cites a number of examples which show the disadvantaged position of females vis-à-vis males. According to her,

men and women differ in the way they interact with one another and this difference is counterproductive and prohibits women obtaining promotions at the top management level. Women are taught early on when they are still girls that it is not wise to blow their horns. Males instead are socialised into doing exactly the opposite: they gain status by making known their own accomplishments with their immediate superiors. Thus, women's achievements are kept locked in the cupboard and so it is hardly surprising that Maltese female academics are at the bottom of the hierarchy. The kind of socialisation in which self-aggrandising talk is not allowed for women proves to be detrimental to their advancement when they become career women. However intelligent and able they are, it is very difficult for them to break the invisible barrier. Their code of conduct has been imprinted on them and now it is difficult to change it. Even if they do, males do not seem to accept such a change from women. Unfortunately, what is acceptable for males is not acceptable for females.

An incident that occurred to the author a few months ago illustrates that discourse understanding is greatly gender related to the extent that metamessages are frequently lost. A meeting with a senior University official was extremely cordial and the atmosphere throughout was friendly. At one point, the author jokingly remarked to her interlocutor that the University had been quite lucky to recruit her because, unlike most Maltese academics she already possessed a doctorate from a foreign university, when she was recruited. The implication of this statement was that she had spared the University a lot of money as she did not need to go abroad for further studies. The metamessage intended in this remark was merely to make her interlocutor aware that in general, the University hardly ever pats anyone on the back, even when such accomplishments are very rare. Unfortunately, the metamessage went awry as is evident from the negative reaction the author got for saying so. Her interlocutor considered what she had just told him as act of boasting highly reminiscent of the inhabitants of a particular area in Malta who are notorious for being braggarts. It is difficult to envisage an identical response had the author been a male. This example reveals what Gregory Bateson (1972) has dubbed the 'double bind' situation that females usually face because as Tannen (1992 : 17) remarks "*whatever we do to serve one need necessarily violates the other*". On the one hand if women stick to their own way of interacting, namely being humble and unassuming about their achievements, no one will give them credit for their work. On the other hand, if they learn to interact in the same style that males do, they are subjected to

a lot of flak and snide comments. In such circumstances, women can never win however hard they try.

### **The pitfalls of indirectness**

Males and females differ in their communicative styles to the extent that Gray (1993) contends that though men and women inhabit planet Earth, they actually come from two diverse and distinct planets, Mars and Venus. This notion is further reinforced when one discovers how direct or indirect men and women are. Sociolinguistic research by Lakoff (1975), Tannen (1991, 1992, 1994), Zimmerman and West (1977), Smith (1985), Coates (1986), clearly reveals that there are language differences among men and women and at times, owing to these differences men and women find it difficult to communicate with one another. In these studies a number of differences have been cited, but only gender differences as regards the way directives are given will be discussed here.

A directive or a command is a speech act in which an individual persuades someone to do something. Such a directive may be simple and direct such as asking the other person "shut the door" or its force might be attenuated and thus be indirect as in "It is very cold here". In all probability, the direct command was issued by a man, while the indirect one was given by a woman.

Engle's (1980), Bellinger and Berko-Gleason (1982) conducted field-work on interaction patterns parents use when playing with their children. The findings of these studies showed that fathers used more direct commands than mothers. Furthermore, a study by Goodwin (1980; 1988; 1990) corroborates these findings. Goodwin researched the communicative styles of boys and girls in Philadelphia while they were playing outside their homes and in the street. The results revealed interesting patterns in the way boys and girls ordered their friends around. Whereas boys were direct and made bald commands as in "Give me the ball", girls used 'mitigated commands' in which they "*used modal auxiliaries can and could to suggest rather than demand action*" (Coates 1986 : 124). This research shows that when still children, girls and boys interact very differently and other research (Tannen 1994) further demonstrates that these patterns are carried over in the workplace. Whereas men give direct commands, women who hold identical positions at work have a tendency to issue mitigated directives. This indirect method of communicating often results in women not being taken seriously since their directives are not considered to be orders.

Being aware of such differences is important especially when one is a woman who needs to issue directives to men! The author came to this conclusion through bitter experience when she was the head of a unit for six years. When this post was handed over to her, she had just returned from her studies abroad and was still very young and very inexperienced. Although this unit had for a long time been riddled with problems (equipment, security, personnel), those in authority thought that, even though she was a mere greenhorn in this kind of administrative work, she should effect radical changes virtually overnight. One of her colleagues made her aware that she was entering a war zone and that in truth, she was being given a hot potato! Although the problems regarding the equipment were not at all easy to solve, yet problems dealing with the members of her unit proved to be the most daunting and the most difficult. Not only were some of her personnel taciturn, surly and at times utterly uncooperative, but they refused to take her directives as orders which had to be obeyed. One such directive that seemingly proved difficult for her staff to comprehend was the need for them to be punctual. Unlike academics, non-academic members at the University have stipulated hours. The author recalls the different strategies she applied in order to try and coerce her staff to obey these seemingly simple rules. The author would gently go over and speak to the persons in question and try to reason things out with them. Several times she would use mitigated directives such as "The students were waiting outside this morning", instead of directly asking them "Why were you late? Even though she thought that by not using bald commands they would appreciate her mode of communication, unfortunately, these same persons who were repeatedly told to change their ways, continued to behave as if no one had ever called to their attention their transgressions. It took the author a long time to realise that her staff was confusing her mitigated directives as lack of authority on her part and that she was unable to control them because she was a woman. For the individuals concerned, her directives were no directives at all. It was only when the author decided that the only way to obtain action was by giving bald commands and ensuring that they were obeyed, did the message finally reach them. Unfortunately, this kind of disappointing experience robs females of their personality and their femininity, particularly through a feeling of being coerced to act as a man and not as a woman.

Not only women with administrative posts are required to walk the conversation tightrope: female lecturers go through the same experience. Once again, gender differences arise. The author acknowledges that she



needs to adopt two styles: one that she uses with male students and another with females. In addition, gender differences are further accentuated when relating to male students who come from countries where their culture has an even lower estimation of the intellectual potential of women.

## Conclusion

The foregoing discussion points to the many obstacles academic women are required to overcome in a Maltese university. Unless both men and women understand that linguistic knowledge and social factors are intertwined, discourse will not be correctly interpreted and will be fraught with misunderstandings. Only recently have sociolinguists stepped up their efforts to look into the co-variation of language and gender. In the workplace in general and in particular at the University of Malta, women are a minority group. Being members of a very small group means that academic women are a disadvantaged social group with an inferior status which is viewed negatively when compared with the dominant group.

In this regard, Tajfel's theory (1974; 1978; 1981) regarding interpersonal relations and social change throws light on women's position today. According to Tajfel, a social psychologist, women can either accept or reject their inferior status vis-à-vis men. If they do accept their situation, they usually compare themselves with other women or else they make an effort to join the superior group as individuals and not as members of a minority group. If one looks at the status of academic women at the University, the five female senior lecturers will not feel that they have an inferior status, if they compare themselves with the majority of academic women who are lecturers and assistant lecturers. They might also decide that the only way they will succeed is to join the superior group by adopting its values. This assimilation effectively requires women to undergo a personality change. The example given in the subsection on indirectness revealed that the author had effectively to communicate in the way men do, in order to effect the necessary changes. This is a sad way of extending influence and of providing society with the female ethos. In effect, this kind of assimilation strips the female of her femininity and of her God-given gender.

According to Tajfel, if women do not accept their inferior position in society as a group with an inferior status, they will endeavour to effect changes within the group by creating a positive and unique image of themselves. Sociolinguistic research has amply shown that men and women



have different speech styles. Both men and women need to understand that one style is not better than the other; they are just different in the same way that men and women are biologically different. Thus, in a predominantly male-dominated environment, women should demonstrate to their male colleagues that their own way of communicating does not make them less knowledgeable and less authoritative.

A few decades ago it was unimaginable for a Maltese woman to join the workforce. That this has come about is a tribute to the many, males and females, who have realised that modernity implies equality, and that even the religion-based biases of yore do not have a real base in the Pauline doctrine that God created man and woman as equals. From second-in-line position, Maltese women are slowly becoming significant role players at every level and in every sphere of Maltese society. One hopes that progress does not kill femininity, but will provide a surer route, and a stronger basis for a richer society, in which inter-gender sharing and co-operation can benefit both the individual, and at the macro level, total society as it grapples to construct meaning systems in a fast changing global village.

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# THE EMERGENCE OF PROSODY IN LINGUISTIC THEORY

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***Abstract** – Prosody is a unique character in the production of sounds. Human speech is particularly marked by prosody for various functions in the different aspects of linguistics (e.g. phonology, morphology, sociolinguistics). The importance of prosody in human language had been known since very early periods of modern civilisation. Both Western and Eastern traditions had put a lot of emphasis on the proper practice of prosodic rhymes and rhythms in the use of language whether it was for analysing grammar or for praying to God or any other superior spirit. Subsequent developments in linguistics have revealed the central role played by prosody in determining the innate grammar of human language. This paper attempts to discuss in brief the evolution of the thought on prosody and its current standing in the field of linguistics.*

## Introduction

The word 'prosody' derives from the classical Greek word 'prosodiai', originally signifying processional hymns, or the rhythms that comprised them. Present-day European linguistics traces its history back to the philosophical studies of classical Greece. Questions about language were viewed as part of the study of all human knowledge. The Greeks investigated phonetics and etymology, but they invested their greatest efforts in grammar and grammar remained a major emphasis in western linguistic study until the nineteenth century. The early scholars distinguished the vowels from the consonants and identified syllables as the structural units of phonology. They also achieved articulatory description of sounds.

With the inclusion of Greece into the Macedonian Empire, the increased contact with non-Greek speakers and the divergence of the vernacular Greek, Koine, Hellenic scholars perceived a need to preserve the forms of classical Greek. Around 300 BC, the work of the Stoic school led to the recognition of linguistic studies as a distinct discipline within the field of philosophia. A system of written accent marks as guides to the correct pronunciation of words, both internally and in relationship to their surroundings was devised. To this was given the general term 'prosodiai'. The Stoics continued to concentrate linguistic study on the Greek lan-

guage using the Greek alphabet. This led to a confusion of the letter for the sound, obscuring the distinction of allophones. Mention was made of the difference between the specifically accented vowels and in segments with and without aspiration or length, but no real note was made of the different vowel qualities that must have accompanied different environments. What they lacked was a precise terminology and a descriptive theory.

### **The study of grammar and phonetics**

In subsequent centuries the study of literature came to replace philosophy as the central interest of Greek language studies. The earliest extant description of Greek grammar is that of Dionysius Thrax written around 100 BC. This was a descriptive work based on the writings of accepted authors. For Thrax, grammar was *"the practical knowledge of the general usages of poets and prose writers. Of its six parts, the first was "accurate reading (aloud) with due regard to the prosodies"* (Robins 1967 : 31). Later linguists enlarged on the various parts of his work. Herodian Dyscolus (2nd Century AD) and others further developed Thrax's 'prosodiai', describing in greater detail the distinctive pitch levels associated with the written accent marks, vowel length, syllable quantity, 'rough' and 'smooth' breathing (initial vowel aspiration and non-aspiration), vowel elision, and pitch changes in word compounding. Greek phonology was developed on acoustic impressions with articulatory features being secondary. In other parts of the world similar work was going on, most notably in Sanskrit, Arabic and Chinese. Much of this other work was superior to Greek scholarship, but it took many centuries for these schools to come into contact with and influence western linguistics.

The great age of Indian phonetics is now believed to have occurred between 800 BC and 150 BC, with their greatest grammarian, Panini, dated variously at 600 BC or 300 BC. As in the Greek desire to preserve the forms of Classical Greek in Hellenic times, the aim in Indian linguistics was to preserve the forms of the orally transmitted texts of the Vedic age (1200 BC-1000 BC). The greatest basic difference between Greek and Indian studies is that Greek was devised as an instructional grammar whereas the Indian was a technical, descriptive grammar. Another major difference was the view regarding the relation of word and sentence. Greek grammar was word-based, while in Sanskrit the word was usually considered to have no real existence outside the sentence or breath group. Words as such, were mere pedagogical devices. For this reason,

junction features were represented in minute detail in 'sandhi' (joining) orthography. This phonetic detail included vowel length and syllable quality, tone, tempo, and initiality and finality in the breath group. Tone was noted as relative, not absolute pitch levels. Word isolating texts also existed, and were termed 'pada' texts. It was not until after 1786, when Sir William Jones presented his now well-known paper on the indisputable relationship of Sanskrit to Latin and Greek, did Sanskrit and its exceptional descriptive treatment, exert any great influence on western linguistics. It is suspected though, that Indian linguists influenced the development of Chinese orthography and phonology as early as the first century AD.

### Writing systems

The Chinese had a writing system as early as 2000 BC in which each character or symbol represented individual morphemes. Over such a vast expanse of time, sound change is inevitable and for this reason Chinese orthography has been revised a number of times. In the 4th century BC a system of 'radicals' related to meanings, and 'phonetics', related to pronunciation was devised. Subsequent phonetic changes caused this system also to become obsolete. By the third century AD a set of prosodic values were given to the system where 'radicals' represented the initial consonants and the 'phonetic' everything else including the tone. This prosodic type of phonology was later developed into a segmental phonemic system under Sanskritic influence. In the newer system, articulatory criteria were used in the ordering and differentiating of the components. The Chinese writing system was misunderstood in 16th and 17th century Europe and was thought to be a form of the 'real characters' that were being sought for a 'universal language' of philosophy.

In the 18th century, the French philosopher Rousseau saw languages and their prosodies as having grown out of primitive grunts and gestures. Early languages had been expressive but this expressiveness had now been chilled by precision into written forms that were unable to symbolise stress and pitch differences. Rousseau viewed tonal languages like Chinese as containing primitive features. *English Grammar* (1795), written by L. Murray, was a teaching grammar that included a section on prosody reminiscent of the descriptions of Thrax. Murray divided prosody into the rules of versification and the description of the features length, stress, pause and intonation. This book is used as a reference by J. R. Firth when he

quotes the explanation that stress on a particular syllable in an English word allows us to perceive the syllables grouped around it as comprising the word. This shows, he says, that stress is a function of the syllable structure of the word. But the major impetus to linguistics in the 18th century was Sir William Jones' previously-mentioned paper that ushered in a hundred years of historical linguistics and the start of comparative linguistics.

The introduction of the obviously superior Sanskrit orthography inspired further work on revising the English orthography in the 19th century. Henry Sweet (1877), in his search for a 'one sound, one symbol' orthography for English, came to realise the impracticality of such a complicated system. He proposed a 'broad' transcription using the classes of sounds (distinctive sounds and their variants that are influenced by environment) whose characteristics he described in his *Handbook of Phonetics*. Baudouin de Courtenay, working independently in Russia, adopted the Russian word 'fonema' in 1894 as the technical term for such occurrences. The publication in 1916 of Ferdinand de Saussure's Geneva lectures, using the French term 'phoneme', brought the concept and the word into widespread modern use. In the Saussurean framework the phoneme was seen as an indestructible unit. In the following decades there was much disagreement about what exactly the phoneme was. Some scholars held that it was a mental concept of the acoustic entity of the sound, others held the 'realist' position, as by Kenneth Pike (1947) who considered phonemes to exist as structural entities and that it was important to symbolise them.

Others, including W. F. Twaddell (1935), held a so-called 'nominalist' attitude. According to him the phoneme is an appropriate term to make statements about the data in question, which in phonetics would comprise the sounds of particular languages. The phoneme became central to the theory of linguistics and to the analysis of languages. In the same period, improved mechanical analysis started to identify in a more precise manner features of intonation and of junctions between syllables, words, and other parts of utterances. These had been mentioned in the work of Sweet as 'synthesis', as distinct from 'analysis', the description of segmental sequences.

### Prosodic analysis

The 1920's and 30's are regarded as the time of the Prague School in



Europe, and the 1930's and 40's as the 'Bloomfieldian' era of American linguistics. In 1930's the Prague School explored the idea of the phoneme as an indivisible unit with their work on distinctive features. Their treatment of the phenomena of *Grenzsignale*, the non-segmental features of syllables, such as length, stress, and intonation, assigned them partially phonemic status and partially non-phonemic status. Bloomfieldian linguistics can be characterised as rigorously scientific or mechanistic. Bloomfield concentrated on formal analysis and demanded that all phenomena be objectively observable and describable. He favoured phonemic theory in a rigid segmental concept of distribution. The Bloomfieldian school posited a new type of phoneme called the 'suprasegmental phoneme' to handle the phenomena of stress, pitch, and length. These suprasegmental phonemes could extend over the entire syllable. Intonation, which extended over several syllables, was analysed into a series of distinctive pitch phonemes for each syllable.

The phoneme concept, even through all its interpretations, came originally from the search for broad transcription, as can be seen in the Pike's (1947) work : *Phonemics : A Technique for Reducing Languages to Writing*. J. R. Firth of the London School of Phonetics, like W.F. Twaddell (1935) before him, felt that a unilinear approach to phonological analysis was incomplete and unsatisfactory. What was needed was a unified theory that went beyond the comparison and contrast of elements, one that went beyond word boundaries and took into account grammatical relationships (de Saussure's syntagmatic relationships; Sweet's synthesis). In Firth's (1948) landmark paper 'Sounds and Prosodies' he put forward the theory of Prosodic Analysis. This theory was not phonemic in nature but involved distinct levels of analysis, phonematic units and prosodies. Phonematic units can be regarded as minimal segments, or C and V components, having definable phonological relationships to one another. The prosodies can be of two types : those elements that extend over more than one segment and can be relevant to the syllable or over an entire sentence, and the demarcative prosodies that delimit morpheme of word boundaries. Firth's paper was at that time, an important step in linguistic theory and deserves to be mentioned here at some length.

Firth's intention was to create a syntagmatic phonology. A basic premise (akin to the 'sandhi' position in Sanskrit) was that "*the primary linguistic data are pieces, phrases, clauses, and sentences within which the word must be delimited and defined*"(Firth 1957 :

121)<sup>1</sup>. The word 'phoneme' was purposely avoided in the title of the paper because of the wide range of meanings then attributed to it. Firth would, he said "*restrict the application of the term to certain features only of consonants and vowels systematically stated 'ad hoc' for each language*" (Firth 1957 : 122). What is a consonant in one language may be prosody in another. For example, the prosodic symbol for 'rough breathing' onset in Greek became the consonant [h] in Roman. An example of the glottal stop becoming a prosody of length is the Classical Arabic /jit/ becoming /geet/ and /jEEt/ (E = epsilon) in Cairo and Iraqi Arabic respectively.

The use of the symbols C and V in phonological notation allows for the systematic statement of the syntagmatic structure of syllables. According to Firth (1957 : 123) :

*We may abstract those features which mark word or syllable initials and word or syllable finals or word junctions from the word, piece, or sentence, and regard them syntagmatically as prosodies, distinct from the phonematic constituents which are referred to as units of the consonant and vowel systems.*

Penultimate stress would be an example of a phonetic feature characteristic of position and could be stated as prosody of the word. Firth uses the analogy of musical melody and rhythm. A series of equal musical notes would contain no rhythm, just as undifferentiated syllables would result in a monotonic utterance. Rhythm is a grouping of measures, and a measure a grouping of pulses with definable interrelations of length and strength, as well as of pitch and quality. He suggests the syllable as a pulse and the word as a measure that shows definite interrelation of length, stress, tone, and voice quality. As an example he uses the five types of Cairo Arabic syllables which have predictable interrelations depending on the number, nature (open or closed), and qualities of the syllables and the sequencing of the syllable's consonants and vowels.

Firth gives a number of examples of prosodic qualities in English. 'The' and 'a' have a number of prosodic realizations depending on stress and juncture (e.g. ð, ði, ðiy, ə, ən, ey, æn). In Southern English schwa is

<sup>1</sup> Firth first published 'Sounds and Prosodies' in 1948 in *Transactions of the Philological Society*. However, all direct quotations from Firth's paper 'Sounds and Prosodies' are taken from Firth (1957) *Papers in Linguistics 1934-51*, a collection of his papers.

linked with the 'intrusive' r, the 'linking' r, the glottal stop, aitch, and even w and y, as in the following examples : vanilla(r) ice, law(r) and order, cre'ation, behind, pa(w) and ma, and be(h/y)ave. The glottal stop can be a junction prosody, such as in the Yorkshire dialect between the definite article and stressed words having initial /t/ or /d/, as in on'EEbl(E = epsilon), and tut'tEytshu (u = schwa). These are distinct from "gud dEE" and "bad taym" in which both words are stressed. The English 'h' is an excellent example of a weak form. In paradigms such as owl/howl, art/heart, and airy/hairy 'h' has phonetic value, yet across the dialects of English 'h' can disappear or intrude depending on the speaker.

In the years since the publication of 'Sounds and Prosodies' the theory has been applied to a number of languages. R.H. Robins (1957) lists some of that work in a paper entitled 'Aspects of Prosodic Analysis'. The prosodic and phonematic components used in a prosodic analysis of Siamese, which is a tonal language, monosyllabic and which has rigid syllable structure pattern are listed. They are :

**SENTENCE PROSODY** : Intonation;

**PROSODIES OF SENTENCE PIECES** : Length, Stress, and Tone relations between component syllables;

**SYLLABLE PROSODIES** : Length, Tone, Stress, Palatalization, Labiovelarization;

**PROSODIES OF SYLLABLE PARTS** : Aspiration, Retroflexion, Plosion, Unexploded closure;

**PHONEMATIC CONSONANT AND VOWEL UNITS** : In such classes as Velar, Dental, Bilabial, Nasal, Front, Back, Rounded, Unrounded.

Robins quotes Leonard Bloomfield's (1935) caution to practising phoneticians. Bloomfield's caveat regarded the danger of virtuosity in differentiating every sound of a language. Practitioners should instead limit themselves only to those that are distinctive. This is interpretable as meaning that they should concentrate only on the features that differentiate one word from another. As an illustration of the danger of using only phonemic analysis when features extend over a structure, Robins uses the example of Russian hard (non-palatalised) and soft (palatalised) consonants. These consonants are considered phonemically distinct but the quality of the adjacent vowels influenced by them are not, yet listeners often find it easier to distinguish the 'relevant' features by listening for the 'irrelevant' features.

As examples of demarcative prosodies Robins lists syllable-initial position in Siamese, penultimate stress in Swahili and Sundanese words of more than one syllable, word-initial stress in Hungarian and Czech, and differences between English word-initial and word-final consonants. These English consonantal features differentiate between noun phrases like 'an ocean/ a notion' and 'an aim/ a name', yet phonemic analysis treats the differences as merely allophonic. Further examples include the ability of languages to economically express their complex tense system of nine or more verb classes as prosodies of centrality, frontness, backness and openness. Likewise, Sudanese active verb forms can easily be differentiated from the passive by the use of the prosody of nasalization (N - prosody). The preferability of prosodic treatment of the glottal stop of Sudanese is also shown. In that language the glottal stop appears in many positions as a junction marker. Between like vowels it marks syllable division; between unlike vowels within a word it is morpheme boundary; between a consonant and a vowel it is a morpheme boundary or a word boundary; and between a vowel and a consonant it helps to define a clause within a sentence. Phonemic analysis does not distinguish any of these functions. Phonemic analysis calls for equal treatment of elements wherever they appear. This is, of course, not possible because of the differing relations that occur in different places.

Pitch, as used by Pike (1948) in his descriptions of tone languages was one of the first phonematic features that belonged to the whole syllable. Robins (1957), however, points out that these 'suprasegmental phonemes' were disqualified from inclusion in syntagmatic prosodic treatment because of their limited applicability. Suprasegmental phonemes are limited to the domain of the syllable whereas syllable prosody covers relations within whole structures as nasalization, palatalization, and glottalization as well as the pitch, stress, and length of suprasegmental phonemes.

### **Fitting prosodic features into phonological theories**

Much work has been done on fitting prosodic features into phonological theories. As a very broad generalisation, North American linguists have tended to treat prosodic features segmentally while British linguists have placed prosodic analysis into a separate area of treatment. Segmental treatments include Harris's (1951) 'zero phonemes' and Hockett's (1955) juncture phoneme 'bundles'. Chomsky and Halle (1968) treated [+/- stress] as a segmental feature and use algorithmic rules to assign a hierarchy of stress.

Goldsmith (1976) uses this terminology in his 'Autosegmental Phonology' theory. The literature on the subject is vast and the terminology is not standardised. According to Sloat et. al. (1978 : 70) :

*Prosody is the study of (1) quantity, stress, and tone in relation to the syllable and (2) intonation in relation to phonetic phrases and sentences. Instead of 'prosody', some linguists use the term 'suprasegmentals' in essentially the same sense (e.g. Lehiste, 1970).*

In Britain, prosodic studies have been carried on, among others, by Abercrombie, Laver, Halliday, Catford, and Brown. Halliday (1970) bases his study of the rhythm of English on 'tone groups' that comprise a number of 'feet' and containing a primary 'tonic segment'. The melody of the language comes from variations of pitch within these tone groups. Brown et al. (1980 : 14) purposely avoid focussing on 'tonics' in their study of Edinburgh Scottish English. Instead, they base the study on pitch contours, relative pitch height, and terminal tones. In their introduction to *Questions of Intonation* they give a brief summary of previous research on intonations :

*Thus Jones (1962) is particularly interested in how intonation distinguishes statements from different question-types. O'Connor and Arnold (1959) and Uldall (1964) are particularly interested in the use of intonation to express affective or attitudinal meaning. Halliday (1967) is particularly interested in the way in which intonation reveals information structure. Brazil (1978) is particularly interested in the way participants in a conversation use intonation to control interactive structure.*

In the 1980s and the 1990s, the study of prosody in phonology took several innovative turns owing to several landmark studies centred on Arabic linguistics. Pioneers of these studies were mostly American scholars in the field. Following CV Phonology (Clements and Keyser, 1983), phonological analyses took a deeper interest in the study of the skeletal tier of morphemes. The views raised in the study were further supported by the morphological theory by McCarthy and Prince (1986). Even the approaches in X-bar syntax contributed positively to this new development (Levin 1985, Lowenstamm and Kaye 1986 and Hayes 1989). All in all, these studies demonstrated very successfully that many morphological rules apply not in arbitrary phonological domains but rather in do-

mains that constitute genuine units of the prosodic hierarchy such as the mora, the syllable and the foot, all of which involve the skeletal tier of a morpheme. Thus many morphological and phonological processes apply not to an entire base, but to a portion of it that constitutes a prosodically circumscribed minimal base. This emphasises the need to understand the units of prosodic hierarchy in phonology in order to explain morphological operations. These findings shed light to widen our horizons of understanding human language and subsequently pave way for clinical and neurolinguistic research to penetrate into yet unresolved areas of human language problems related to aphasia.

The aims and methods of defining the prosodic features of languages have been and continue to be widely varied but immensely improved. Work is continuing and expanding in this field, yet, to paraphrase J. R. Firth (1957 : 138) in his conclusion to paper 'Sounds and Prosodies', whatever we isolate by analysis must be prosodically reintegrated. Firth aptly concludes his paper by saying : "*We speak prosodies and we listen to them*".

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# A VILLAGE FOR AN ISLAND: MALTA IN FRANS SAMMUT'S NOVEL *SAMURAJ*

ADRIAN GRIMA

**Abstract** – In Frans Sammut's novel *Samuraj*, the village in which most of the action takes place, is a metaphor of post-Independence Malta that is trying, and more often than not failing, to come to terms with what has been called the "severity of independence". The isolated, backward Village is plagued by the bipolar nature of its social make-up and strangled by its overpowering Church. Its 'moral' community takes the protagonist's refusal to toe the line as an affront to its authority, and its aggressive reaction forces him to turn to the painful, but fond memory of his battered mother for comfort, echoing independent Malta's inability to wean itself away from its colonised past.

## Introduction

Written a decade after Malta became an independent state in 1964, the novel *Samuraj* by Frans Sammut (1975) can be read as a political narrative about Malta and its need to become truly independent. *Samuraj* recounts the story of a lone bachelor, Samwel, whose relationship with Żabbett, a young woman in her twenties is deemed highly improper by the tightly knit community of their traditional rural village. When the young woman walks out of the oppressive environment of her parents' home and moves in with the as yet unprepared Samwel, who is still tormented by his difficult childhood, the village community decides it is time to intervene and Samwel loses both Żabbett and what was left of his self-esteem and his desire to live. Perhaps not enough attention has been given to the political aspects of this novel since *Samuraj* can be read as the story of a group of people who are trying to get to grips with their identity as individuals and as part of a nation.

The indications of this dual search for identity first surface in the opening chapter in which Samwel, the protagonist, observes that "*in this land*", it is always "*either summer or winter*" (p.5). Autumn does not exist. "*It's either sunny or rainy. You either go to Hell or to Heaven*" (p.5). It is not even possible to end up in limbo because newborn babies are immediately taken to church to be baptised.

At least two points emerge from these initial observations made by the protagonist: the bipolar nature of Maltese society (Samwel is not referring to a particular village but to the country in general) and the great influence of the Catholic Church on the people's lives. These comments regarding the identity of the Maltese people are not random observations but seminal points that will be developed throughout the novel.

The institution of the Church emerges as a powerful force that suffocates the individual because it uses its moral authority and extensive resources to control the community. In *Samuraj*, the Church is not really interested in people's lives and loves, in their griefs and beliefs. All the Church seems to want is to guarantee and consolidate her privileged and domineering position by, among other things, supporting the *status quo* and enforcing obedience to the accepted norms of behaviour. In dealing with Samwel and Żabbett, the Church ignores what their relationship means to them and demands nothing but unconditional obedience.

In the novel the institution of the Church is represented by those who play a leading role in its organisation, namely Dun Vincenz Abela-Tanti, the parish priest, and Sa Rozann, the puritan lay volunteer who herself takes the responsibility to make right whatever is wrong in the Village. She considers herself to be the parish priest's right hand, and a mother figure to all the unmarried young women of the Village. Ironically, the parish priest himself can't stand her intrusions: he labels her egocentrism and the way she tries to dominate other people's lives *Sarożanncentriżmu*, but at the end of the day, the two of them agree on the most important matter, that the relationship between Samwel and Żabbett is unacceptable and has to be stopped.

In his study of the village of Hal Kirkop carried out in the late 1960s, Boissevain observes that all visitors to Malta are struck "*forcefully*" by "*the importance that religion occupies in its many aspects, as a system of belief and action.*" In Hal Kirkop, religion not only orders the rhythm of the villagers' lives but it also "*provides the structural form of the community in which they live*". As in Sammut's anonymous village, the religious belief of the villagers "*defines and enforces the moral limits of their behaviour*" and influences their relations with others (Boissevain 1980 : 56).

In *Samuraj*, the pressure of the Church and the moral community on the young couple takes the form of what Gilmore (1987a : xi,11) has called "*symbolic forms of aggression*", that is, "*non-violent acts with injurious intent*". Gilmore's point is that although these acts are usually deplored, they are "*essential for the unfolding of that in-group feeling of belonging*"

that Durkheim in another context called the "*group mind*". Gilmore argues that aggression is the human motive underlying the action of "*cultural superstructure*" or "*shared frame of mind*". An aggressive public opinion, like the one that is present throughout *Samuraj* and is epitomised by Sa Rozann, "*holds the group together by disallowing deviance, by punishing solecisms, and by rectifying*" what the anthropologist calls "*disturbances in the fabric of tradition*". Symbolic aggression becomes "*a force that binds*", not only in the small Andalusian town of Fuenmayor that Gilmore studied, or in *Samuraj*'s Rahal, but in all small-scale moral communities.

When discussing with the parish priest about the repercussions the scandalous behaviour of Samwel and Żabbett might have for the community, Rozann speaks in the first person plural, deliberately promoting herself as the spokeswoman of the village community. Her false humility only makes her arrogance as opposed to the vulnerability and acquiescence of the community more evident.

### Concentric circles

The anonymous traditional rural village where almost all the action takes place seems to be a metaphor of Malta as a whole. It is more likely a metaphor than a metonymy or synecdoche because the text does not focus on its role as part of the whole that is Malta. The Village is a whole in itself, with its own insularity, its own social and religious organisation and hierarchy, its own politics. According to Oliver Friggieri (1979 : 329), the 'Village' is the whole of Malta, a "*metaphorical substitution of the real name*". The Village becomes part of a whole, so to say, in relation to the city, represented by the Count, but then even the Village has its own Count in Pankraz Mifsud Manara. The Village has the quality of being "*variously interpretable*" or indeterminate, a quality which is associated with fresh metaphor. Following Aristotle's lead, contemporary scholars have resuscitated the role of metaphor as metaphor for the non-literal in general. In fact, Aristotle's own examples of metaphor include what later rhetoricians would have called metonymy, proverb, hyperbole, catachresis, and so on (Cooper 1986 : 13; 77). This political interpretation of the 'Village' represents one possible reading of the novel without claiming, of course, that this is the only legitimate interpretation.

One of the first indications of the metaphoricality of the Village is its namelessness in a context which is explicitly Maltese. The initial capital

letter (*ir-Raħal*, the Village) gives the reader the impression that this is *the* Maltese village, what Friggieri (1979 : 332) has called the national Village. Samwel's Village is Malta writ small because like Malta, the Village is a small island made of the same social, political and religious fabric of the Maltese Islands.

The bipolar nature of Maltese society is depicted with scathing irony in the sub-plot about the rivalry between the Village's two band clubs. The narrator calls the existence of two, and only two, band clubs in Maltese villages a 'tradition' (Sammut: 1975 : 128). The bipolar social organisation of Maltese villages, with their two rival band clubs and their two feasts is a microcosm of the bipolarity of Maltese national politics. Henry Frendo's book about *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*, claims that this political division, "*blurred from time to time at the edges by additional groups*", runs back to the 1880s and beyond. In his Foreword, Dennis Austin (Frendo 1991 : xi) asks whether this division was once "*a reflection of colonial collaboration versus colonial dissent, or (more subtly) of constitutional arrangements*", or whether it is "*the effect (more simply) of ins and outs – government and opposition – under rival leaders*". Independence has not really challenged this bipolarity. Recent attempts by third parties like the local green party (Alternattiva Demokratika) to make any headway in the general elections have all but failed.

Most of what goes on in the novel takes place in the anonymous Village, and this gives the impression that, like Malta, the village is an island, a world in itself. The Count who lives in the city describes it as "*remote*" (p.122), situated on the other side of the hill (p.118). The "*great*" distance between the Village and the rest of the island resembles that between Malta and the rest of the world because the Village has the same quality of insularity that characterises Malta. Moreover, like most islands, the Village is considered backward, or as Count Pawlinu Pessina-Triganza describes it, cut off from civilisation (p.121).

This distinction between village and city, which is being likened to the difference between Malta and foreign lands, is understandable, because at the time the novel was written it was quite pronounced. Even though he originally wrote in the late 1960s, Boissevain (1980 : 2) notes the "*marked difference in values, dress, and even speech between those who live in [the great urban agglomeration surrounding Valletta and the Grand Harbour] and those who live in the villages*".

On the other hand, between the villages of the Maltese Islands

Boissevain observes "*a remarkable cultural homogeneity*" (Boissevain 1980 : 99). This is chiefly due to the unifying influence of a strong church in a small relatively isolated island society. The parish church towers over the tightly clustered houses and dominates social relations within the village. The Church "*has been for centuries the focal point of power and authority*" (Boissevain 1980 : 99) within the village and the source for moral guidance. But the author also attributes the villages' cultural homogeneity to their similar cultural values, including language, moral values and factors on which prestige and class are based. This analysis supports the interpretation of *Samuraj's* Village as a metaphor of rural Malta, but it doesn't necessarily rope in urban Malta too, unless one perceives *Samuraj's* urban society as *essentially* similar to the rural society. Oliver Friggieri (1979) claims that in *Samuraj*, all Malta, even urban, 'civilized' Malta, is seen as one village. Count Pawlinu Pessina-Triganza, who is stereotypically presented as the epitome of the city, has much in common with Pankraz Mifsud Manara who is the President of one of the village band clubs. Both think highly of themselves and have particular surnames that prove their uniqueness; both occupy positions of power; both are cunning and skilful in the way they deal with the parish priest. In a sense, Pankraz Mifsud Manara is simply a smaller, or more modest version of the Count. Otherwise they are quite similar and this resemblance confirms one of Sammut's points in *Il-Gaġġa* that Malta, city and all, is one big cage, or village.

At one point in the novel, the two lovers, Żabbett and Samwel, are walking in the countryside when Samwel sees the lights on the cliffs through the sides of the hills (p.85). The impression that the village is surrounded by hills is reinforced by the fact that the village is cut off from the rest of the island, an enclosed space within a larger enclosed space. This world-view made of concentric circles is reminiscent of Dun Karm's poetic view of the world that could be described as common in traditional Mediterranean society, with the home at the centre and the Mediterranean region as the outermost circle. Samwel views the world in very much the same way: the most serious violation of his privacy, the greatest affront to his individuality and independence takes place when the parish priest appears at the entrance to his farm. It is clearly an intrusion, an unacceptable act of aggression by an "*outsider*", and Samwel's hand reaches instinctively for the folding-knife in his pocket (p.6). He only pulls it back when he realises that the parish priest is not an enemy.

While the hills mark the edge of the Village, the cliffs characterise the edge of Malta. Significantly, here the novel refers to the name 'Malta'.

The fact that the novel is set in Malta is clear from the very start, so that cannot be the reason why the text chooses to mention 'Malta'. With one arm around Żabbett who is standing beside him, Samwel looks at the "edge of Malta" and "sees" beyond it "the sea and the freedom of the open space". This makes him want to walk to the cliffs and to see whether "the black space hides inside it any sign of what the future has in store" (p.85). Unlike Dun Karm who yearns for the return of his sweet past, Samwel is tormented by his difficult childhood and his only hope is for a better future. This hope is associated with the open space beyond the Village and beyond Malta, and this is no coincidence, because Samwel feels oppressed by the stifling Village that he lives in and by the larger, but similar village that is Malta. When Żabbett leaves her parents' house and turns up on the doorstep of Samwel's house in the Village, the couple decide to move to Samwel's farmhouse on the outskirts of the Village to leave the "ugliness" and the "bitterness" of the "cursed" Village behind them (p.170).

But Samwel's uneasiness in the Village is evident right from the start. One evening, as he opens the door of his village house to go out into the deserted street, he feels trouble and deceit walking beside him and the walls of the quiet houses look black with weariness (p.11). It is not only an instance of pathetic fallacy; Samwel does not feel at ease when he is outside his home. The only place where he really feels at ease and happy is at the farmhouse when he decides to clean it up so that he can eventually go to live there with Żabbett. But his plans for a new beginning are dashed by the community's pressures and by the couple's inability to deal with their own and each other's anguish. Besides, for Samwel, even the environment of his safe haven becomes oppressive and unbearable and he feels that this time he has nowhere else to go.

In other post-Independence novels, many protagonists either choose to emigrate or consider leaving the island. In Alfred Sant's *L-Ewwel Weraq tal-Bajtar* (1968) (The First Fig-leaves) and in Frans Sammut's first novel *Il-Gaġġa* (1971) (The Cage), the (male) protagonists decide to abandon the asphyxiating atmosphere of the island. In *Il-Gaġġa*, Fredu Gambin himself describes Malta as a cage in terms which are similar to *Samuraj's* mention of hills "surrounding" the Village. Moreover, the last sentence of *Il-Gaġġa* is reminiscent of Samwel's mention of the "open space" beyond the cliffs: "In front of me," writes Fredu Gambin, "lies the openness of unending space" (p.150); both Samwel and Fredu Gambin long for open air and open space. In an introductory note to the text of *Il-Gaġġa*, Frans Sammut points out that the characters in his story are fictitious but

the cage is real. In *Samuraj*, when the parish priest visits Samwel's farmhouse to take the sick and depressed Żabbett away, he convinces Samwel to "let her go", so to say, by telling him that it was for her own good that he wanted to take her back to her parents' home. Samwel calls this argument "a trap", which is an individualised, tighter version of the collective cage that Fredu Gambin wants to get away from in Sammut's earlier novel *Il-Gaġġa*.

*There you are, that's the trap. You've laid the net and now you've caught me in it. You're worse than the spiders that were hanging from the arch in the shed (p.183).*

Sammut's shift from a collective cage to an individualised trap marks his change in focus from the collective to the individual but it does not alter the essence of his interpretation of Maltese society.

### **Ins and outs**

Although the text is not aware of it, *Samuraj* tackles two elements which have been associated with Mediterranean cultures namely, the relationship between insiders and outsiders and the central role of the mother, especially the strong relationship between mother and son and the real or virtual absence of the father in the rearing of his young children (Grima 1997).

Fear of the outside and the outsider is not uncommon in the collective unconsciousness of a small Mediterranean island that has witnessed so many evils come ashore from the sea that separates it from larger, more powerful lands. Despite the fact that the Mediterranean Sea has been described as a "sea of closeness" (Matvejevic 1991 : 22), a sea that brings people together, in Maltese literature it has often been portrayed as a powerful, dangerous and capricious force. For Dun Karm and Karmenu Vassallo, to mention just two major Romantic poets, the sea often arouses a deep sense of fear and it is frequently used as a metaphor of, or in association with, powerful, negative forces. So for a small island surrounded by a much larger sea, this "sea of closeness" is often seen as a violent, impulsive force that fills the islanders with both awe and fear of the irrational and the unknown. On an island, the outside cannot but be associated with the sea.

The closed nature of Maltese society is as protective as it is oppres-



sive; to many post-Independence novelists the island fortress of Malta, with its real and metaphoric hills and cliffs, is almost exclusively oppressive. In *Il-Gidba* (1977) (The Lie), Oliver Friggieri attacks the hypocrisy and double standards of Maltese society. The protagonist, Natan, does not feel safe anywhere, not even inside: his obsession with closing windows and keeping out of sight is symptomatic of the uneasiness and vulnerability that render him homeless in a crowded land where the home is the only true refuge. At one point, Natan and Rebekka, the young woman he is having an extramarital affair with, discuss leaving the island, but they never get down to it, probably because of their inability to cut the strings that tie them to their community and start all over again somewhere else. Their relationship eventually founders and Natan ends up not only spiritually but literally homeless.

In *Il-Gidba*, the protagonist moves to another village to get away from his wife and from the oppressive eyes of his inquisitive neighbours, but Rebekka's village is the same as his. This fact makes any form of escape impossible. After all, the pressures of social control follow him wherever he goes, even when he visits his friend Indri in the countryside. Malta is one village. Friggieri even ignores the distinction examined by other writers like Frans Sammut, Francis Ebejer and J.J. Camilleri between the village and the city. Malta is perceived as one crowded village where the individual is simply expected to toe the line. Whereas the romantic historical novels that dominated the Maltese literary scene before Independence gave the impression that the Maltese Islands were physically boundless, many post-Independence novels have highlighted the claustrophobic nature of life on crowded Malta and focused on their characters' need to make enough space for themselves to develop their personalities.

In the claustrophobic atmosphere of the Village, Samwel realises that it is impossible for him to feel at ease, to come to terms with his past and the anguish that it has burdened him with, and to plan his own future. On the other hand, Samwel is not interested in changing the way the villagers think. Jumi Harr tries to do that in J. J. Camilleri's *Il-Ghar tax-Xitan* (1973) (The Devil's Cave) but Samwel is a very different character and he does not have Jumi Harr's experience of the 'city'. Samwel is no hero and he has no interest in becoming one either. All he wants is to live peacefully. The pressures of the environment in which he lives are not the only reason why he cannot live the way he wants to live, but they play an important part in stripping him of almost all control over his life. Put differently, Samwel does not commit suicide because he refuses to, or is unable to



behave like the other members of his community. But his story is an attempt to understand what it means for an individual and for a Maltese to live in the village called Malta.

There is a striking resemblance between the anonymous village of *Samuraj* and the village of San Rokku in which most of *Il-Għar tax-Xitan* is set. In the second paragraph of his novel, Camilleri describes San Rokku as a small village hidden away in a valley surrounded by hills, cut off from the world and very far from the nearest large city (p.7). The village is a metaphor of Malta in the same way that *Samuraj*'s Village is Malta writ small. The remoteness of the village is indicative of its insularity and the distance from the nearest large city calls forth the distance between the Maltese Islands and the nearest land mass. "*The long road [from the village to the city] was never ending. To Petriga the city was the other side of the world*" (p.102). In *Il-Għar tax-Xitan* the city is foreign, profoundly different from the village of San Rokku and Jumi Harr's return to his native village from the city is really a metaphor of the return to Malta of a Maltese person who has lived abroad and absorbed other ways of thought. The insider has now become an outsider and this makes his challenge to the accepted norms of the village's closed community more palatable if still unacceptable. While his advantage is that as an outsider he is not expected to behave as an insider, his disadvantage is that his attempts to challenge the world-view and ways of the villagers are perhaps considered irrelevant because insiders do not think that outsiders can really know or understand what is going on inside. The novel gives us the impression that Jumi Harr fails to leave any positive lasting impression on the villagers of San Rokku, probably because "*the villagers hardly ever feel the need to take the long, rough and winding road over the hills to the city*" (p.8). San Rokku is another world, closed inside a circle "*as strong as iron*" that reminds us so much of Fredu Gambin's cage. In *Samuraj* it is only Xandru the Poet who tries to challenge the status quo but he is written off as mentally ill (which he probably is).

In *Il-Għar tax-Xitan* the portrayal of the city is plagued by stereotypes that are reminiscent of Juann Mamo's caricature of the way illiterate Maltese emigrant villagers view the United States of America in his satirical novel *Ulied in-Nanna Venut fl-Amerka* (1930) (Grandma Venut's Children in America). Some of these stereotypes are included intentionally. In Camilleri's novel, the parish priest, for instance, "*frequently described the big city as eroded by incredible evils and scandals*" (p.17). The city was the "*model of the world*", one of the three fierce enemies of human beings,

the others being the Devil and the body (p.17). Jumi's father Sidor echoes this view when he concludes that the city "ruined" his son (p.29), and made him "lose his faith", while his mother, echoing Dun Iddew's own convictions (p.101), fears the magic spell of the deceptive city (p.24). The novelist is certainly aware that these are misconceptions about the city. But he may be less aware of the superficial way in which he makes Jumi's girlfriend Petriga view the city as a place where there is little room for values and morals (p.102).

Another element of Camilleri's narrative which was not meant to be a stereotype is the ease with which the unmarried couple settle down to life in the city. This contrasts far too sharply with the complexities and conflicts of life in the village. The novelist's unintentional idealization of life in the city is perhaps most evident in his idealization of the people who live in the city (p.106). This stereotypical portrayal of the city is a metaphor of the superficial character of some Maltese perceptions of life outside Malta. These stereotypes do not help the Maltese to understand themselves or others any better and many characters in the post-Independence Maltese novel hide behind these convenient stereotypes to avoid the destabilising challenges of an honest search for one's own identity because understanding others is also understanding oneself.

Notwithstanding its generally incisive analysis of life in Malta, particularly rural Malta, and despite its portrayal of truly rounded characters, at certain moments *Samuraj* makes the same superficial portrayal of the city that appears in other Maltese novels:

*Below him were the houses and the streets full of people busy doing the tasks that filled their pockets and made them richer than before: below him were the revelry and the wealth of a rich city (p.122).*

These thoughts of the parish priest come from someone who should have a much better idea of what the city is really like. The parish priest and the Count are on the terrace of the Count's house and the host is urging his guest to get away from the remote Village and return to the city where he can make a name for himself. Although the parish priest does not altogether agree with his host's line of thought, he certainly feels he is missing something: this particular context may explain why the priest's thoughts about the city are superficial. Besides, the novelist wants to contrast the frugality of Dun Vincenz's life in the Village with the richness of life in the city. But ultimately, the impression one gets from his thoughts is

that he is being more rational than nostalgic or sentimental. The priest really thinks that the city should be identified with wealth, greed and a capricious way of life.

If this interpretation of the priest's perception of life in the city is correct, when the stereotypical distinction between the Village and the city is transferred to that between Malta and foreign lands, the sharp contrast emphasises not only the superficiality of this particular perception of the 'other' but also the divide or distance, which some anthropologists have described as common in the Mediterranean, between insiders and outsiders. Because if the city, that is the foreign country, is perceived in a stereotypical way, then it means that the Maltese person does not really know the foreigner; this inevitably keeps foreigners 'outside', even when they are physically inside. In modern Maltese, 'foreigners' and 'outsiders' are both "*barranin*". Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, this cliché about the foreigner exposes the inability of the parish priest (and other Maltese people) to understand other ways of being and other ways of living. For those who make eager use of them, stereotypes have the advantage of simplifying what is complex and reinforcing accepted norms and perceptions. Taking a good look at what things are really like would challenge those norms and force the person to reinterpret the world. Most of the characters in *Samuraj* are unwilling and perhaps even unable to take the risk of invalidating key elements of their neat, if unsatisfactory, world-views. The parish priest and Sa Rožann, in particular, move quickly to undo the illicit relationship between Samwel and Żabbett, but they are not at all interested in understanding the behaviour of the couple or the relationship that has developed between them; they are only interested in invading their life to re-establish normality, that is adherence to their 'norms' and to their collective code of behaviour.

### The severity of Independence

The oppressive behaviour of the villagers who make optimum use of gossip, that sharp weapon of social control, and of the Village establishment, which also includes the police sergeant and Doctor Hili, renders the Village sterile. Samwel himself thinks about the "*parched up roots of this village*" (p.28). Sa Rožann is unable to have children; Samwel refuses to have children and consequently Żabbett, who wants children, is unable to have them too; and the intrusive farmer Beneditt il-Laqxi does not have any children. The infertility of Sammut's characters is reminiscent of Rita's

frigidity in Francis Ebejer's play, *Il-Hadd fuq il-Bejt* (1973) (Sunday on the Roof). As in the case of Rita, the sterility of Sammut's Village is a metaphor of Malta's inability to give life, to be creative, to become truly independent. This theme is also associated with the way first his father and then Samwel himself neglect their arable land. When Samwel decides to breathe new life into his farm and its uncultivated land, he has to deal with the strong opposition of the Village community, the fragility of his relationship with Zabbett and his own deep anguish. These are too much for him and, abandoned by everyone, he chooses to reattach himself to the soothing, though painful memory of his mother.

In *Samuraj*, the characters' strong attachment to their mother, which is also evident in other Maltese novels, even in one like *Ulied in-Nanna Venut fl-Amerka* which has seemingly little to do with mothers, can be seen as a metaphor of the attachment of post-Independence Malta to its old mentality and its old ways. This is consonant with the pre-Independence, romantic personification of Malta as a loving mother who has sacrificed herself for her children. One of Samwel's biggest problems is that he is unable to cut the umbilical cord that binds him to his mother, even now that she is no longer alive. His strong attachment to his mother is understandable not only because Mediterranean boys are traditionally close to their mothers, but because he has suffered together with his mother the battering of his violent father (Gilmore 1987b: 14-15; Grima: 1996, 1997). This is a lot like 'new' Malta's inability to disengage itself from its colonised past. The emotional and ideological cord that keeps Rita tied to her mother in Ebejer's play *Il-Hadd fuq il-Bejt* only starts to tear when her mother dies; in Samwel's case, however, time does not loosen his hold on his mother but actually makes it stronger. At first he thinks of her occasionally, but gradually he comes to think of her all the time, in such a way that it seems to him that he has become pregnant with her in the same way that she was pregnant with him years before. But like independent Malta, Samwel realises that sooner or later he has to wean himself away from his mother in order to give her "*the death she merits and to leave her in peace*" (p.53). He knows that his pregnancy is not a natural one, because it has lasted far too long.

Like Cooper's 'indeterminate' metaphor or Eco's 'open' text, *Samuraj* is a novel that affords many possible readings that do not exclude each other but rather flourish in the presence of each other. This particular reading of *Samuraj* (and of other post-Independence Maltese works of literature) sees it as a narrative about Malta's challenge to survive what Dennis

Austin has called "*the severity of independence*", but this reading is not meant to, and cannot, exclude other simultaneous readings (Frendo 1991 : xiii). In his last moments, Samwel sees a young boy picking flowers for his mother and he longs for his own mother's "*kiss to cover his face*" (p.200). Almost ten years after Independence, *Samuraj*'s new Malta is finding its comfort in the warmth of its battered past.

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# DOMINIQUE VIVANT DENON À MALTE : DES LUMIÈRES AU BONAPARTISME

RICHARD SPITERI

*Abstract - Dominique Vivant Denon (1747-1825), who came twice to Malta in the second half of the 18th century, wrote the accounts of his visits in the books : Voyage en Sicile, 1st edition, 1788, and Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte, 1st edition, 1802. In 1778, Denon was secretary at the French Embassy in Naples. That year he went on a cultural tour to southern Italy and then Malta. His description of Valletta is an anthology piece and his observations on the frescoes of Mattia Preti are among the earliest we have by an expert artist. He was moved on seeing peasants toiling endlessly on their barren island. In 1798, Denon set sail with the fleet that was to invade Egypt. There he was going to make some one thousand drawings of the monuments of the Pharaohs. He describes the capture of Malta by Bonaparte and then attends a dinner given by the General during which he has the opportunity to see the newly appointed Maltese administrators. Denon believed that Malta could become useful to a particular sector of the French economy : agriculture. Tropical plants could be acclimatized on the island before they were grown in Provence.*

La récente réédition en France de deux ouvrages de Dominique Vivant Denon : *Voyage en Sicile* et *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte* nous incite à examiner de près les deux séjours que cet homme de culture fit à Malte au cours de la deuxième moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle

## Vers une carrière diplomatique

Il naquit, en 1747, à Givry près de Chalon-sur-Saône d'une famille de hobereaux bourguignons. Son père, qui fournissait des crus au Roi, lança bientôt le jeune Dominique à la conquête de Paris. Dans la capitale, le jeune homme fréquente les ateliers de grands artistes dont celui de Boucher et apprend, chez Noël Hallé, la technique du dessin et de la gravure. La fortune lui sourit et Louis XV le nomma conservateur des collections de pierres gravées léguées par Madame de Pompadour, puis le fit gentilhomme ordinaire de sa chambre.

En 1772, Denon fit ses débuts dans la carrière diplomatique. Il rejoignit son poste à l'Ambassade de France à Saint-Petersbourg où une de ses

tâches consista à espionner un philosophe dangereux : Diderot. Son excès de zèle attira vite l'attention de Catherine II qui l'expulsa.

Plus tard, Denon se rendit à Stockholm auprès de Vergennes, alors ambassadeur de France. Puis il fut envoyé dans les cantons suisses. En 1775, quand il se trouve à Genève, il décide d'écrire à Voltaire qui, témoignant de l'intérêt à la mission saint-peterbourgeoise, l'invite à souper à Ferney. Par la suite, Denon dessine plusieurs portraits du philosophe, mais une gravure intitulée *Le déjeuner à Ferney*, qui connaîtra un succès considérable dans la capitale, irrite Voltaire. Le philosophe accuse le graveur de l'avoir dessiné en "singe estropié".

En 1776, Louis XVI envoya Denon à Naples où il séjournerait neuf ans comme secrétaire d'ambassade, puis comme chargé d'affaires. Une fois les tâches diplomatiques accomplies, il participait aux fouilles d'Herculaneum et de Pompéi. De plus, il maîtrisa l'art de dessiner les statues et les objets antiques détachés sur les sites archéologiques.

En 1778, un certain abbé de Saint-Non mena une mission scientifique et artistique dans le royaume des Deux-Siciles. Ibrahim Amin Ghali fait observer que Saint-Non pouvait puiser dans les bénéfices énormes de son abbaye, car une telle enquête coûtait fort cher (Amin Ghali 1988 : 70). En tout cas, le mécène recrute Denon qui bientôt parcourt les routes de la Calabre avec des collègues renommés, parmi lesquels se trouvent le minéralogiste Dolomieu et le peintre Fragonard.

Nous ne nous arrêtons pas à la querelle qui, quelques ans après la fin de la mission, s'élèvera entre l'abbé et le secrétaire d'ambassade. Il nous suffit de signaler que Saint-Non publiera en cinq tomes un *Voyage pittoresque de Naples et de Sicile*, ouvrage auquel Denon contribue le texte et plusieurs dessins. Si Saint-Non ne souligne pas l'importance de la contribution de son collaborateur, c'est en partie la faute de Denon lui-même, vu qu'il a demandé à l'abbé de ne pas trop faire "étalage de son nom afin de ne pas compromettre ses fonctions de secrétaire d'Ambassade" (Amin Ghali 1988 : 70).

## Du tourisme culturel

Toujours est-il, que c'est au cours de la mission organisée par l'abbé de Saint-Non, que Denon visita Malte pour la première fois. Le matin du 6 septembre 1778, l'espérnade sur lequel il voyageait, pénétrait dans le port de La Valette. Le passager distingué donne libre cours à son émotion en composant un véritable hymne :



*Alors nous vîmes cette superbe perspective de l'intérieur du port, de tant de forts, et de ces deux villes bâties en amphithéâtre; coup d'oeil qui ne ressemble à celui d'aucune autre ville du monde, et qui ne le cède peut-être à aucune en magnificence. Il n'y a pas un seul bel édifice ; mais ils sont tous si bien construits, de grands et magnifiques bastions leur font de si belles bases, que rien n'est plus imposant que leur aspect. L'intérieur de la ville neuve à droite, bâtie par La Valette après le fameux siège des Turcs, a pris le nom de son fondateur. De belles et larges rampes, en marches de pierres, conduisent à de grandes rues bien droites et bien pavées. Les maisons sont bâties en pierre de taille, d'une si belle espèce, qu'elles paraissent toujours neuves ; et le sol et la poussière sont d'une nature si blanche, qu'au lieu de ternir les murailles, elles semblent les reblanchir éternellement (Denon 1993 : 137).*

Présenté au grand maître de Rohan, Denon devine les tares qui, vers la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, minent l'ordre militaire de Saint-Jean. Il les expose en employant un ton ironique hérité de Voltaire :

*Entouré d'ambitieux, sa cour est en proie à l'intrigue comme celle du plus puissant monarque; et ses états sont si petits, qu'il ne fait que tourner sans cesse autour de son tombeau, vers lequel il sait que mille frères le voient s'acheminer toujours trop lentement. Malgré leur soumission, ils semblent lui reprocher tous les moments qu'il dérobe à leur ambition, en occupant trop longtemps une place à laquelle ils ont tous droit d'aspirer à leur tour (Denon 1993 : 137).*

Il mentionne la révolte des prêtres de 1775, mais l'optique qu'il adopte change l'événement en opéra bouffe :

*.. cet infortuné souverain est sans cesse en défense contre les cabales intestines, des conspirations et des soulèvements. La dernière année du règne de Ximénès en fit voir un exemple dans la révolte des prêtres, qui ne projetaient pas moins que d'assassiner ce grand maître dans l'église, ainsi que tous les chevaliers. Ce projet n'ayant pu être exécuté, ils osèrent s'emparer de deux forts, et tirèrent sur la ville le canon qu'ils ne savaient heureusement ni charger ni pointer (Denon 1993 : 139).*

Denon entre en contact avec des Maltais. Les bateliers, qui, la nuit du 5 septembre, l'amènent vers la côte, font preuve de bon sens en évitant

aux passagers de l'espéronade une quarantaine horrificante dans le lazaret. Quand Denon fera le voyage de retour pour la Sicile, un batelier maltais sera le protagoniste d'un geste noble. Le 19 septembre, quand l'espéronade s'approche de Terra-Nova, tous les habitants, les considérant injustement comme des pestiférés, viennent sur la plage pour les refouler :

*nous y eussions été contraints [de nous éloigner] [...] si un Maltais, à qui par hasard le bateau appartenait, [...] n'eut partagé notre indignation et pris sur lui de nous acheter lui-même du pain, et de nous faire apporter de l'eau et du vin ; ce qui dans la circonstance, nous parut une action sublime* (Denon 1993 : 154).

À Malte, Denon se rend un peu partout. Il demeure saisi devant les paysans qui présentent un aspect digne tout en se fatigant sur une terre aride :

*"Le cultivateur ne peut tirer du sol qu'un peu de blé et du coton, et la pauvreté y est si active, si soigneuse et si propre, qu'elle n'y a l'air que de la sobriété"* (Denon 1993 : 138). Les Maltais sont visiblement fiers de leurs récoltes de coton. Un paysan, qui arrose cette plante, dit sur un ton humoristique à Denon : *"Nous serions réduits à l'arroser d'huile, et qu'il nous faudrait encore la cultiver"* (Denon 1993 : 142).

L'artiste est très désireux d'examiner les antiquités qui se trouveraient sur l'île. Sur la porte principale de Mdina, il contemple la 'statue mutilée de Junon' (Denon 1993 : 145). Mais finalement ses espérances seront frustrées : *"À tout ce que l'on a trouvé de sculptures et de médailles dans l'île, on peut juger que les arts n'y ont jamais été poussés à un grand point de perfection"* (Denon 1993 : 145). Denon croit déduire la raison de l'inaptitude des habitants à pratiquer les beaux-arts. Il pense que les Maltais ressemblent à leurs ancêtres, les Phéniciens [sic], en ce qu'ils sont adroits dans le commerce, mais peu doués pour la créativité artistique : *"La nation a conservé de son origine l'esprit mercantile et de calcul, et le même éloignement pour les beaux-arts et la littérature"* (Denon 1993 : 145).

En revanche, les fresques de l'église Saint-Jean de La Valette l'éblouissent :

*... le chevalier Matthias Calabrais a peint dans la voûte l'histoire de S. Jean. C'est là qu'il faut voir ce peintre pour le connaître et lui accorder l'admiration qu'il mérite. Grand dans la composition, large dans l'exécution, sa manière est franche comme celle de Paul Véronèse, dont il*

*tient beaucoup pour la couleur et le pinceau. Il serait à désirer qu'il eût réussi de même à imiter ce peintre dans la noblesse et l'élégance de ses figures, qui sont cependant quelquefois un peu trop fortes. Au reste on peut moins lui reprocher cela ici qu'ailleurs ; car rien n'est plus fier et plus largement fait que les grandes figures des martyrs et de chevaliers qu'il a représentés à la retombée de la voûte. Il serait à désirer que cette suite fût gravée avant que le temps ou le besoin de rétablir l'église eussent détruit ces morceaux, et aussi pour la gloire de ce peintre, qui n'a pas toujours été heureux dans l'exécution des tableaux de chevalet. Il y a, dans la chapelle de S. Jean de cette même église, un grand tableau de Michel Ange de Caravage, représentant la décollation de S. Jean, d'une composition aussi simple que terrible (Denon 1993 : 140-141).*

Denon valorise Matthias Calabrais, autrement dit Mattia Preti, en le comparant à Paul Véronèse et, lorsque l'expert de beaux-arts considère que le premier ne se montre pas l'égal de l'autre, alors il adoucit quelque peu ses mots. La remarque laconique que Denon fait à propos du chef-d'oeuvre de Caravage accentue la vive impression que le tableau hautement dramatique laisse en lui.

Denon visite également la bibliothèque *tanseana* qui vient d'être fondée. Il fait l'éloge de la collection de livres et de médailles ainsi que du bibliothécaire, le père Gioacchino [Navarro], alors âgé d'une trentaine d'années, et qu'il décrit en ces termes :

*... l'abbé Agio, jeune Maltais, que le goût inné des sciences a seul formé. Ce jeune homme très intéressant, et très utile à cet établissement, par ses talents et son activité, sera peut-être un jour le père de la littérature maltaise (Denon 1993 : 146).*

Le futur directeur des Musées Nationaux considère attentivement l'ensemble d'antiquités que le grand maître de Rohan cherche à réunir : *"... il y a quelques tableaux et des bas-reliefs trouvés dans le pays, représentant des portraits en marbre ... Il y en a un de la fille de Cicéron"* (Denon 1993 : 146). Il repart le 17 septembre, après un séjour de deux semaines sur l'île.

## **Le 22 prairial an VI**

Pendant la Révolution, Denon figura sur la liste des émigrés, mais, en

décembre 1793, il retourna à Paris en se mettant sous la protection du peintre David qui fut également député à la Convention. Quelques ans plus tard, en 1798, Bonaparte commença les préparatifs pour envahir l'Égypte. Un des aspects originaux de l'expédition fut qu'elle comportait une mission culturelle qui nécessitait la convocation de 167 savants dont Denon.

Le 24 floréal An VI (14 mai 1798), des navires quittaient le port de Marseille (Denon 1990 : 40). La flotte mit le cap sur la Sicile et c'est seulement là, à bord de la *Junon*, que Denon comprit qu'on se dirigeait vers Malte. À l'aube du 20 prairial [8 juin], l'île de Gozo se profile à l'horizon (Denon 1990 : 45). Deux jours après commence la bataille. Elle dure à peine quelques heures. Le lendemain le général Reynier, s'étant déjà emparé de Gozo, envoie sur l'*Orient* des soldats maltais capturés. Bonaparte les harangue, mais il ne fait que bluffer :

*Puisque vous avez pu prendre les armes contre votre patrie, il fallait savoir mourir ; je ne veux point de vous pour prisonniers ; vous pouvez retourner à Malte tandis qu'elle ne m'appartient pas encore* (Denon 1990 : 47).

Dans la nuit du 23 au 24 prairial, Bonaparte signe une convention avec l'ordre de Saint-Jean et la conquête est un fait accompli. Le matin du 25 [13 juin] Denon va à terre : *"Français et Maltais tous étaient surpris de se trouver sur le même sol ; chez nous c'étaient l'enthousiasme, chez eux la stupéfaction"* (Denon 1990 : 48).

Une fois devenu maître de la Cité Valette, Bonaparte donne plusieurs ordres dont celui de mettre fin à l'esclavage qu'on pratique sur l'île. Denon raconte :

*On délivra tous les esclaves turcs et arabes ; jamais la joie ne fut prononcée d'une manière plus expressive : lorsqu'ils rencontraient les Français, la reconnaissance se peignait dans leurs yeux d'une manière si touchante qu'à plusieurs reprises elle me fit verser des larmes ; ce fut un vrai bonheur que j'éprouvai à Malte* (Denon 1990 : 49).

L'historien Carmelo Testa affirme qu'en tout 601 esclaves musulmans furent tirés des fers [Testa 1979 : 82]. En contrepartie, Bonaparte, par l'intermédiaire des consuls de la République, fit parvenir des lettres aux Beys d'Alger, de Tunis et de Tripoli, les enjoignant de libérer les esclaves maltais devenus désormais citoyens français. Peu après, le Bey de Tunis délivra une soixantaine de misérables parmi lesquels il y avait des Maltais (Testa 1979 : 83).

## Point de lendemain

Denon fut invité à une réception officielle importante qui eut lieu le soir :

*Le quatrième jour, le général nous donna un souper où furent admis les membres des autorités nouvellement constituées. Ils virent avec autant de surprise que d'admiration l'élégance martiale de nos généraux, cette assemblée d'officiers rayonnants de santé, de gloire et d'espérance; ils furent frappés de la physionomie imposante du général en chef, dont l'expression agrandissait la stature (Denon 1990 : 49).*

Cette réception n'est pas à confondre avec une cérémonie qui se tint le 14 juin à midi pendant laquelle, devant Bonaparte, les juges de l'île, les chefs des ordres religieux, des officiers municipaux, etc. durent prêter serment d'obéissance à la République française (Testa 1979 : 83).

Quand Denon erre dans La Valette, il aperçoit que certaines rues sont désertes, car les habitants ne participent pas du tout aux réjouissances des victorieux.

*Le mouvement qui avait régné dans la ville à notre arrivée avait fait fermer les cafés et autres lieux publics : les bourgeois, encore étonnés des événements, se tenaient clos dans leurs maisons ; nos soldats, la tête échauffée par le soleil et par le vin, avaient épouventé les habitants, qui avaient fermé leurs boutiques et caché leurs femmes. Cette belle ville, où nous ne voyions que nous, nous parut triste (Denon 1990 : 49).*

À Malte, Denon fait quelques dessins. Le 22 prairial [le 10 juin], lorsqu'il se trouve sur la *Junon*, il esquisse d'abord l'archipel maltais et, ensuite, les batteries des forts qui tirent sur le débarquement français. À La Valette, il se rend à la bibliothèque *tanseana* où il dessine des antiquités. Puis il fait trois vues de l'intérieur du port. Il ne manque pas de visiter l'église Saint-Jean afin de chercher ce qu'il appelle "*ses anciennes connaissances*", c'est-à-dire les fresques de Mattia Preti et le tableau célèbre de Caravage.

Denon fait sur place une réflexion sur l'importance de l'annexion de Malte à la République française. Selon lui, Malte pouvait jouer un rôle utile surtout dans le secteur agricole de l'économie française :

*Si l'aspect de Malte est aride, peut-on voir sans admiration que la*

*plus petite colline qui recèle quelque peu de terre soit toujours un jardin aussi délicieux qu'abondant où l'on pourrait acclimater toutes les plantes de l'Asie et de l'Afrique ? Cette espèce de première serre chaude pourrait servir à en alimenter une autre à Toulon, et par degré, en amener les productions jusqu'à Paris, sans leur avoir fait éprouver les secousses trop vives qu'occasionne l'extrême différence des climats : peut-être y naturaliserait-on une grande partie des plantes exotiques que nous faisons venir à grands frais chaque année dans nos serres, qui languissent la seconde année... (Denon 1990 : 50).*

Le 17 juin, Denon part avec la flotte pour l'Égypte. L'on sait que les dessins magnifiques des monuments pharaoniens qu'il y exécuta auraient marqué l'histoire de l'archéologie. Quand Bonaparte résolut de quitter l'Égypte, il demanda à l'artiste de l'accompagner. Le 23 août 1799 (Denon 1990 : 290), deux frégates prirent la mer, elles longèrent la côte de la Cyrénaïque, traversèrent le golfe de Sidra et atteignirent le cap Bon. Ensuite elles se dirigèrent vers la France en passant par Lampedusa et Pantelleria.

En 1802, Denon fut nommé directeur des Musées Nationaux, poste auquel il renonça après Waterloo. Il eut une vieillesse sereine au cours de laquelle il avait dû passer de très riches heures au milieu de la collection d'objets d'art fabuleuse qu'il avait assemblée dans l'hôtel du quai Voltaire où il résidait.

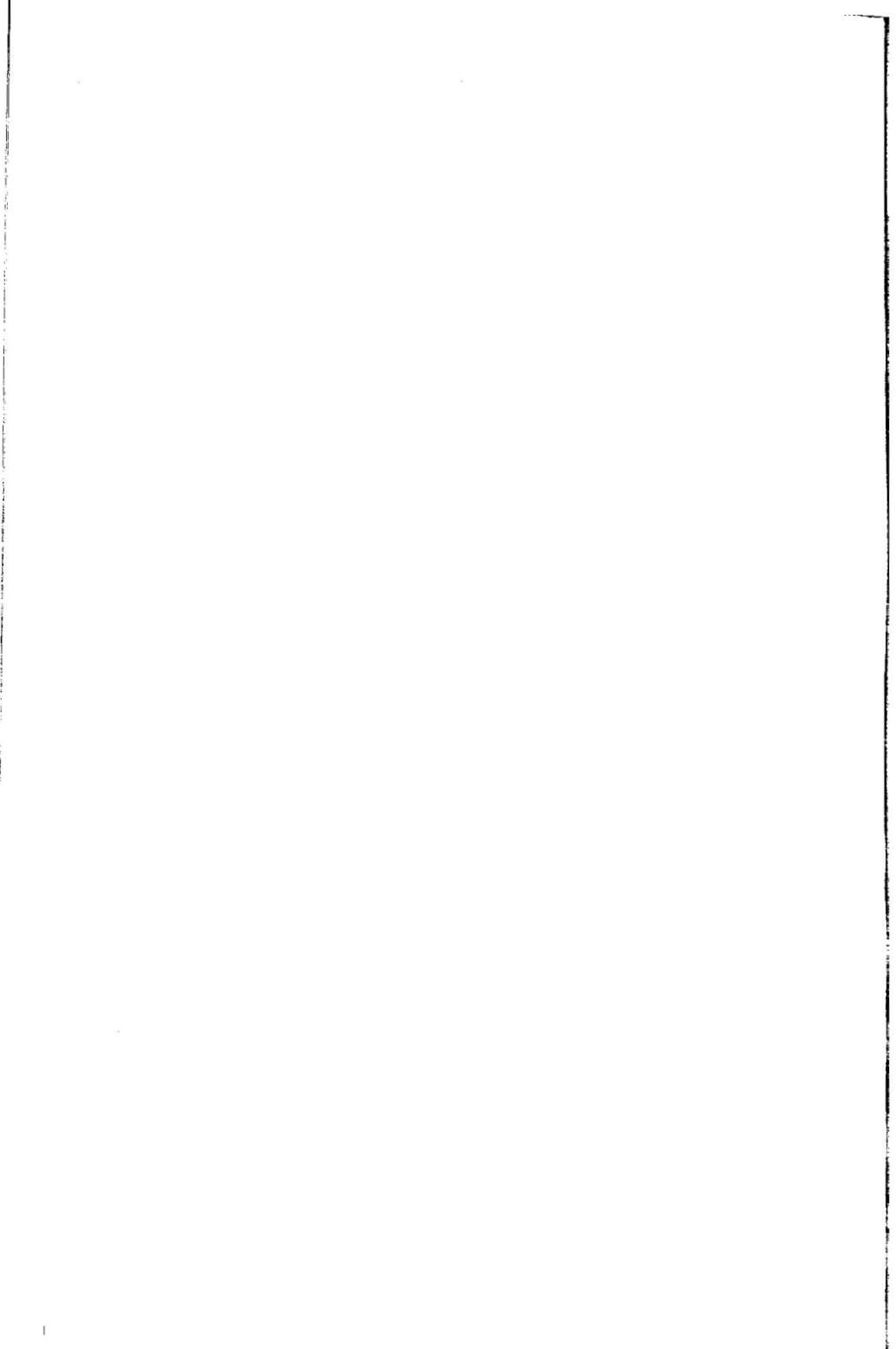
Le tour d'horizon que Denon fait des antiquités de Malte reste intéressant tout en étant lacunaire. On pourrait préférer les observations pénétrantes qu'il fait à propos des fresques de l'église Saint-Jean. Ses notations sur les paysans frappent par leur franchise, mais puis, en commentant le climat social, il se méprend sur la révolte des prêtres de 1775 qu'il appelle une "*ridicule expédition*" (Denon 1993 : 1390). Au contraire, cet événement révélateur d'un nouvel équilibre entre les forces politiques locales mérite une interprétation bien différente.

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# FRANCESCO AZOPARDI – A MALTESE MUSICIAN AND THEORIST : NEW EVIDENCE ABOUT HIS CAREER AND DIDACTIC WRITINGS

DION BUHAGIAR

***Abstract** - Francesco Azopardi (1748–1809) lived in Malta during the second half of the eighteenth century. He was professionally trained in Naples for four years and remained in this city working as a composer, teacher and conductor until 1774. The Cathedral authorities subsequently employed Azopardi in Malta as an organist. His duties included composition, playing the organ and teaching singers. Azopardi's workload increased significantly following the retirement of his predecessor Benigno Zerafa. Azopardi was a prolific composer and he composed new music regularly for the liturgical services of the Cathedral Church. In addition, he taught many students including Nicolò Isouard and produced two important composition treatises for his students.*

## Introduction

Giovanni Battista Agostino Francesco Giuseppe Azopardi<sup>1</sup> was born in Rabat (Malta) on 5 May 1748 and died there on 6 February 1809. His baptismal record reads as follows :

*5 May 1748. The Most Reverend Fr. Peter Attard, assistant parish priest baptized in the parish church of St Paul Outside The Walls, the child born today of Salvatore Azopardi and his wife Anna, from the suburb of Notabile<sup>2</sup>, and was named Giovanni Battista, Agostino, Francesco, Giuseppe. His godparents were the most excellent Don Franciscus Mamo and Anna Graziulla Chetcuti.<sup>3</sup>*

This document tells much about the Catholic environment into which Azopardi was born and eventually brought up. He became a devout be-

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<sup>1</sup> The composer's family name was pronounced with a single 'z'. Its modern counterpart carries a double 'z', thus, Azzopardi.

<sup>2</sup> During the eighteenth century, Rabat was known only as a suburb of Notabile.

<sup>3</sup> LB IV folio 390

liever who dedicated himself to the service of the Cathedral Church in Malta. All four names, of which it was then customary to adopt the third, manifest the rigid religious fervour prevalent in Rabat during that time. Each of the last three names represents a saint associated with a particular religious order : St Augustine and St Francis, for example, are venerated as the founders of the Augustinian and the Franciscan (Conventual) orders respectively. These orders still exist, and the church of St Francis is situated almost in front of Azopardi's house. Interestingly so, over the main entrance of the Azopardi house itself there remain the crossed arms and cross which form the coat of arms of the Franciscan Order.

Francesco Azopardi was the second born in a family of six children; he had three brothers and two sisters. Little is known about his life in general, as is made clear by Pullicino (1876 : 23)

*Meanwhile, the life of Francesco Azopardi, which does not offer numerous and varied events to talk about, can only be found if summarized, (so to speak) in the continuous production of his compositions.*

But if Pullicino is reticent regarding Azopardi's early life, Tanti (1809 : 1) provides more information in his *Elogio* :

*In studying and in the exercise of piety did our Francesco pass his early years. An intellect thirsty for knowledge, a quickness of mind, a natural genius for music.*

From this one can surmise that at an early age Azopardi must have applied himself to the disciplined study of his art, and his strict and religious upbringing helped him to become acquainted with the liturgy and the essential part that music plays therein.

### **Azopardi's musical scholarship**

Azopardi began his musical training under the guidance of Mikiel Ang Vella who had established his own private school as was and still is customary in Malta. Eventually, Azopardi pleaded with his parents to send him to study abroad. According to Tanti (1809 : 1)

*The strong and persistent requests that he made to his parents were successful, and he was sent to the famous Royal Conservatory of*

*Sant'Onofrio in Naples. Thus, here, he was launched upon his career (and) from among a considerable number of students, our Maltese was considered the best.*

According to the enrollment register (*rollo dei figliuoli*), Francesco Azopardi, a Maltese, entered as a resident fee-paying student in 1763 and left four years later in 1767.<sup>4</sup> Azopardi's acceptance in this conservatory at the somewhat mature age of fifteen, attests to his strong musical background. According to the conservatory's charter, as summarized by Charles Burney (Glover 1927 : 63), the boys were admitted :

*Between the ages of eight and twenty, and the younger pupils were bound for the space of eight years : the older boys could only obtain admission if they showed exceptional talent ...some were taken as paying students, and these were not subject to the eight year agreement.*

Thus, in view of the conservatory's charter, Azopardi was deemed to be well prepared to be accepted as a full-time, fee-paying student at Sant'Onofrio.

Some biographers disagree on the duration of Azopardi's stay at the conservatory. Pullicino (1876), Caruana Gatto (1910) and Mifsud Bonnici (1950) claim that he was there for eight years, while Muscat Azopardi (1949) mentions ten years, from 1760-1770. However, Azopardi's 'mature' application did not require him to spend eight years as was demanded of all younger students : in fact, the records show that Azopardi entered in 1763 and left in 1767 and that he stayed at the conservatory only for four years, after which he emerged as a qualified 'Maestro di Capella'. According to the Cathedral music deputies :

*He accomplished his musical studies in the above-mentioned city to such a degree of advancement, that he has become a Maestro di Capella of great ability.*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Francesco Azopardi Maltese. Entrato a convittore nel 1763, 15 Ottobre, esce nel 1767." Salvatore Di Giacomi, Il Conservatorio di Sant'Onofrio a Capuana e quello di Santa Maria della Pietà dei Turchini, edited by Remo Sandron (n.p.); (n.publ.), 1824.

<sup>5</sup> CEM-AO folio 620 v.

It is hardly surprising that Azopardi, although barely 20 years of age, had achieved so much in four years when one considers the commendable learning environment at the conservatory which included eminent teachers and a Spartan-like schedule. Burney (Glover 1927 : 63) describes the routine as follows :

*The only vacation in these schools, in the whole year, is in autumn, and only for a few days : during the winter, the boys rise two hours before it is light, from which time they continue their exercises, an hour and a half at dinner excepted, till eight o'clock at night : and this constant perseverance for a number of years, with genius and good teaching, must produce musicians.*

Although Azopardi left Sant'Onofrio after four years, he remained in Naples for another eight years until 1774, thereby staying for a period of almost twelve years in that city.

There are also differences of opinion regarding the identities of Azopardi's teachers at Sant'Onofrio, but most biographers, including Pullicino (1876) and Rolandi (1932), claim that they included Niccolò Piccinni. Pullicino (1876 : 8) refers to :

*The esteem that Piccinni often harboured for and bestowed on him (Azopardi) while conversing with those who were familiar to him in Naples, and it was from several of these persons that I (Pullicino) had the opportunity to obtain this specific information directly.*

When taking into account both Azopardi's stay in Naples between 1763-1774 and the above statement, we may safely assume that Azopardi did come in contact with Piccinni. Tanti (1809 : 2) mentions letters from Piccinni to Azopardi which reveal a great respect for the musician from Malta :

*It suffices to mention that the famous Picini (sic), his master, this man (Piccinni), a very great person in music, testifies by means of letters to our Francesco the high esteem he had of him.*

Conservatory records reproduced by Salvatore di Giacomo (1824 : 159) indicate Carlo Cotumacci and Giuseppe Dol as among Azopardi's teachers :

*From 1755-1785 we find him (Cotumacci), with Dol, teaching at the Conservatory of Sant'Onofrio.*

### **Azopardi as a composer**

Pullicino (1876 : 17) gives an indication as to Azopardi's activities after he left the conservatory :

*Azopardi remained in Naples for four years after he left the conservatory : during those four years he found himself being introduced as a teacher giving music lessons, not only to a great number of distinguished families, but also in various monasteries of the closed orders...In addition to the lessons that he used to give, he also made frequent public appearances for the performance of his own compositions and to conduct orchestras in various places and on different occasions of great solemnity.*

By 1768, Azopardi had embarked upon his career as a composer with his first liturgical composition, the Mass in F (Mus Ms 339). A second Mass in G (Mus Ms 369) appeared two years later (1770), and a third, also in G (Mus Ms 340), was composed in 1772. In addition to Masses, Azopardi composed Psalms and a Magnificat, which he himself conducted in various places and on different occasions. Tanti (1809 : 2) confirms that Azopardi was establishing himself as Maestro di Capella in a city where music was greatly appreciated :

*He was already asked to become first Maestro di Capella at the above-mentioned royal conservatory (Sant'Onofrio) and also in the other two conservatories of Loreto and Pietà where highly-renowned people were employed, (for) the young man was already inclined to occupy the honourable position.*

While Azopardi was living in Naples, he occasionally visited Malta and gave his musical services both to the Cathedral and to other churches of the diocese. The following report by the Cathedral music deputies to the Archbishop Mgr. Gwann Carmine Pellerano, testifies to such activity :

*Being charged with referring to the request of Francesco Azopardi who lives in Naples, we feel obliged to assure you, Illustrious and Most Reverend Father, that he completed his studies in the above-mentioned*

*city to such a degree of advancement that nowadays he has become a fine Maestro di Cappella and an excellent contrapuntist. He also performs on the organ with total perfection, and, moreover, we can assure you not only of the reputation that he enjoys, but also of the experience that we had of him on more than one occasion, not only in this Cathedral Church but also in other churches in your diocese, two years ago when he returned to this Island.<sup>6</sup>*

This document also suggests that Azopardi had already tried to re-settle in Malta two years prior to December 16, 1773, yet for some unknown reason was obliged to return to Naples. It is likely that the date of that visit to Malta was early 1772, and the evidence for this is found in the dedication, in Azopardi's own handwriting, on the title page of the Mass in G :

*Kyrie and Gloria of Signor and Maestro di Cappella Francesco Azopardi, performed by the same, on the solemn day of the Commemoration of Saint Paul at the Cathedral in 1772, and donated by the same to the Reverend Chapter of the Holy Cathedral Church.<sup>7</sup>*

The above dedication and conducting of the Mass in G major of 1772 must have influenced the Cathedral authorities very positively. They accepted Azopardi's application and recommended him for the position of organist with the right of future succession as Maestro di Cappella :

*Therefore, we are aware of his skill and ability, we are of the opinion that he deserves to serve in this Cathedral church of Yours, for the time being as an organist with the right of future succession as Maestro di Cappella.<sup>8</sup>*

Azopardi's installation as an organist with the right of future promotion came on the 12th of April 1774 :<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> CEM-AO, folio 620v.

<sup>7</sup> Azopardi, Mass in G (Mdina: Cathedral Archives, 1772, Ms. 320), title page v.

<sup>8</sup> CEM-AO, folio 620v.

<sup>9</sup> CEM-AO, folio 620v.

*This is on behalf of Maestro Azopardi who is the organist of the Holy Cathedral Church of Malta. By the strength of the signed transcript of the Illustrious and Most Reverend Father John Pellerano, Archbishop of Malta, written in reply to Francesco Azopardi's letter of application, dated December 20, 1773, after the written relation of the Most Reverend music deputies, Canon and Dean Don Paolo Mompalao Apap Depiro and Canon Don Pietro Platamone, inaugurate and instate as organist of the same Cathedral Church, the same Francesco Azopardi, with the usual annual salary of 120 scudi, and other remunerations, privileges and usual responsibilities that we are used to, and with future promotion either through the death or resignation of the Prefect of Music.<sup>10</sup>*

Later in the document, one reads that the Cathedral Chapter granted Azopardi an additional sum of 80 *scudi* to his annual salary, which was paid throughout his lifetime. This substantial remuneration was offered because his responsibilities included playing the organ, giving music lessons to the singers at the cathedral school, composing new music and conducting the liturgical services at the cathedral church. Azopardi accepted these terms, and in the summer of 1774, he left Naples permanently for Malta to become the organist of St Paul's Cathedral, Mdina.

### **Azopardi as 'Maestro di Capella'**

The position of Maestro di Cappella was retained by Don Benigno Zerafa who, at the time of Azopardi's appointment, had already given 30 years of service at the cathedral. Azopardi gradually assumed all the responsibilities of Maestro di Cappella and on the 8th December 1783, when he had already been employed for almost ten years, the church deputies for Music proposed an increase in his salary and the retirement with full pension of Zerafa; however, no decision was made.<sup>11</sup> The salary increase of 60 *scudi* annually was granted only after Azopardi submitted his case again in January 1785:

*To Francesco Azopardi, Organist and Prefect of Music with future promotion. The Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord, Don Vincent Labini,*

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<sup>10</sup> RP I: folio 96v.

<sup>11</sup> LDC II: folio 205

*Bishop of Malta, while ratifying the Chapter's deliberation that took place on the second day of the month (January 2, 1785), and was approved on the eleventh day of the month (January 11, 1785), orders an increase of 60 scudi in the salary for Francesco Azopardi.*<sup>12</sup>

To the title of organist, that of Prefect of Music was added, albeit with the restriction 'with future promotion' attached; Zerafa retained the title until his self-requested retirement in January 1787, and not, as Pullicino and Rolandi state, until his death on March 20, 1804. No document could be found that shows Azopardi's official designation as Maestro di Cappella. The only relevant information appears in a letter of Azopardi requesting, from the Bishop of Malta, an increase in salary to the amount of half of the pension that Zerafa had been receiving, that is, half of 100 scudi.<sup>13</sup> There is also nothing to suggest that Azopardi requested the elimination of the restrictive 'future succession' to the title of Maestro di Cappella at the Cathedral in Mdina. Azopardi continued his normal duties as Maestro di Cappella, however, after Zerafa's retirement in 1787.

### **Azopardi as a composer and teacher**

Azopardi's oeuvre includes Masses - around thirty-two, including, three for eight voices, two Requiem Masses (one of which was written for the death of the Austrian Emperor Leopold II), Psalms, Antiphons, Hymns, Graduals, Sequences (*Dies Irae* and *Lauda Sion*, for example)<sup>14</sup>, a *Te Deum*, and an oratorio, *La Passione di Cristo* (a setting of the *Metastasio* text). He also wrote two secular cantatas, arias, duets, trios and sonatas for pianoforte, Christmas organ pieces which he calls *Pastorali* and instrumental *Sinfonie*. One of these *Sinfonie*, known as *The Terra Santa* manuscript, shows the work to be in a three-movement 'classical' style. Tanti (1809 : 4) notes that Azopardi's music was also commissioned in Madrid and Munich :

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<sup>12</sup> RP I: folio 104r

<sup>13</sup> This letter is dated 23 April 1804, that is, a month after Zerafa's death. MC XIX: folio 731r.

<sup>14</sup> The sequences *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath), and *Lauda Sion* are sung during the celebration of the Mass. The former, during the Mass for the Dead, the latter for the Mass of "Corpus Christi" (Eucharist).



*What can I say about the production of his Music? The least that could be said is that in Madrid they have requested his scores and that in Monaco (Munich) they have accumulated a good collection, while in other regions, his music is sung and applauded.*

According to Pullicino (1876 : 42), "*Azopardi had many students, several of whom became very distinguished*". Amongst these students, Nicolò Isouard (1775-1818) was one of the most prestigious figures in the history of music in Malta. Grandmaster De Rohan appointed him organist at St John's Co-Cathedral, and in 1796, he was appointed Maestro di Cappella. He retained this position until he settled in Paris on 5 February 1800 when Malta was still under French occupation.

### **Azopardi as a theorist**

To Azopardi's importance as a composer and teacher we should add his significance as a theorist. Tanti (1809 : 3) observes that :

*Since he believed that there was a shortage of useful books that deal with music, (he also believed that) it would be advantageous to society at large to produce new ones. (Also) knowing that he must preserve and cultivate what he studied by means of musical productions he dedicated himself to composition. Concerning his first great achievement, there is the production of the famous treatise on the theory and practice of music, a work which since then has been translated into the French language and also given for publication; moreover, this treatise is studied in the various colleges and conservatories of music.*

In the above citation the writer is referring to Azopardi's *Il Musico Prattico* which he wrote in Italian, the lingua franca of the day. The treatise was subsequently translated into French by Nicholas Etienne Framery and carries a recommendation by André Gretry (dated 25 October 1786). It was published in Paris by Le Duc on 1786 and was later re-edited and published by Alexandre Choron in 1824.

Azopardi's purpose was to present the beginner student with a *Gradus ad Parnassum* - a step by step composition manual presented in a practical and clear manner. Evidently, the success of the first *Il Musico Prattico* encouraged Azopardi to write an expanded version in which he included not only the traditional approach of harmonising note patterns (character-

istic of the thorough bass system) but also the new concept and principle of chord inversion (*rivolti*). The *Il Pratico* (II) is in four books (*quattro libri*) and it concludes with two discourses (*dissertazioni*).

Azopardi died on 6 February 1809 after having served at the Cathedral under three bishops, namely : Gwann Carmine Pellerano (1770-780) who was instrumental in securing the position at the Cathedral for him; Vincenzo Labini (1780-1807) who greatly admired and protected Azopardi and Ferdinando Mattei (1807-1820) who respected Azopardi so much as to honour him by a visit a few days before he died. According to Pullicino (1876 : 51), the Cathedral Chapter, in gratitude for his great services, ordered that the occasion be honoured with grandeur :

*He was entombed in the Cathedral Church (Mdina) where he received solemn obsequies. He was lamented not only by the Cathedral Chapter, whom he had served for almost 40 years, but by all the people of Malta where he was extremely respected as a great Maestro, the like of whom the island had never seen before.*

Rolandi (1932 : 57) states that Azopardi died in Malta on 6 February 1809 and that his tomb, although no longer distinguishable, is located at St John's. The death certificate, however, contains the following specific information :

*Mr Franciscus Azopardi Maestro di Cappella of the Holy Catholic Church, son of Master Salvatoris from the suburb of Notabile, aged 62, died at his home in communion with the Holy Mother Church, and whose body is buried in the above-mentioned Cathedral Church. Reverend Father Andrea Tanti heard his confession, and Reverend Don Wincelous Debono Archpriest gave him Holy Communion and Extreme Unction.*<sup>15</sup>

Early in the year 1870, the members of the Cathedral Chapter erected a marble memorial tablet among those of the Archbishops and Canons as a memorial to Francesco Azopardi, Maestro di Cappella. Pullicino (1876 : 1) notes that the Cathedral Chapter decreed this first privilege to Azopardi in recognition of his own "*Singular musical ability and for the extraordinary services rendered by him to the church of Malta.*"

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<sup>15</sup> LD V: folio 85

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- CEM-AO** Cathidralis Episcopalis Melitensis - Acta Originalia Ms. 333 (Mdina : Cathedral Archives. Dec. 16, 1773).
- LB** Liber Baptizatorum, (Mdina : Cathedral Archives, May 5, 1748).
- LD** Liber Defunctorum (Mdina : Cathedral Archives, 6 February 1809).
- LDC** Liber Deliberationum Capitolarium (Mdina : Cathedral Archives, 8 December 1783).
- MC** Minutae Capitolarium (Mdina : Cathedral Archives, 23 April 1804).
- RP** Registrum Personarum (Mdina : Cathedral Archives, April 12, 1774).

# IN SEARCH OF A PERSONAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY : THE ENGLISH POEMS OF VICTOR FENECH

ARNOLD CASSOLA

***Abstract** - This article examines the English poems that the Maltese contemporary writer Victor Fenech (1935-) published during the 1970s. Fenech considers the Maltese language to be quite limited since it keeps the Maltese people "locked out of the mainstream of international literature". English thus becomes the international medium that has the power to liberate the author from the restrictions imposed upon him by the national Maltese language. This article highlights the fact that Fenech feels a deep sense of sorrow at the way human beings act. The writer therefore decides to distance himself in solitude from a valueless society. Solitude, however, does not necessarily coincide with contemplative life. So much so, that the poet even indulges in 'political' poetry. The key elements that surface in Fenech's poetry seem to be : lack of faith in human beings; lack of faith in politics; even of faith in God. However, the author does find some consolation in his ideal female figure and in the way of life in little centres : happiness, if this is ever found, lies far away from the hustle and bustle of the big metropolis. The author of this article reaches the conclusion that Fenech's poetry should not be seen exclusively as a transcription of the poet's feelings : it is also, and more especially so, the faithful chronicle of the epic story of a people who are always "licking wounds sustained for others" and who continuously search for a proper fixed identity.*

## Introduction

The Maltese archipelago is situated in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea and has a population of around 380,000 inhabitants who speak Maltese, a language that is basically Semitic with a strong Italo-Romance element and a sprinkling of Anglo-Saxon. Despite the limited size of the archipelago (the size of Malta is 246 sq. km; that of Gozo 67 sq. km; that of Comino 2.6 sq. km), Maltese literature has been written throughout the ages in at least six languages : Arabic, Latin, Sicilian, Tuscan, Maltese and English.

## Literature in Malta

The first known Maltese writers of the 'modern period', that is after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, are 'Abd Allah 'ibn 'as Samantî 'al Mâlitî, 'Utmân 'ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmân, nicknamed 'Ibn as-Sûsî and 'Abû 'al-Qâsim 'ibn Râmadân 'al Mâlitî. The Sicilian historian Michele Amari, who reproduced their poetry in the Italian translation, classifies these Maltese poets in the same category as their Sicilian contemporaries, since they were all active in the Court of Roger II (around 1150 A.D.) in Palermo and they all wrote their verses in Arabic (Cassola 1991 : 57-59). In 1973, Michele Papa came up with another suggestion that the Maltese 'Utmân was the real author of the first part of a love letter, which Amari had considered to be the work of others (Wettinger-Fsadni 1983 : 38).

When the Normans put an end to the Arab conquest of Malta in 1091 AD they re-introduced Latin as the language of the administration. Later on, Sicilian was to become the second language of administration. These administrative decisions were to have an effect on the Maltese literary circles of the time. It is a known fact that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Maltese notary public Giacomo Bondin used to write epigrams in Latin (Wettinger-Fsadni 1968 : 28). Moreover, in 1565 Luca da Armenia, another Maltese writer, dedicated his *O Melita Infelix* to the important military event of that year (Cassar 1981). These works are evident proof of a flourishing literary activity in Latin amongst cultured people of the time.

As regards the use of Sicilian as a literary language, not many examples have survived to our day. However, it is presumed that the *Vita di San Cono*, a lost work written in 1371 by Giovanni Aragona, considered by some to be Maltese, by others Sicilian and by others of unknown homeland (Cassola 1991 : 59), must have been written in Sicilian. Later on, one comes across *Parenti certu sî di tali pasta*, a sonnet written entirely in Sicilian and included in Marcello Attardo de Vagnoli's unpublished *Canzoniere* (Cassola 1991 : 62-65; Attardo de Vagnoli 1994).

However, the real literary language of Malta in early times up to quite recently was Tuscan Italian. When the Knights of St John of Jerusalem took possession of Malta in 1530 they adopted the Tuscan variant of Italian as the language of administration, and this decision is reflected on the literary language, since Italian became the language of any literary genre : from poetry to historiography, from pastoral poetry to travel memoirs,

from the picaresque novel to the theatre. This state of affairs was to last until, more or less, the early twentieth century.

Against the background of this literary-linguistic panorama of the origins, the Maltese language only made an appearance a couple of times. The first document written in Maltese, P. Caxaro's *Cantilena*, is actually a twenty-line poem. It goes back to the last decades of the fifteenth century, even though the copy that has come down to us is an early sixteenth century one. Apart from its undoubted historical and linguistic value, the reference to the Maltese language (*quam lingua melitea hic subicio*) confirms that the Maltese people of the period were already conscious of the autonomy of their own linguistic medium, which deserved the appellation of *lingua*. This notwithstanding, one had to wait for about two hundred years for the second literary text in the Maltese language, G. F. Bonamico's *Sonetto*.

As for literature written in the English language, the foundations were laid last century, after Malta became part of the British Empire (1800). Basically, during the early decades of the 19th century literary production in English was tied to journalistic activity. In this context, the English missionary James Richardson (1806-1851) is to be considered an important precursor since, between 1838 and 1841, he founded various newspapers, amongst which *Harlequin*, *The Malta Penny Magazine* and *The Clown* (Cassola 1992 : 151-152). During the early decades of the twentieth century, English became an official language of Malta and consequently the number of Maltese writing in English increased. Maltese became the national and official language when Malta became independent in 1964.

### The English works of Victor Fenech

Victor Fenech, who was born in Malta in 1935, during the sixties was one of the younger poets in open conflict with the traditional poets who were still taken up by the ideals of religion and motherland in their Maltese verse. These themes were considered to be *depassé* in post-Independence Malta by the young generation of poets, and thus they tried to liven up the stagnant cultural scene on the island with new ideas. Victor Fenech in particular tried to experiment with new forms of expression. This frantic search for a new means of poetic expression led to his coming up with what he terms *poeproza* in his 1979 collection of Maltese poems, *F'Altamira* (Fenech 1979). As one can gather from the author's words in

the introduction to the book (Fenech 1979 : 5), his concept of *poeproža* has been influenced by his English readings.

His mastery of the English language not only provides Fenech with unlimited access to all that is written in the Anglo-American world but also gives him the possibility to violate the limit that is imposed upon him by the restrictions of the Maltese linguistic-literary code. Thus, he is able to let himself communicate on an international scale by writing in English. In fact, though Fenech does write in Maltese, he acknowledges the fact that there are, relatively speaking, few speakers of Maltese and that his linguistic barrier can only be overcome through the use of an international language :

*I am not exactly a lover of the language (Maltese). I accept it because it is there and it is our language and there is nothing I can do about it (I think I am realistic here), but the way I see it is that national pride and national identity apart, the Maltese language only keeps us locked out of the mainstream of international literature (Fenech 1976 : 6).*

Ironically, the Maltese language causes identity problems to the Maltese people. Fortunately, for Fenech, English is the international language that has the power to liberate the author from the restrictions imposed upon him by the Maltese language.

Fenech's collection of poems, *London Pictures and Other Poems* which was published in 1976 is actually the revelation and unfolding of Fenech's 'English' soul. The poems in this volume were written in 1967, during the year that Fenech spent in London for study purposes. What strikes the reader in these poems is the intensity with which he presents the outside world. The London of the sixties was the *swinging London* of the Beatles and other pop groups but, with its student, pacifist and hippie movements, it was also a busy hive of cultural and political activity, and a prelude to what was to be the 1968 season of world protest. Fenech's poems participate fully in the fervent activity, which was so characteristic of London during that period.

The stylistic technique which Fenech adopts in order to reproduce in writing the bubbling activity of the English metropolis is the intermingling of descriptive impressionistic passages together with direct speech, thus reproducing the daily language of myriads of people who come from completely different social, cultural and racial backgrounds. This heterogeneity of linguistic registers perceived *en passant* livens up the page,



which thus reflects in all its minute details the multifarious activities of the English capital city.

Religious terminology and imagery certainly could not be lacking in the works of an author like Fenech, who was brought up in an environment, such as the Maltese one, which is strongly conditioned by the presence of the Catholic Church. In contemporary Maltese poetry, many authors contest the multi-secular hegemony of the Roman Church, but in doing so they continue to make use of terminology and imagery pertaining to the Catholic liturgy, even though their intentions are irreverent. Basically, the end result is a type of inverted liturgy (Cassola and Mariano 1985). Fenech's Maltese poetry fully subscribes to this rule. Expressions like *Fis-saltna tas-smewwiet* ['In the Kingdom of Heaven'], *Ave Maria* and *Sursum Corda, Ejjew ejjew o Angli* ['Come, come, O you angels'] and imagery such as *Xwejjah qassis* ['An old priest'], *gismu jibbandal qanpiena* ['his body see-sawing like a bell'], *griehi r-Redentur sidru spulpjat* ['the wounds of the Redeemer with skinny chest'] are to be found throughout his Maltese works. On the other hand, in his English poems there is hardly any sign of the various allegorical, symbolic and even ironic references that the 'religious' reading of the Maltese texts might lead to. The international audience Fenech is addressing by means of his English poetry just could not understand certain references which would be easily accessible to a more restricted Maltese audience. Thus, in the English texts the 'religious' register does not have the same pre-eminence as in the Maltese poems : it just becomes a faithful means of registering what is being said around, but it remains on the same footing as all the other linguistic phenomena captured by the author in his careful observation of the world around him.

*London Picture n. 5* is a perfect example of the mixture of languages that appear in Fenech's poetry. The poem describes a typical London afternoon :

Saturday afternoon at Highbury.  
Want a ticket sir?  
The day of the tartan at Wembley  
The day of the touts.

The ritual of after-match queues :  
Game chatter. Cockney chuckle.  
Roasted peanuts tanner a bag.  
Salvation marchers — 'Repent,  
Brethren, the end of the world...'

The end of the world

Is a long way from London (Fenech 1976).

In the short space of eleven lines there are at least four different linguistic registers. The main scene is taken up by two football stadia : Highbury Stadium, the home ground of Arsenal, a London football club of noble traditions and Wembley Stadium, where the English national team plays its home matches. What stands out then is a mundane environment where two teams fight it out in sporting combat for a slice of glory, that is easily translated into money and material gain. However, the two social *milieux* are quite different from one another. Highbury is a middle class area in London, even though the Arsenal fans generally belong to the working class. The undescribed and undefined tout selling tickets outside the stadium adapts his way of speaking to that of the inhabitants of Highbury, and thus comes up with a well mannered "*Want a ticket sir?*" At Wembley stadium, things work out differently. Here, it is the Scottish National team ("*tartan*") that is in action and therefore the coarse Highland dialect is to be heard all over the place. In such a sociolinguistic context, the 'touts' are called by what they really are, with all the negative connotations that such a term implies.

The after-match atmosphere is the same in any part of the world. The fans talk about the missed chance with an open goal, the penalty that was not awarded, the unfair referee. It is a "*ritual*" of "*game chatter*" that always repeats itself. However, in London these after-match discussions must be held in the local dialect. Therefore, in this poem the "*game chatter*" is actually equated - even in a structural way - to "*Cockney chuckle*", the famous dialect most East End Londoners speak.

This mixture of different linguistic registers (middle class; Scottish; Cockney) is brusquely interrupted by a sombre religious warning, verging on the apocalyptic : "*Repent, / Brethren, the end of the world ...*". Fenech places these words in the mouths of Salvation Army activists, who are the total antithesis of the football fans. It is the voice of one's conscience that is trying to put back on the right road those common mortals who have been led astray by the attractions of frivolous and materialistic goods. On a linguistic level, it is the high and archaic register that is trying to resist the dialects and slang that are normally in use in everyday life; it is the 'high' tone that is trying to suffocate the 'humble' one. But Fenech's conclusion ("*The end of the world is a long way from London*") accepts the state of things as they are. The world has

changed completely and the traditional picture of London is no more : the old white-collar workers of the City, wearing a bowler hat and an umbrella, have been replaced by T-shirt clad youngsters, with long hair and unshaven beard. Consequently, the family, moral and other traditional values have been superseded by the exigency of immediate wealth. The human kind does no longer live for a future transcendent world; the only real value is the concrete present material wealth. Basically, this is the era of *everything and quickly!* Therefore, this general transformation, which the city of London fully embodies, is represented by Fenech on a linguistic level through the total absorption of the 'high' language by the 'humble' one.

### **The solitary poet as opposed to a valueless society**

The fact that Fenech recognizes things for what they actually are does not necessarily imply his acceptance of the new realities of life. On the contrary, in his poetry one can detect a deep sense of sorrow for the way man is going against nature. This progressive sense of degradation can be perceived by the poet one Sunday afternoon at Hyde Park. The idea of humanity transforming itself into an animal deprived of any rational faculties is rendered by the lines "*This forest of humanity/ Now trampling the park*", where the nexus between humanity and the wild forest - where the most ferocious beasts live - is further strengthened by the use of the verb "trampling", which is normally associated with imagery of ferocious beasts or enraged elephants, but is here dependent on the subject *humanity*. The syllogism could not be any clearer : if man is associated with the forest, and the forest is the usual dwelling place of wild beasts, therefore humanity is equivalent to wild beasts!

The transformation of man into a being deprived of any sense of values happens in the famous *Speakers' Corner*. For Fenech the speakers' language is totally revealing of the degeneration in which humanity finds itself. And all varieties of language are perceived by the author as an indication of humanity's profound state of abjection; from the leftist jargon which the anti-capitalist makes use of ("*Down, I say/ With all capitalist pigs*") to the nonsensical blabber of the religious fanatic ("*... but madam I am God!*"), where the italicization of *am* renders perfectly the idea of the hysterical tone, verging on madness, with which this mad truth is asserted. Therefore, the author is left with no other choice but to escape from the masses that are destroying the world and to search for inner peace in the

refuge of a solitary place : "Alone/ Seeking the seclusion of the/ Deckchairs/  
By the sleepy Serpentine".

For Fenech, however, solitude does not always coincide with contemplatory life. *No sad songs for Martine* (Fenech 1976 : 11-12) raises the bitter question of how people who in the public eye might seem to be leading a glamorous life, can actually be really lonely. Martine Carol, a well known actress in the fifties and sixties, having been "*The first undressed lady of France*" (here the author is resorting to the use of *journal-ese*), was found dead at home, following a heart attack. The obsessive insistence of the writer on the dragging velar vowels in the sentence "*Alone, alone, all, all alone,/ alone on a bathroom floor*" verges on the gloomy and the funereal. Martine's last solitary moments stand out even further when the last mentioned sentence is contrasted with the picture of the actress's most resplendent moments, when she was the object of desire of all men : "*multitudinous/ the eyes of hedonistic men*". The contrast between glory and oblivion is further highlighted by the phonic contrast between palatal and velar vowels. All this without mentioning the picture full of anguish that comes up in the final three verses : "*Alone, all, all alone,/ alone in an open tomb/ under the sun of Cannes*". Martine is now "*alone*", but her tomb is "*open*", ready to welcome "*all*", even those film stars and members of the *jet set* who normally frequented Cannes during the sixties, when it was considered the uncontested European capital of luxury and lust.

The theme of the progressive degradation of humanity is present in Fenech's poetry right from his initial Maltese verses. In *Kwadru mis-seklu ghoxrin* [*Picture of the Twentieth Century*] the author's bitter and sarcastic conclusion seems to be shouting out a loud warning to the reader : our much vaunted century of progress is actually a century that only leads to sorrow and death :

Is-Seklu Ghoxrin :  
u mad-dsatax ta' qablu hhiberija xejn,  
ghax dawn sekli ta' dlam  
u hu mkabbar ghax progressiv.

Is-Seklu  
Ghoxrin.  
Is-Seklu  
tal-

Progress! (Camilleri et al. 1966 : 30)

[The Twentieth Century :  
and with the previous nineteen no friendship,  
cause these are the centuries of darkness  
while the former is proud of its progressiveness.

The Twentieth  
Century.  
The Century  
of  
Progress!]

The consequent desire of secluding oneself from the rest of the world to question oneself and to question the *raison d'être* behind the workings of life is an exigency which finds confirmation in the following Maltese verses in *Tfittixa* [*The Search*], which was written more or less at the same time as *London Pictures* :

GHAŻIŻA, illejla tistenninix.  
il-lejla nixtieqni wahdi.  
Irrid interraq triq it-tfittixa.  
Irrid insib mill-gdid il-jien.....  
il-jien jien,  
mhux il-jien illi għagnuni (Fenech 1979 : 9).

[DEAR, this evening don't wait for me.  
this evening I want to be alone.  
I want to walk through the road of research.  
I want to discover my "I" anew...  
the "I" me,  
not the "I" they've made out of me]

The author's thirst for knowledge seems however destined to be always frustrated. Human beings can try as much as they can but they will never be able to understand the rules that govern this world. This is the gist of *Primum Movus* :

Hardly put my finger  
on the genesis & existence  
when i must move again  
to pastures new  
beyond my comprehension.

Since my brain's too small  
for a plan so vast

i leave the answers to  
someone higher up  
who should understand  
having set the ball rolling.

Half the world doesn't know  
half the world knows by different  
names - enough that there is  
someone higher up  
who sees  
who knows.

I am the Lord thy God...

illusion or reality  
it is best to bow our heads (Poet 1968 : 24).

Fenech's and the rest of humanity's impotence is rendered graphically through his transcription of the personal pronoun *I* in small letters, *i*. When man starts putting existentialist questions, God -who here seems to be taking humanity for a ride - answers back by quashing this 'i' inexorably. Fenech's auto-nihilistic technique is very reminiscent of the 'guidogozzano' utilized by the most famous representative of the *movimento crepuscolare* in Italy. But while in self effacing himself Gozzano actually really intended to ridicule Gabriele D'Annunzio, a great intellectual but still a human being, Fenech's intention borders on the sacrilegious since the target of his scorn is actually God himself! His conclusion, "*it is best to bow our heads*" is not intended as an act of humble resignation to the Lord's will! On the contrary, it is a polemic dig at the being "*higher up / who should understand*" but, as Fenech seems to imply through the use of the conditional "should", does not seem to know exactly what is happening!

The author's anxiety at being able to grasp the absolute truth does not distract him from the fact that he is an inhabitant of this world. If, on the one hand, his gaze is looking upwards, on the other, his feet are firmly fixed to the ground. He is really most attentive to all the 'political' matters going on around him. Undoubtedly, the London period contributed strongly to widen the hitherto restricted vision of the islander Fenech. Living in London brought about the opening of new horizons for the author; London actually constituted for him a window onto a new world.

## Fenech's 'political' poetry

The poem *After the Crisis*, that deals with the six-day war between Israel and Egypt, is undoubtedly the most 'political' poem of the volume. The first stanza is full of ironic imagery, which certainly reflects the author's lack of respect for the political leaders of the two countries. Moshe Dayan, who was considered by his countrymen as a veritable hero, is here treated like a vulgar pirate when he is portrayed "*in Long John Silver patch*". On the other hand, Gamal Abdel Nasser does not come out any better : for his countrymen he is "*the Egyptian God*" but for Fenech he is just another adventurer. The wars with Israel would be for him just a *divertissement*, a "*poker game*" based on chance and on coincidences, where the only people who go through risks are the poor inhabitants of the two countries.

This first stanza, which echoes Fenech's mistrust in the two leaders, is counter-balanced by a second stanza in which Fenech invokes the patriarch Abraham's intervention so that the rift between the two fraternal peoples be healed :

Come father Abraham come  
gather your Isaacs and Ishmaels  
depoison their fangs and tie  
them in brotherly knots.

Come father Abraham come  
come father Abraham come

come come father Abraham come ... (Fenech 1976 : 16).

On reading the author's appeal, an appeal that is rendered even more passionate by the use of the anafora in the last three verses, the reader is convinced of Fenech's faith in divine power, here represented by Abraham. Instead, the last verse "*Or are you leaving it to U Thant?*", isolated as it is from the rest of the poetry, immediately cancels the previous illusion. This derisive verse which is addressed to Abraham sounds like a real act of barefaced challenge to God's representative. Fenech does not have any faith in his fellow human beings, but he is also wary of divine intervention. His seems to be an act of total mistrust in everything and everybody, since humankind really seems to be at the mercy of an uncontrollable destiny.

Fenech's total mistrust in the 'political' actions of mankind is further reinforced in *Trafalgar Square*. The students who are demonstrating in

favour of world peace assemble under Nelson's statue, but Fenech seems to be completely uninterested in the motivations that spur on these youngsters to protest against the establishment. This lack of interest manifests itself in the apparently casual and careless way in which description and impressions are accosted to each other and given the same value in the picture of the event as portrayed by the author :

|                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| girls looking like boys              | (1)                    |
| boys looking like girls              | (2)                    |
| Christ figures in Wellington coats   | (3)                    |
| Use Atom for Peace                   | (4)                    |
| Make Love Not War                    | (5)                    |
| trite slogans for a hackneyed march  | (6)                    |
| but dreadfully true                  | (7)                    |
| (besides, what else is there to do?) | (8) (Fenech 1976 : 12) |

Fenech's list, which at first sight might give the impression of being similar to a disorderly housewife's shopping list -and this is the effect desired by the author in order to reinforce his lack of interest in the event-, is actually drawn up according to precise criteria :

|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| (1) + (2) + (3) | = description         |
| (4) + (5)       | = stereotyped slogans |
| (6)             | = author's judgement  |
| (7)             | = an acknowledgement  |
| (8)             | = conclusion          |

This list is therefore a logical process of extreme rationality which, whilst departing from concrete elements (people, and what they say), comes to a conclusion totally built on indifference ("*besides, what else is there to do?*") through the evaluation of the facts on the author's part. His scepticism is reinforced by the behaviour of the demonstrators. Fenech seems to imply that in becoming more frequent ("*tenth of its kind*") these demonstrations in favour of peace are actually emptying themselves of all significance. So much so, that the few demonstrators who take part in the protest ("*thin one this time*") do so because it is an opportunity to fight boredom ("*after all, there's nothing else to do*").

That the same young demonstrators do not believe any longer in their stereotyped slogans in favour of peace is revealed in the expression that sums up the prototype of the pacifist demonstrator, "*Christ figures in Wellington coats*" : Christ (the most sublime example of peace) who wears a



coat named after Wellington (the great warrior who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo) is a contradiction in terms that does not need any further comment! A youngster "with 'out' ideas" who lives out of his times and who invokes "man's need of God" actually realises this contradiction. But another youngster, the youngster of today who is so presumptuous as to feel the only arbiter of his own destiny, openly dismisses his fellow idealist, by exclaiming : "*God? This is the Twentieth Century, man!*"

Lack of faith in man; lack of faith in politics; lack of faith in God : these seem to be the key elements in Fenech's poetry. One might wonder why Fenech is so sceptical about everything. The answer is to be found in the author's uneasiness. Fenech does not have any faith in anything because in reality he does not even have any faith in himself. He would like to be able to grasp the ultimate truth, but he does not manage to do so. This contrast between wanting to do and being incapable of doing gives birth to his poetry, which is in fact the poetry of contrasts. London fascinates the poet because it reflects his contradictory personality :

Open Browning's heart - Italy.  
Open mine - London.

For all it is  
I love (hate)  
This massive masculine city.  
London : my echo.  
My rainbow and my fog (Fenech 1976 : 10).

If Fenech could understand everything about London, if he could master in their entirety the thousand secrets of the avenues and little streets of this metropolis, then he would no longer be enthralled by its fatal attraction. The words "love" and "rainbow" would disappear from his oxymorous hymn of love and hate, which would thus be reduced to a lament of hate. Yet this is not so. In a nearly masochistic way, Fenech needs to be frustrated in his yearning to possess the city in its entirety. Knowing everything about it would be equivalent to killing every stimulus towards further knowledge. This crave for the unobtainable, coupled with a pinch of narcissism on the author's part, who enjoys seeing his contradictory self reflected in the city, renders London the forbidden fruit he is so much attracted to.

## Fenech's ideal female figure

The attraction Fenech feels for London is not very dissimilar to the attraction he feels for his ideal female figure. In fact, the women desired by the poet are women whom he can never have! *On the Escalator* describes the author's furtive meeting with the woman of his dreams in the London underground station :

She rises from the sea, dripping  
pearls of water from her chocolate body.  
Excalibur in suppleness would have lost  
the duel, and Helios' steeds succumb  
in sleekness to her Jaguar line.  
Is this the shape that launched  
a thousand sighs  
in Acapulco and Nassau? (Fenech 1976 : 12).

This mortal being made of flesh and bones is transformed into a celestial divinity thanks to the precious imagery evoked by the author, imagery that recalls the mythology, the culture and the customs of the past : amongst other things, Fenech refers the reader to Botticelli, comparing his portrait of the nascent Venus to this woman who is also rising gradually ... as the escalator approaches; to the Greek mythological world (the steeds of Helios, the god of the sun, are poor things compared to the splendour which emanates from Fenech's nymph); to the legends of the Breton cycle (Excalibur, King Arthur's enchanted sword, envies the flexibility of the woman's perfect body) as well as to the trendiest places frequented by the jet set (Acapulco, Bahamas).

The woman seen for just a fleeting moment in the underground becomes the picture of personified perfection in the eyes of the poet. But this is the result of his not being able to have her. What will bring Fenech back to drab reality is the voice of the ticket collector in the underground, shouting "*Ticket please...*" in the most non poetic of ways. At this stage, the "*ideal*" woman disappears in the rain as quickly as she had appeared originally. This quick exit on her part is an essential condition if she is to remain in the poet's eyes not only as a nymph, but also as a "*framed Nelbarden nymph*", a superior being who is to be framed, admired and adored as a divinity.

Distance, which implies the impossibility of being able to frequent a person regularly, renders this person even more mythical and desirable to

the far away poet. Basically, therefore, although he has the possibility to establish contacts with other women who are spatially much easier to frequent, his ideal loved one is to be found far away in Malta. Irene, this is her name, is the protagonist of a whole poem, where the author sings her praises :

*Triptych for Irene*

Graceful as a fawn,  
As free and as elusive -  
My loved one my peace!

Rose tears in her eyes;  
Why do I hesitate so? -  
The plane is waiting.

I miss not the isle,  
Only its vernal daughter -  
Does she wait for me? (Fenech 1977).

The title itself is already emblematic of the high degree of sacredness to which the poet has elevated his beloved one. In fact, the triptych imagery cannot but bring to mind the figurative arts of the Middle Ages, which privileged this artistic means to convey the prevalently religious themes of the paintings of the period. Irene is Fenech's "*loved one*" because she is a "*free and elusive*" creature. Had she been easy to 'capture', then she would not have provoked in the author such strong desire. Fenech does not miss Malta; the only thing that he misses of the island is this "*vernal daughter*", offspring of Spring, the season which marks the rekindling of all human kind's hope. And, in fact, Irene symbolizes hope and faith in life : she is the counterpart of the poet's lack of faith in life, and is his real and only hope for the future.

The fact that Irene is considered to be the only safe harbour in Fenech's London poetry can be confirmed in *Home Thoughts from Abroad* (Fenech 1976 : 13). It is Spring but in London Spring does not seem to exist. If anything, it is more like Autumn : the "*skeletons of trees*" and the "*guillotined/leaves on rainwashed pavements*" can only bring to mind scenes of sadness and death. The author, therefore, depicts the desolation of London springtime as the antonym of that brightness that only the Mediterranean climate can produce : "*Golden sand*", "*rose red sun*", "*chocolate body*" is the imagery that the poet, who is far away from his island, can

recall. But these colours are so warm and full of life because on the "golden sand" of the beach, under a "rose red sun" which warms up the hearts, there lies the "chocolate body" of his beloved one. And the poet has "mind serene" because he is "touching fingers with Irene". Therefore, the memory of springtime in Malta is pleasant because of the presence of Irene. She is a sort of Petrarchan Laura of the twentieth century, who bestows upon the surrounding nature her beauty and her warmth. And, in the meantime, she gives her far away lover a moment of serenity, a fleeting moment of faith which brightens up his inner world, which is full of spectres, doubts and shadows.

### Fenech's English poems with a Maltese setting

As yet, we have only had a look at Fenech's English poems, i.e. the poems written in England. However, since it is a well-known fact that islanders are much attached to their homeland, it is only natural that Fenech's literary production should include poems that deal with the customs, habits and bad habits of his country. If, on the one hand, these Maltese poems are characterized by the attention they devote to the local colour, on the other they reconfirm that state of mind that lies at the basis of Fenech's English lyrics.

At the outset of this paper, a distinction was made between the poet's use of religious terminology and imagery in his poems written in Maltese and those of his English *London Pictures*. In this respect, his English poems written in Malta are to be considered totally distinct from the *London Pictures* and more on the same wavelength as the poems written in Maltese. In fact, in order to remain faithful to the local colour, his Maltese English poems *had* to include references to the language and the rites of the Catholic liturgy, which are still today an integral part of Maltese life.

The first stanza of *Fertility Goddess* describes the most important day of the year for each Maltese village. It is the day of the feast of the patron saint or, to put it in Giacomo Leopardi's words, "*la sera del dì di festa*" :

Nightsky and balls of colour  
saints and fireworks  
band marches nougat sellers  
and people people people  
people people people -  
it is the village festa (Massa 1978 : 32).

All the imagery utilized by Fenech evokes religious feasts, but on examining this imagery closer, one realizes that there is only one real reference to the sacred : "*saints*". The rest of the imagery recalls sounds ("*band marches*"), colours ("*fireworks*") and tastes ("*nougat sellers*") that are not normally associated with sacred and solemn ceremonies! By indifferently placing next to each other the sacred ("*saints*") and the profane, the poet wants to prove that the so called religious feast is nothing else but an excuse to trigger off a spectacular choreography of lights and colours that serve to attract the attention of thousands of people ("*people people people*", etc.) who are more intent on enjoying worldly pleasures rather than nourishing their spirit, as did their patron saint!

This negative attitude towards the catholic religion is further strengthened by the comparison with the scene in the stanza that follows. Here, in the prehistoric temple of Tarxien, the fat lady worshipped in Malta by neolithic man, the "*fertility goddess*", "*sleeps*" in tranquillity beneath the trilithon. The pagan goddess isolates herself from all worldly feasts and surrounds herself by silence, that is the symbol of spiritual peace. Ironically, Fenech seems to suggest that the sacredness one should experience in Catholicism is in fact only experienced by a pagan goddess.

This goddess, who has "*known strange flags over Malta, / blood and toil, plague and uprising*", has been witness to all the painful events of the past that have hit the Maltese islands. And she was not just an uninterested onlooker. In fact, in the verse "*She's known strange flags over Malta*", the adjective "*strange*", apart from indicating an undisputed historical fact, namely the presence of various colonisers on the island over the centuries, is also a clear sign of the goddess's point of view : for the pagan goddess of fertility there is something strange in the continuous alternation of foreign colonisers in what was, in her times, an oasis of peace. Such continuous coming and going, which was the harbinger of suffering and destruction for the Maltese people, has worried her for many centuries. On the contrary, the representatives of the Catholic church have never really bothered about the many problems which the Maltese people have had to face over the ages. The important thing was for the Church to consolidate its hegemony, even by taking advantage of and manipulating the festa in a certain direction in order to reach its objective — "*and always there was the festa*".

Today, the fertility goddess is the only one who is not bothered by material and temporal well being, symbolized by the imagery of "*fireworks*", "*band marches*" and "*nougat sellers*". She is "*oblivious of the*

*petards*" because she is not interested in being noisy just to attract the attention of others. Despite being a pagan goddess, she is the only one to have realised that gods and their representatives on earth should only be absorbed in the silence of ascetic meditation, in order to fulfil their role of spiritual guides. Thus, she "*sleeps unperturbed/ defying time and the elements*".

This diachronic antithesis between Christian and pagan, which echoes at local level the Dantesque contrast between the corruption of the Christian clergy, placed in hell, and the wisdom of the pagans, placed in limbo, is re-affirmed by the author at synchronic level in *Marsaxlokk*. Again, the author sympathises with the untainted pagans. This time, however, the author contrasts the usual rites of a fossilized liturgy with the practical and productive work of the old fisherman, Grezz.

In Marsaxlokk, a village on the southeastern coast of Malta, the main source of income is fishing. Every year in August, the *lampuki* fishing season is declared open by the parish priest, who blesses the fishermen's boats. This is a tradition that has been going on for many years and is anxiously awaited by all the inhabitants of the place. In fact, it is an event that is very similar to the feast of the patron saint. Just like the feast day, even this ceremony has lost any real religious meaning and has become more of a folkloristic tradition. "*despite the priest's blessing/ it's been a long lean summer*"; which means that the priest's blessing has not served any purpose! The disastrous economic consequences for the inhabitants of the village are clearly spelt out by the contrast in the second stanza between the optimism at the departure and the moral and physical depression when the fishermen return with no catch at all :

That bright August morning  
the *dghajsas* left in a procession  
of colour and hope.  
Most evenings they crept back  
on tired bellies upon a spiteful sea (Massa 1978 : 27).

What renders this contrast even stronger is the lexical choice on the part of the author : an ordered sequence adj./ noun/ noun/ noun (bright/ possession/ colour/ hope) in the first three lines to denote self confidence and strong hope in a future catch; a disorderly mixture made up of verb/ adj./ noun/ adj. (*crept/ tired/ bellies/ spiteful*) in the last two lines to emphasise the picture of total defeat which the fishermen had to suffer. This defeat further brings out the ironic connotation of the initial pompous im-

agery when the author had made use of an obvious reference to the Catholic liturgy ("*procession*").

On such a negative background, with religion that does no longer offer any guarantee against the problems of life, the old Grezz sticks out. He becomes the emblem of hope and the willingness to live life. Despite the poor catch; "*old Grezz grins just the same*"; despite everything, "*there's always the next season*". The good old man, of the same mould as Verga's Padron 'Ntoni, has lived on the sea and thus knows its good points and its defects as well as its tough laws. He has learnt that one must never defy nature, but accept its decisions meekly. The old man's strength lies exactly in this attitude that seems to imply submission to a predetermined destiny. In reality, the old fisherman has understood that one must not aim for objectives that are not within his reach : one must never go against what has already been decided! By not wasting his time in mythical fights against windmills, he has the time to enjoy the little things of life, like "*mend the nets*" and "*repaint the dgħajsa*". The true essence of life seems to have its roots in the simple philosophy of St. Francis of Assisi; namely the acceptance with joy of all the most humble things in life.

### **'Primitive' cultures and 'progressive' technology**

The contrast between the goddess of fertility and the choreography characteristic of the Catholic rite or else between the old fisherman and the stereotyped benediction is nothing else but a cultural localization of the clash between good and bad, that is a clash that invests the whole of humanity and which Fenech associates, on the one hand, with the genuine values of a 'primitive' civilisation and, on the other, with the rapid process of degradation of a 'progressive' technological society. *I Remember* deals with this topic.

The poet simulates a catastrophe that completely destroys the city ("*the city was gone*"). It is not a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, over which man has no control. It is in fact a disaster provoked by man and by his inventions which, when gone berserk, manage to take over from their creator : "*A blown fuse some said in a supermarket/ (or was it the hospital?)*". The choice of place where the fire breaks out is quite meaningful : the supermarket is the symbol of how genuine products of nature are converted into processed food, thus distancing themselves totally from mother earth that produced them; the hos-



pital, on the other hand, instead of a place that restores to life, the way it should be, transforms itself into an infernal place, harbinger of death.

The original city, the Greek *polis*, was a conglomeration of civil and cultured people who lived in a community. Today's city has lost all cultural and civilized connotations and therefore does not deserve to exist any longer. Humanity's greed has led to its auto-destruction. Actually, Fenech seems to imply that what seems to be a catastrophe and a holocaust is in reality a sign of liberation : "*It was a simple accident./ It was the day of deliverance*". This biblical deluge of the modern era has a precise function : that of cleaning up the world of its corruption, while at the same time making humanity understand the real values of life, which are to be found in the little and simple things of every day. Therefore, humanity should return to the countryside, devoting itself to the simplicity of country life and, after a year of tough work and sacrifices, in Spring it should reap its well-earned reward, i.e. the eternal joy one gets from the simple fruits of the earth :

Then one by one the living took up plough  
and sank it into the earth  
into deep earth  
into the earth of their father  
and their father's father  
and their father's father's father  
and the earth slowly yielding  
delivered lilac fruit (Massa 1978 : 29).

It therefore seems that Fenech has understood the secret of happiness. This lies in the simple life of little centres, far away from the hustle and bustle of the big metropolis. Having discovered this secret, the author should have found the solution to his recurrent sense of uneasiness. Yet this is not so. In reality, his conclusion is only a provisional one. This is the characteristic of Fenech's poetry : in his works, a safe haven of certainty is never reached; everything is always discussed anew. And it is only right that things are so since every person needs to be taken up by unresolved problems and incurable contrasts in order to have the necessary stimuli to keep on going. Moreover, frontier people who have a heterogeneous socio-cultural background and very unstable roots, doubly need to question things and ... themselves.

The Maltese people, of whom Fenech is simultaneously a representative and a lucid historian at the same time, are indeed a frontier people.



Therefore, Fenech's poetry should not be seen exclusively as a transcription of the poet's feelings; it is also and more especially so the faithful chronicle of the epic story of a people always "licking wounds sustained for others" and continuously searching for a proper fixed identity.

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# INTERNAL MIGRATION OF THE MALTESE POPULATION : AN APPLICATION OF A MATHEMATICAL MODEL

MAJA MILJANIC BRINKWORTH

*Abstract - This paper is an attempt at statistical modeling, based on the Rogers and Castro migration model. The data used which are derived from the 1995 Census of Population and Housing regarding internal migration provided a basis for analysis of parity of migration, computation of respective gross migraproduction rates as well as compilation of reports on the outcomes of statistical modeling. Seven parameters of the double exponential equation are estimated by means of non-linear regression analysis. The author demonstrates that internal migration needs to be further examined and the research findings need to be applied, since internal migration directly contributes to the processes of: (a) depopulation (the Inner Harbour Region), (b) aging (Gozo and Comino and the Inner Harbour Region) and (c) concentration and population increase (the Northern and the Western Region).*

## Introduction

Not so long ago migration used to be referred to as 'a stepchild' of demography. The reasons are mainly of a historic character. For centuries, it was mortality which mainly influenced population size and its structure. A deficiency in migration data still presents the insurmountable problem in the application of various methodologies, which have gone ahead in comparison to the operational possibilities for data collection. Each of the available sources on migration data carries a complex set of pros and cons regarding the quality of data. The most recent improvements in demographic analysis and practice indicate that a synthetic approach in data utilization is imperative. The same applies for greater use of the unpublished data. Arriaga 1996 : 264) stated : "*Migration has, therefore, become the most difficult variable to predict and the most important variable in population growth within countries*". The fact that internal migration is multidimensional makes subnational population projections a very difficult task (Armitage 1986 : 3).

Yet, migration seems to be less analyzed and implemented in the prac-

tice of demographic studies than the other two population determinants : mortality and fertility. It is known and frequently stated in demographic literature that the smaller the population of certain area is, the more significant is the effect of the migration component on its future size.

The present state of the Maltese demographic research indicates that the internal migration component for projection purposes has not been implemented. The data collected in the 1985 Population Census were futile as regards the application of the cohort component method of population projections. The data suffered from a common problem of defining the age-time-place coordinates needed for any serious analysis of migration. The 1995 Census of Population represents significant improvement in this respect. It was a practical example of data produced following the theoretic postulates and international recommendations in this field.

This paper aims to reveal the demographic features of the internal migrants in the Maltese Islands using the Rogers and Castro mathematical model (Castro and Rogers 1979a; 1979b; 1983a; 1983b; Rogers and Castro 1981a; 1981b; 1984a; 1988). The aim is to produce the age-gender specific internal migration rates for Maltese population by gender, based on migration data on usual place of residence five years prior to Census and one year prior to Census. The final output of this research are the equations based on the Rogers and Castro migration model for both genders and the total population and for migration five years and one year prior to Census 1995. This would provide the necessary input for multiregional projections following the suggested methodology on sub-national projections (Rogers 1985; UN, 1992).

**Table 1: An overview of mobility, Census 1985 and 1995, in percentage**

|                      | 1985*    |                    | 1995 by region | 1995 by locality |
|----------------------|----------|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Households           | Per cent | Population         | Per cent       | Per cent         |
| No move              | 76.92    | Secondary Onwards  | 1.63           | 2.79             |
| Moved once           | 21.36    | Secondary Returned | 1.54           | 1.26             |
| Twice                | 1.27     | Primary            | 79.76          | 82.83            |
| Three times and more | 0.46     | Unknown            | 17.06          | 13.11            |
| Total                | 100.00   | Total              | 100.00         | 100.00           |

Source: Census '85 Vol. I Table 40, p.299;

Census 1995

\*Data refer to movement of households since 1975

\*Data refer to change of usual place of residence one year prior to Census and five years prior to Census

Table 1 gives a comparison between internal migrants by parity of migration in the last two Censuses. It should be noted that full compatibility of two Censuses was not possible owing to different methodologies applied.

It can be observed that secondary onwards migrants (1995 Census data) represent the lowest category in absolute numbers. They are the persons where place of residence was different in all three relevant points in time, namely 26 November 1990, 26 November 1994 and the Census date 26 November 1995. Secondary returned migrants are those migrants who would reside at the same region at any two points in time. Primary migrants are those who made only one change of usual residence as registered by Census questions.

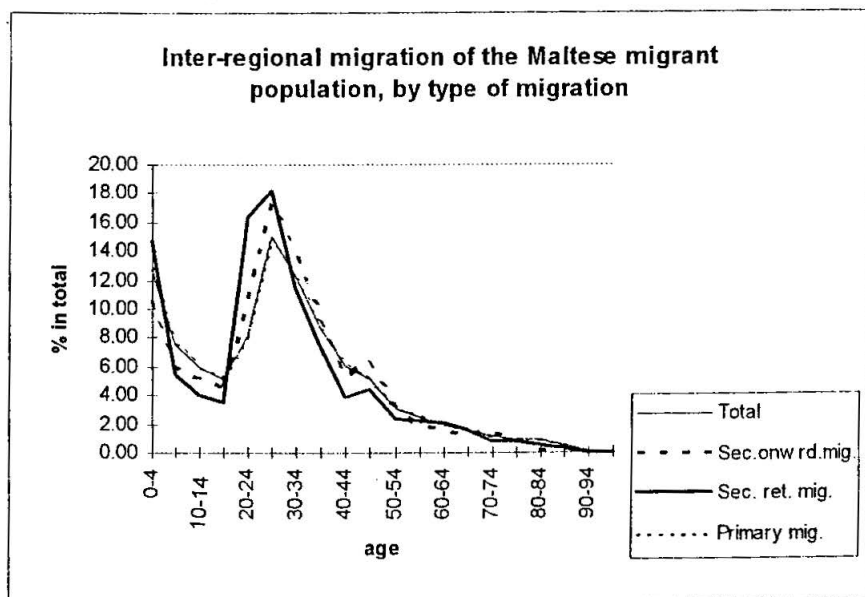


Figure 1.

According to the data collected on the basis of question on place of residence five years prior to Census, the Maltese person makes on average 1.31 inter-regional migration migrations per-lifetime. On the national level, slightly higher values of GMR<sup>1</sup>(obs.) were observed for migration one year prior to Census. On average, the Maltese person made 1.45 inter-regional moves per life-time under the socio-economic and other condi-

<sup>1</sup> GMR(obs.) - observed gross migraproduction rate.

tions influencing migration in 1994. Both GMR(obs.) values are relatively low. For the sake of comparison, the Dutch GMR(obs.) on municipality level was around 4 in the 1970's (Castro and Rogers, 1979a) and about 8 in the 1990's.

**Table 2 : A review of GMR(obs.) out-migration five years prior to Census**

|                      | Total   | Males   | Females |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Maltese Islands      | 1.30806 | 1.16817 | 1.37665 |
| Inner Harbour Region | 2.22774 | 1.93954 | 2.36319 |
| Outer Harbour Region | 1.17373 | 1.10479 | 1.21885 |
| South Eastern Region | 0.78086 | 0.65981 | 1.00508 |
| Western Region       | 1.21210 | 1.23289 | 1.20328 |
| Northern Region      | 0.96956 | 0.91288 | 0.98689 |
| Gozo and Comino      | 0.1548  | 0.12097 | 0.17938 |

**Table 3 : A review of GMR(obs.) out-migration one year prior to Census**

|                      | Total   | Males   | Females |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Maltese Islands      | 1.45171 | 1.47387 | 1.46000 |
| Inner Harbour Region | 2.44667 | 2.20011 | 2.62404 |
| Outer Harbour Region | 1.16391 | 1.20473 | 1.16792 |
| South Eastern Region | 0.99684 | 1.09574 | 1.00172 |
| Western Region       | 1.89085 | 2.38480 | 1.45348 |
| Northern Region      | 1.30724 | 1.40429 | 1.25893 |
| Gozo and Comino      | 0.2697  | 0.2085  | 0.31370 |

On the regional level population of the Inner Harbour region exhibits the highest inter-regional mobility of 2.2 and 2.4 migrations per life-time, five years and one year prior to Census, respectively. Gozitan population is the least mobile – showing less than 0.2 and 0.3 inter-regional migrations per life-time.

### **The Rogers and Castro migration model - A theoretical background**

One of the models which is based on the analogy with vital events analysis is the Rogers and Castro model migration schedules. The Rogers and

Castro model has the characteristics of a planning model (as defined by Moreland 1990) since the outcome of its simulation can be used for population projections purposes in a short to medium term. The question might be asked as to why this particular model has been adopted in the analysis of Maltese migration data. It has been proved that :

*...There is a mathematical formulation that fits all types of observed age-specific gross migration profiles remarkably well. The analytical utility of such mathematical expressions, called model migration schedules, lies in their ability to summarize and codify the fundamental regularity exhibited by age profiles of migration all over the world (Castro 1985 : 1).*

The initial idea of the Rogers and Castro model migration schedules, is based on the previous demographic research on marriage frequencies, carried out by Coale in the early seventies (Coale 1974; Coale and McNeil 1972).

The following standard density function was established for marriage event,

$$f_s(x) = \frac{1.2813}{S} \exp\left\{\frac{-1.145}{S}(x - \bar{x} + 8.05S)\right\} - \exp\left[\frac{-1.896}{S}(x - \bar{x} + 8.05S)\right]$$

This type of standard density function has been used further on, in order to describe migration profiles for the labor force. But in reality, it is not only the labor force, which constitutes migration streams of the population. Two other components must be added, namely pre-labor and post-labor component of migration. Therefore, the basic notion of a complete model should be introduced. The complete model of age-gender migration schedules is decomposed into three parts, namely pre-labor force, labor force and post-labour force (Rogers and Castro, 1981a; Castro and Rogers, 1979a) :

$$\begin{aligned} m(x) = & a_1 \exp(-\alpha_1 x) \\ & + a_2 \exp\{-\alpha_2(x-\mu_2) - \exp[-\lambda_2(x-\mu_2)]\} \\ & + a_3 \exp\{-\alpha_3(x-\mu_3) - \exp[-\lambda_3(x-\mu_3)]\} \\ & + c \end{aligned}$$

$x=1,2,\dots,z$

where  $x$  is age and  $m(x)$  is age-specific migration rate.

The following is the interpretation of the parameters as they appear in each segment of model emigration schedules :

- pre-labour force curve is a single negative exponential function with the rate of descent  $\alpha_1$  and level determined by parameter  $a_1$ ,
- labour force curve is presented by double exponential function describing a unimodal positively skewed curve, with rate of ascent of  $\lambda_2$ , rate of descent  $\alpha_1$ , while the level is defined by the amplitude parameter  $\alpha_2$ ,
- post-labour force which presents the third part of the  $m(x)$  function, which has bell-shape profile, again depicted by double exponential function with rate of ascent  $\lambda_3$ , rate of descent  $\alpha_3$  and level defined by parameter  $a_3$ , and
- constant element  $c$  which is a measure of level and provides the fit (Rogers and Castro 1981a : 4).

If the third part of age-gender migration schedule, namely post-labor force is presented by a monotonically upwards increasing curve instead of a bell shaped one, then the number of parameters falls from eleven to nine.

The application of the model in this research followed several steps :

1. Transitional data on single age-gender groups were used from the 1995 Population Census. These data reveal transition made by a migrant and recorded at the 26 November 1990 or 1994, and at the end of the five or one year interval, namely on the 26 November 1995 (Rees and Willekens in Rogers and Willekens 1986 : 23). It is important to note that total number of migration movements is not recorded here. In fact, total number of migration movements is higher than obtained by this procedure.

2. The annual migration rates were computed as a ratio between the number of migrants in particular age-gender category and average population exposed to risk of migrating at the mid-period. For data on place of residence five years prior to Census this ratio was further divided by five in order to arrive to an average annual age-gender specific migration rate (Arriaga, 1993 : 247).

3. Annual migration rates were standardized against respective observed gross migraproduction rates,  $GMR(obs)$ . The standardization was necessary here, since difference between  $GMR(obs.)$  of lower spatial areal units present a hindrance regarding comparability, particularly regarding vertical relationships between curves (Castro and Rogers 1979a : 25).

4. Standardized rates were plugged into BMDP AR procedure together with the initial values of parameters.

The result of this four step procedure was the estimate of the Rogers



and Castro model parameters. Using the parameters of the model, various useful demographic indicators were derived, and major conclusions about migration characteristics of the Maltese population were formulated.

Based on the complete, eleven parameters equation model migration schedule the following basic measures can be introduced (Castro and Rogers 1979a : 22)

heights :  $a_1, a_2, a_3, c$

locations :  $\mu_2, \mu_3$

slopes :  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \lambda_2, \alpha_3, \lambda_3$

and several respective ratios which will be introduced later.

Measures like heights and slopes cannot explain strictly demographic features of migrant population. In the 11 parameters model schedule, four parameters  $a_1, a_2, a_3$ , and  $c$  refer to migration level. Although two age-gender migration schedules can be of almost identical profile, they can differ significantly in terms of their level i.e. in terms of their position against the y axis. The values of these heights correspond to gross migraproduction rate equal unity. In order to obtain their values for GMR(obs.) levels different from unity, they should be respectively multiplied with the value of GMR(obs.) (Rogers and Castro 1984a).

The summary of parameters also includes locations  $\mu_2$  and  $\mu_3$ , which occur in labour and post-labour force curves and defines the profile rather than the level of the migration schedule. They represent mean age on the age axis around the labour force curve and post-labour force curve, respectively (Hofmeyr, 1988). Parameters  $\mu_2$  and  $\mu_3$  determine position of labor force and post-labor force curve respectively, on the age axis. Together with rates of ascent and descent they determine the profile of migration curve. An increase of  $\mu_2$  signifies that migration in the labor-force age has been postponed. The  $\mu_2$  takes position to the right of the x-axis. The value of  $\mu_2$  is usually between 17-25 years, or roughly around 20 years. Therefore, Rogers and Castro (in Rogers and Willekens 1986 : 186) distinguish between : (a) population with  $\mu_2$  level below 19 years, as an early-peaking migration schedule, (b) population with  $\mu_2$  level above 22 years, as late-peaking schedule, and (c) consequently, populations with  $\mu_2$  level between 19 and 22 years of age are considered as a moderate-peaking migration schedules.

Figure 2 gives a graphical presentation of age-specific migration rates decomposed into three major parts : pre-labour force, labour force and post-labour force.

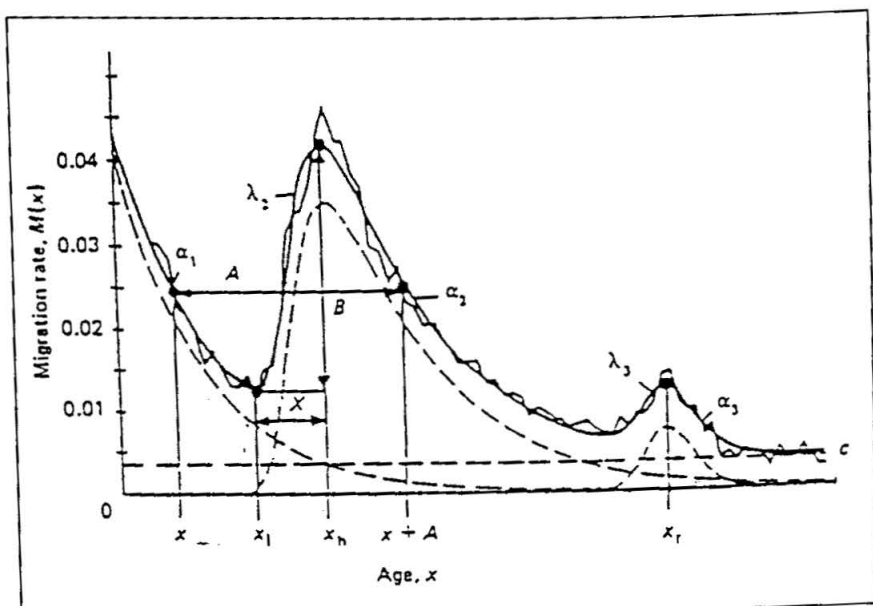


Figure 2.

Source: Castro and Rogers (1979a:15)

### The outcomes of the Rogers and Castro migration model application

In this paper the seven parameter equations will be presented for Maltese population, total, males and females, out-migration flows, and migration five years and one year prior to Census. Each equation is followed by the respective graphical presentation, which should facilitate the analysis of a concept of the Rogers and Castro model, as well as prove the goodness-of-fit. The author believes that this is the first attempt to apply the Rogers and Castro model to an island-state, since previously the model was applied in the IIASA<sup>2</sup> project for several, so called medium and small sized countries of which the smallest had population of 4.8 million (Rees and Willekens in Rogers and Willekens 1986).

<sup>2</sup> IIASA – International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Luxembourg, Austria

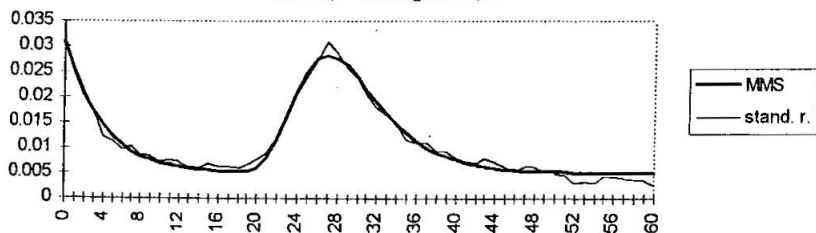
# **Migration 5 years ago, out-migration, total Maltese population Maltese Islands**

$$M(x) = 0.02615e^{-0.251578x}$$

$$+0.063332e^{-0.233573(x-26.552095)} - e^{-0.264615(x-26.552095)}$$

$$+0.004966$$

**Figure 3. Model migration schedule (MMS) and standardised rates, out-migrants, 1990**



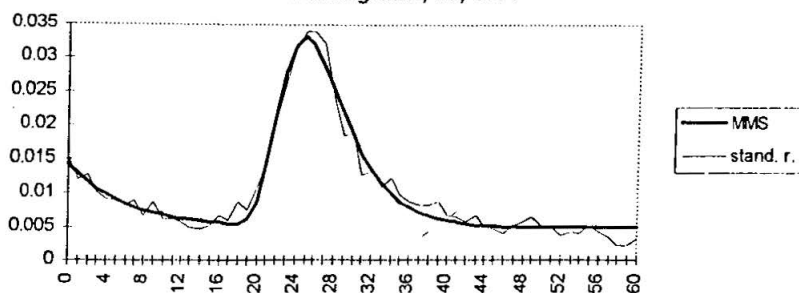
# **Migration 1 year ago, out-migration, total Maltese population Maltese Islands**

$$M(x) = 0.009465e^{-0.155678x}$$

$$+0.075128e^{-0.276042(x-24.414493)} - e^{-0.3310499(x-24.414493)}$$

$$+0.004898$$

**Figure 4. Model migration schedule and standardised rates, out-migrants, MI, 1994**

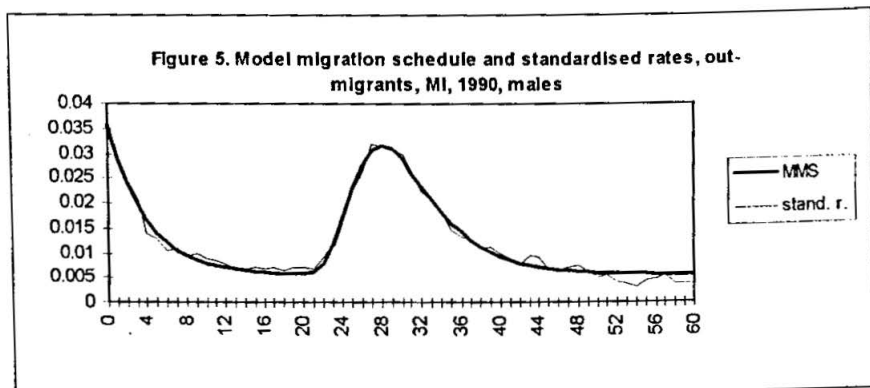


## Migration 5 years ago, out-migration, Maltese male population Maltese Islands

$$M(x) = 0.030057e^{-0.251502x}$$

$$+ 0.068053e^{-0.222429(x - 27.053541)} - e^{-0.297037(x - 27.053541)}$$

$$+ 0.00548$$

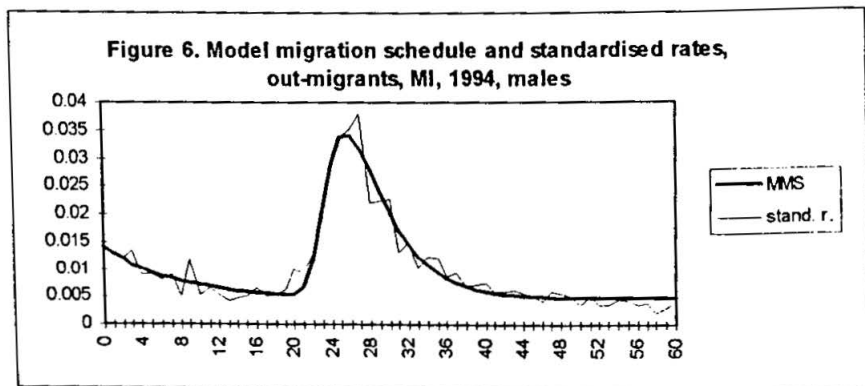


## Migration 1 year ago, out-migration, Maltese male population Maltese Islands

$$M(x) = 0.009415e^{-0.137566x}$$

$$+ 0.070387e^{-0.253317(x - 24.287871)} - e^{-0.470809(x - 24.287871)}$$

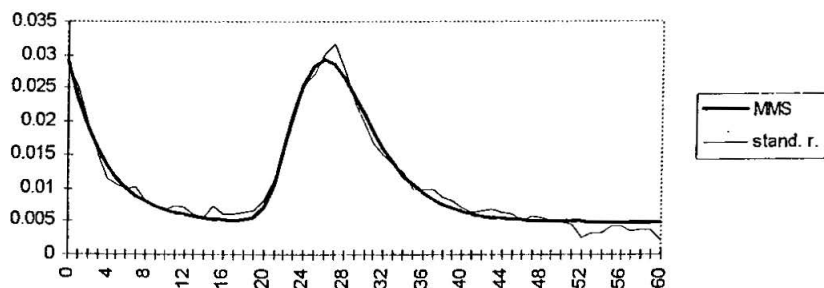
$$+ 0.004654$$



# **Migration 5 years ago, out-migration, Maltese female population Maltese Islands**

$$M(x) = 0.024182e^{-0.255727x} + 0.066313e^{-0.253961(x - 25.616307)} - e^{-0.2809958(x - 25.616307)} + 0.004865$$

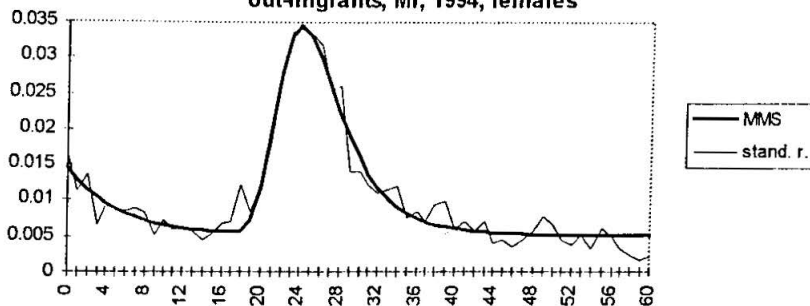
**Figure 7. Model migration schedule and standardised rates, out-migrants, MI, 1990, females**



# **Migration 1 year ago, out-migration, Maltese female population Maltese Islands**

$$M(x) = 0.00939e^{-0.189703x} + 0.07497e^{-0.265541(x - 22.967447)} - e^{-0.39644(x - 22.967447)} + 0.005177$$

**Figure 8. Model migration schedule and standardised rates, out-migrants, MI, 1994, females**



# Synthesis of Rogers and Castro model migration schedule

Out-migration

Question on usual place of residence 5 years prior to Census

Maltese Islands

|              | Total   | Males   | Females |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|
| GMR (mod)    | 1.0000  | 1.0000  | 1.0000  |
| GMR(obs)     | 1.3081  | 1.1682  | 1.3767  |
| a1           | 0.0262  | 0.0301  | 0.0242  |
| stand. error | 0.0009  | 0.0009  | 0.0010  |
| alfa1        | 0.2516  | 0.2515  | 0.2557  |
| stand. error | 0.0156  | 0.0153  | 0.0203  |
| a2           | 0.0633  | 0.0681  | 0.0663  |
| stand. error | 0.0018  | 0.0033  | 0.0019  |
| alfa2        | 0.2336  | 0.2224  | 0.2540  |
| stand. error | 0.0264  | 0.0239  | 0.0328  |
| lambda2      | 0.2646  | 0.2970  | 0.2810  |
| stand. error | 0.0343  | 0.0382  | 0.0417  |
| mu2          | 26.5521 | 27.0535 | 25.6163 |
| stand. error | 0.9735  | 0.7708  | 1.0519  |
| a3           | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| stand. error | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| alfa3        | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| stand. error | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| lambda3      | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| stand. error | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| mu3          | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| stand. error | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| c            | 0.0050  | 0.0055  | 0.0049  |
| stand. error | 0.0003  | 0.0003  | 0.0003  |
| n bar (mod.) | 25.7308 | 25.9870 | 25.4924 |
| % (0-14)     | 21.0841 | 21.6058 | 20.4528 |
| % (15-64)    | 56.7969 | 56.2828 | 57.1641 |
| % (65+)      | 22.1190 | 22.1114 | 22.3831 |
| delta1c      | 5.2670  | 5.4849  | 4.9706  |
| delta12      | 0.4130  | 0.4417  | 0.3647  |
| delta21      | 2.4213  | 2.2641  | 2.7422  |
| delta32      | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| beta12       | 1.0771  | 1.1307  | 1.0070  |
| sigma2       | 1.1329  | 1.3354  | 1.1065  |
| sigma3       | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| xi           | 18.0000 | 19.0000 | 17.0000 |
| xi           | 27.0000 | 28.0000 | 26.0000 |
| xi           | n.a.    | n.a.    | n.a.    |
| X (in years) | 9.0000  | 9.0000  | 9.0000  |
| A (in years) | 31.3300 | 32.1276 | 29.5194 |
| B (per 1000) | 0.0232  | 0.0257  | 0.0242  |
| E value in % | 10.1775 | 0.8323  | 13.0536 |

The complete Rogers and Castro migration model

$$m(x) = a_1 \exp(-a_1 x)$$

$$+ a_2 \exp\{-a_2(x - \mu_2) - \exp[-\lambda_2(x - \mu_2)]\}$$

$$+ a_3 \exp\{-a_3(x - \mu_3) - \exp[-\lambda_3(x - \mu_3)]\}$$

+c

$\alpha_1$  = rate of descent of pre-labor force curve

$\lambda_2$  = rate of ascent of labor force curve

$\alpha_2$  = rate of descent of labor force curve

$\lambda_3$  = rate of ascent of post-labor force curve

$\alpha_3$  = rate of descent of post-labor force curve

c = constant

$x_l$  = the low point

$x_h$  = the high peak

$x_r$  = the retirement peak

X = the labor force shift

A = the parental shift

B = the jump

Source: Rogers, Raquillet and Castro (1978)

# Synthesis of Rogers and Castro model migration schedule

Out-migration

Question on usual place of residence 1 year prior to Census

Maltese Islands

|              | Total   | Males   | Females |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|
| GMR (mod)    | 1.0000  | 1.0000  | 1.0000  |
| GMR(obs)     | 1.4517  | 1.4739  | 1.4600  |
| a1           | 0.0095  | 0.0094  | 0.0094  |
| stand. error | 0.0010  | 0.0013  | 0.0015  |
| alfa1        | 0.1557  | 0.1376  | 0.1897  |
| stand. error | 0.0296  | 0.0363  | 0.0548  |
| a2           | 0.0751  | 0.0704  | 0.0750  |
| stand. error | 0.0036  | 0.0078  | 0.0072  |
| alfa2        | 0.2760  | 0.2533  | 0.2655  |
| stand. error | 0.0369  | 0.0378  | 0.0434  |
| lambda2      | 0.3310  | 0.4708  | 0.3964  |
| stand. error | 0.0533  | 0.0931  | 0.0814  |
| mu2          | 24.4145 | 24.2879 | 22.9674 |
| stand. error | 0.9030  | 0.6172  | 0.8667  |
| a3           | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| stand. error | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| alfa3        | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| stand. error | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| lambda3      | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| stand. error | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| mu3          | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| stand. error | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| c            | 0.0049  | 0.0047  | 0.0052  |
| stand. error | 0.0003  | 0.0005  | 0.0004  |
| n bar (mod.) | 26.7567 | 26.8975 | 26.7853 |
| % (0-14)     | 15.8816 | 16.5407 | 15.1052 |
| % (15-64)    | 60.6820 | 60.4367 | 60.6160 |
| % (65+)      | 23.4364 | 23.0227 | 24.2788 |
| delta1c      | 1.9324  | 2.0230  | 1.8138  |
| delta12      | 0.1260  | 0.1338  | 0.1253  |
| delta21      | 7.9375  | 7.4760  | 7.9840  |
| delta32      | 0.0000  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| beta12       | 0.5640  | 0.5431  | 0.7144  |
| sigma2       | 1.1993  | 1.8586  | 1.4930  |
| sigma3       | 0.0300  | 0.0000  | 0.0000  |
| xl           | 17.0000 | 19.0000 | 17.0000 |
| xh           | 25.0000 | 26.0000 | 24.0000 |
| xr           | n.a.    | n.a.    | n.a.    |
| X (in years) | 8.0000  | 7.0000  | 7.0000  |
| A (in years) | 27.4100 | 27.2910 | 27.5647 |
| B (per 1000) | 0.0276  | 0.0288  | 0.0291  |
| E value in % | 16.4006 | 19.1319 | 14.7055 |

The complete Rogers and Castro migration model

$$m(x) = a_1 \exp(-a_1 x)$$

$$+ a_2 \exp\{-a_2(x - \mu_2) - \exp[-\lambda_2(x - \mu_2)]\}$$

$$+ a_3 \exp\{-a_3(x - \mu_3) - \exp[-\lambda_3(x - \mu_3)]\}$$

+c

$\alpha_1$  = rate of descent of pre-labor force curve

$\lambda_2$  = rate of ascent of labor force curve

$\alpha_2$  = rate of descent of labor force curve

$\lambda_3$  = rate of ascent of post-labor force curve

$\alpha_3$  = rate of descent of post-labor force curve

c = constant

$x_l$  = the low point

$x_h$  = the high peak

$x_r$  = the retirement peak

X = the labor force shift

A = the parental shift

B = the jump

Source: Rogers, Raquillet and Castro (1978)

A suitable demographic interpretation of the parameters in the model migration schedules is of the utmost importance in order to analyze characteristics of migrants, as well as the relationship between migration levels and age-gender patterns. It helps to relate these characteristics with the magnitude of migration and also with the prevailing socio-economic conditions contributing to the occurrence of migration streams. All these presented measures are given for value of gross migraproduction rate equal to unity, i.e. standardized, for reasons of regional comparability and unified graphical presentation.

Derived measures revealing demographic characteristics of the migration model schedule are :

areas : GMR,  $\%(0-14)$ ,  $\%(15-64)$ ,  $\%(65+)$

locations :  $\bar{n}$ ,  $x_l$ ,  $x_h$ ,  $x_r$

distances : the labor force shift X, the parental shift A and the labor force jump B.

An important conclusion is that all estimated parameters and derived measures of the Rogers and Castro migration model take values within the range observed world wide. The study indicates an increase in the average age of pre-labour force and labour force for out-migration one year prior to Census being equal to 26.8 years, in comparison to 25.7 years for migration data five years prior to Census. The male migrants were older than the female migrants, but the difference is smaller than the one corresponding to the age difference between spouses at the first marriage.

The Maltese migration schedules' profiles indicate 'late peaking' curves, where the location of the mean age of the labour force component  $\mu_2$ , takes values higher than 22 years of age, namely 26.5 years for migration five years prior to Census and 24.4 years for migration one year prior to Census (both national level data).

The profile of the model migration schedules described by low points  $x_l$  goes in accordance with the Maltese law regarding the minimum age at labour market. Basically, all modeled values of low points were greater than 16 years of age. The high peak  $x_h$  occurs at the age of 27 years (five years prior to Census) and at the age of 25 years (one year prior to Census). The high peak of female labour force precedes the one of male labour force in terms of age. The differences are around two years, thus corresponding to the average differences of bride and bridegroom at the first marriage. The time needed for labour force to settle down, i.e. the



labour force shift X is around 9 years for migration five years prior to Census and 8 years for migration one year prior to Census. The parental shift A, based on mirroring effect of rates of decrease  $\alpha_1$  and  $\alpha_2$ , takes values of 31.3 years for migration five years prior to Census and 27.4 years one year prior to Census. The latter figure can be considered as a proxy for the mean age of childbearing. Specificities of the Maltese society namely the absence of regional labour markets in terms of wage differentials, low participation rates for female labour force, tendency of a young couple to live close to the bride's parents (which ultimately results in a lower inter-regional migrativity of females than in European societies), relatively low level of migrativity of both genders and an earlier 'settling down' process, bring about values of the jump B higher for males than for females. In contrast to European societies, where male labour force migration curve is flatter at the ages characterized by the highest levels of migration rates in the Maltese population there is a high peak resulting in a jump B higher than for the females.

The index of child dependency reveals a 'child dependent' family type of migration, five years prior to Census. However, the difference between five and one year prior to Census data indices, can be attributed to estimated migration for the first five cohorts in the former. For both observed fixed points in the past, the resulting equations returned labor force families of curves symmetrical with values close to unity. This indicates a bell shaped form of labor force component. The index of parental-shift regularity  $\beta_{12}$  confirms similarity between the rates of decrease for pre-labour and labour force components, five years prior to Census. This is just like in the case of the index of child dependency - where family type migration was observed. The values of the index of parental shift regularity for one year prior to the Census indicate that the rate of decline of pre-labour force,  $\alpha_1$  was lower than the labour force one, i.e.  $\alpha_2$ , hence values of the index lower than 1.

Finally, the question on overall quality of estimated parameters can be posed. The respective standard errors are given for each estimated parameter of the model (Tables 4 and 5). However, an overall index of goodness-of-fit, E proves to be a better overall measure. In the case of migration five years prior to Census the median value of overall index of goodness-of-fit, E was equal to 12.5% which shows a better result than the similar counterparts in Sweden, the UK and Japan (Hofmeyr 1988 : 26). The analysis shows that Maltese male migration schedules are better approximation of their observed rates than those of females' ones. Modeling

based on migration data one year prior to Census shows worse results of estimation due to a higher number of zero values in number of ages and also due to the smaller number of migration events. Higher regional differences were observed in GMR(obs.) five years ago than one year ago, resulting in the respective mean absolute deviation averages (MAD/N%) of 18.2% and 7.8%.

## Conclusion

Demography has a distinctive place in the set of social and population related sciences. Social scientists have always highly valued methods and techniques established within demographic research system. Their outcomes usually present inputs for other population related research projects. Because the statistics collected for the purpose of this thesis intends to reveal the underlying processes of migration, it should also help to capture the behavioral patterns connected with local customs, social prescriptions, state of the economy, even the environmental considerations. Although this work is based on methods developed by mathematical demography, it is not isolated from the sociological context of human variable.

There are several reasons why the Rogers and Castro seven-parameter model has been chosen and affirmed useful in this work. The application of the model allows the following :

1. Migration hypothesis for population projections can be based on a modeled, smoothed rates instead of zigzag observed rates. Modeled values of migration rates are based on standardized observed migration rates, which correspond to a gross migraproduction rate equal to unity. This allows comparability between regions.
2. In those cases where only five year age group migration data are available and where there is a need for analysis by single ages, the Rogers and Castro model migration schedules can be used to interpolate single-ages between existing five year age groups.
3. The Rogers and Castro model gives the opportunity to create families of model migration schedules. Comparison of migration model schedules families are possible for different spatial units within one country or between different countries. They can be based on : mean labour force

age,  $\mu_2$ ; index of parental shift regularity,  $\beta_{12}$ ; index of labor asymmetry,  $\sigma_2$ ; index of child dependency,  $\delta_{12}$ ; retirement peak,  $a_1, a_2, a_3$  and  $c$  levels, etc. This allows a comparative analysis of the observed schedules and definition of a standard migration schedule representing particular family.

Many developed countries already included internal migration in population projections on the subnational level. If internal migration is considered to be included in population projections procedure locally, then this type of research might be applied using : GMR's on regional level, age-gender specific migration rates, as well as model migration equations based on estimated parameters of the Rogers and Castro migration model.

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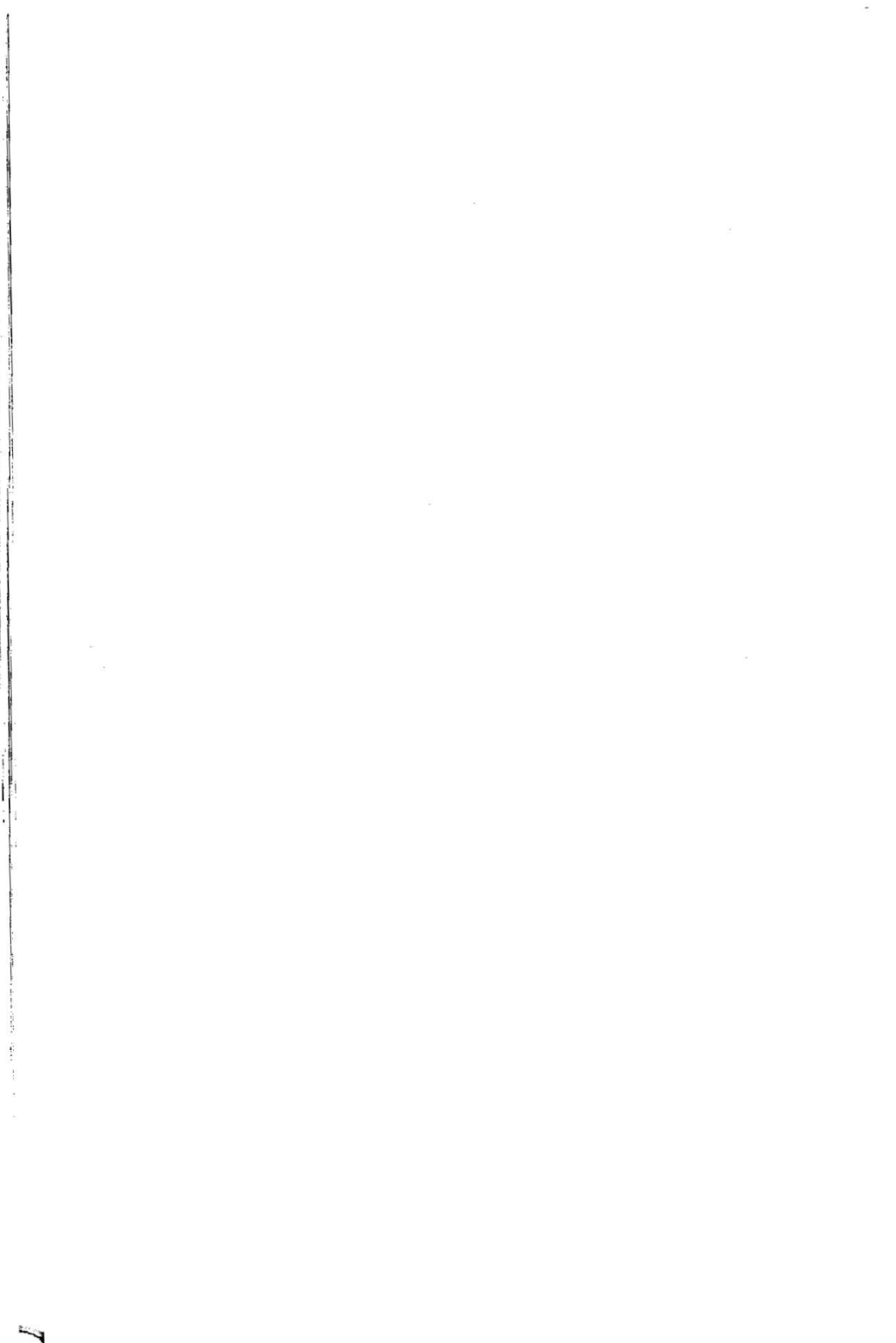
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# MYTH AND HISTORY IN COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE

STELLA BORG BARTHET

***Abstract** - The author's interest in Commonwealth Literature is grounded in a concern about the place of English in post-colonial Malta. The writing of those who have been, like the Maltese, through the process of re-negotiating their identity through and beyond Independence is of particular interest to our students. In addition, the fact that the author teaches English Colonial, Australian and African Literature within the Department of English has shown her how quick Maltese students are to grasp different aspects of identity construction in the work of these writers. An exploration of myth and history in Commonwealth Literature showed that the traditional European opposition between mythological thought and historic vision was untenable vis-à-vis the writer's practice in Africa, Australia and other Commonwealth countries. Writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka, Patrick White and Randolph Stow often show a mythopoeic sensibility as well as political consciousness. Such writers utilise myth but do not allow their novels to move outside a time referent. They project indigenous religions with their gods and rituals but remain grounded in their society's actual situation, which they are fully committed to ameliorate.*

## Introduction

In the late fifties and early sixties, while African states were emerging into independence and nationhood, Europe was experiencing a disillusionment with politics that was accompanied by what has been called a "*flight from history*" (Sheridan 1980 : 198). This movement, associated with the work of De Saussure in linguistics, Lacan's in psychoanalysis and that of Levi-Strauss in ethnology, viewed its object as 'structure,' thus isolating it from the intentions of a creative subject, the effect of external factors on the object and its influence on the environment. This new scepticism towards historicism was directed at all disciplines, including the study of myth.

## The study of Myth and of History

Levi-Strauss (1968 : 65) describes myth as being made up of constitutive units that derive their meaning only in relation to one another. He

suggests that the meaning of a myth can never be interpreted on one level, "*for any myth consists in an interrelation of several explanatory levels*". This implies that a myth must, at least in part, be explained by reference to the ethnography of the society in which it originates. This marks a departure from the method employed by James Frazer and his contemporaries.

Frazer believed that since culture comes from man, and all men are members of one human race, there must be basic ideas and psychic universals in all cultures, and that culture goes through identical stages of development everywhere. This meant that ethnographical variables could largely be ignored (Frazer 1922). The chief problem in evolutionist research in Africa is that despite its insistence on the psychic unity of man, it assumed a condescending attitude towards myth and myth maker that masked and endorsed its imperialist thrust. The insistence on a psychic unity discoverable through a comparative study of myth is typical of the hegemonic thrust that masked itself as universalist (Okpewho 1983).

Levi-Strauss's contribution to the study of myth lies in the disruption of myth as a category of knowledge that is opposed to history. In his essay 'How Myths Die', he shows how, in passing from tribe to tribe, a myth is transformed and finally exhausts itself. This, however, does not mean that the myth disappears. It can either be elaborated into a fiction, or it can be reactivated "*with a view of legitimizing history*" (Levi-Strauss 1968 : 268). Levi-Strauss shows that origin-myths of one group of Amerindian tribes are adapted by another group of tribes as historical tales. The link between myth and history is implicit in the aetiological function that William Bascom (1954) ascribes to myth. In his discussion of the tale, 'Oba's Ear' which has been recorded both in Southwest Nigeria (Yorubaland) and in Brazil, he finds that the tale ensures ethnic solidarity between members of a race that have been separated by history :

*In its different versions, the myth explains and validates religious practices, including the taboos on mixing the waters of the Oba and Oshun rivers and on mentioning the name of one when crossing the other; why Oba...and Oshun are enemies; how Oba, Oya and Oshun turned into rivers and became river goddesses; and why Oba dances with her ears covered with leaves or a cloth.* (Bascom 1992 : 11)

As Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1968 : 33) show in their study of the genealogies of the Tiv and Gonja of West Africa, the validation of culture



promotes social cohesion. These tales "serve the same function that Malinowski claimed for myth; they act as 'charters' of present social institutions rather than as faithful historical records of times past". Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah, Elechi Amadi, Ben Okri, Thomas Keneally, Patrick White, Randolph Stow - these writers and many more throughout the Commonwealth use indigenous myths to validate culture, first of all by retrieving the past of their communities from the debris left by colonialism. This is not just nostalgic retrospection or romantic hunting out of an idyllic past to flaunt before foreign readers. Commonwealth authors, at times, explore the mythic line running through from the past through the present to the future - a perceived linearity of time and its forward-moving image embodying the community's destiny as it seeks to escape the nightmare of the coloniser's exploitation and continuing post-colonial oppression towards freedom and independence.

When the object of study is literary, myth has to be seen in relation to the work in which it exists. The main concern in literary studies is not with myth proper but with its presentation in a poem, play or novel. The difference between myth and its representation is crucial because it highlights the gap between literate and non-literate societies. In oral cultures such as the Igbo, the Akan or the Yoruba communities of Nigeria and Ghana, it is believed that words have the power to create reality. This means that words, uttered in appropriate circumstances through, for example, the *Egwugwu* in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* or in rituals, can change reality. The introduction of writing creates or helps establish a different kind of consciousness. Abdul R. JanMohamed (1983 : 280) notes the development of a historic consciousness in hitherto oral societies through the introduction of literacy :

*...literacy, by permitting the recording of particular facts and thus making available in time a dense and specific past, will not allow memory, the major mode of temporal mediation in oral cultures, to eliminate facts that are not consonant with or useful for contemporary needs.*

Writing itself, then, disrupts the traditional orientation to knowledge and interpretation. At the same time, the idea that writing is inevitably alienated from speech has been questioned. See, for example, the work of Dennis Cooley and Ian Adams.

The study of Commonwealth Literature has led to the effort to recuperate oral art as its matrix. Achebe weaves orature into his novels through

proverbs and folk tales, Armah, Keneally and Ngugi through the inclusion of incantatory rituals and Soyinka through reference to a Yoruba religion which is still a part of the living, unwritten experience of many Southwest Nigerians. Oral tradition in Commonwealth literatures is, however, one 'arm of the cross' on which these writers have their being (Achebe 1975 : 68). The other arm is constructed out of the English language, the writing medium, the novel as a form and the writers' own Western education .

It has been suggested that structuralism often dismantles the concept of myth as the antithesis of reality or of history. Levi-Strauss shows myth to be in a complementary rather than an oppositional relationship with history. He emphasises the "organic unity apparent among mythology, legendary tradition and what we must call politics" and refuses to make history a privileged domain in which man would be sure of finding truth (Levi-Strauss 1968 : 256).

Structuralism has disrupted the concept of the objective study of history. Historical consciousness is called into question and ultimately reduced to prejudice that continues to support and consolidate the established mores of a foreign politico-economic power elite :

It is possible to view historical consciousness as a specifically Western prejudice, by which the presumed superiority of modern, industrial society can be retroactively substantiated (White 1973 : 1-2).

History is exposed as having a strong bias in favour of Western notions of progress, and as being a tool in the project of appropriating and controlling the Other. Paul Carter perceives history as the justification of imperial thrust :

*The fact is that, as an account of foundation and settlement, not to mention the related processes of discovery and exploration, empirical history, with its emphasis on the factual and static, is wholly inadequate... For the result of cause and effect narrative history is to give the impression that events unfold according to a logic of their own. They refer neither to the place, nor to the people* (Quoted in Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 1996 : 376).

Achebe directs his writing against this false history of Africa. *Things Fall Apart* is a repudiation of *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, a study being compiled and collated by one of the char-

acters in the novel, the district officer. The recourse to history on the part of Achebe, however, shows that the African writer needs to justify the notion of history as fact, because if all histories are unrelated to truth, what can Achebe pit against European accounts of ignorance, savagery and evil? The need to reassert a belief in history as fact is voiced by Eric Hobsbawm, who sees it as the only possible means of resisting present day barbarism :

*I used to think that the profession of history, unlike that of, say, nuclear physics, could at least do no harm. Now I know it can. Our studies can turn into bomb factories. This state of affairs affects us in two ways. We have a responsibility to historical facts in general, and for criticising the politico-ideological abuse of history in particular (quoted in Chambers and Curtis 1996 : 65).*

In Commonwealth literature, contrasting attitudes to history as fact and history as fiction are found. Achebe pits his 'true' account of the past, as depicted in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, against the imperial history of pre-colonial Africa as 'triumphant bestiality' such as is found in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Achebe 1988 : 2). In *Anthills of the Savannah*, however, Achebe explores the past in Igbo myths to help in the formation of contemporary attitudes. In his essay 'The Role of the Writer in the New Nation,' Achebe (1964 : 157) writes, "*the past needs to be recreated... for our own education*". Levi-Strauss (1968 : 268) perceives this process as the reactivation of myth :

*Two paths still remain open : that of fictional elaboration, and that of reactivation with a view to legitimizing history. This history... may be of two types : retrospective, to found a traditional order on a distant past; or prospective, to make this past the beginning of a future which is starting to take shape.*

Like Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Armah's foremost concern in his 'Histories,' is the creation of vision in the project of nation building. In the same way, Soyinka's treatment of the past in his novels is concerned with the retrieval of a viable identity in the present. Indeed, in 1975, Soyinka and the South African poet Dennis Brutus signed the Declaration of African Writers, in which it was advocated that writers should "*render accessible the reality of an African civilization through works of literature.*"

The declaration urged the Union of African Writers to "collaborate actively with historians and ethno-scientists for the retrieval of the African past in the quest for self-comprehension" (Brutus et al.1975 : 8).

## Conclusion

Literature, like history, has a vital role to play in nation building. In the Europe of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the development of the modern nation-state was accompanied by the rise of national literatures. What is increasingly recognised is the idea that literature, rather than simply recording social change, is part of the project of creating and impelling developments. Timothy Brennan (1996 : 176) concludes that "Nations...are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role".

This concept of *nation* as an imagined community links *history*, the shared experience of a community, with *myth*, the retrieval or recreation of symbols that help construct national identity. Myth and history are brought together in the development of identity in post-colonial societies, a process which imaginative literature records and creates.

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# LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND LANGUAGE SHIFT OF MALTESE MIGRANTS IN TORONTO : A FOLLOW-UP TO SCIRIHA<sup>1</sup>

HANNAH SLAVIK

*Abstract - This author investigates the levels of language maintenance and language shift among Maltese-Canadian immigrants living in Toronto, Ontario. The author's research on language use is compared with a similar study carried out by Sciriha in 1989. The results of the more recent study show that the Maltese language is used widely among first generation migrants, but the majority of second generation respondents do not use Maltese in many domains, if at all. Although most respondents believe that it is important to maintain the Maltese language and pass it on to their children, few actually speak Maltese to their children. As predicted by Sciriha (1989) the process of shift from Maltese to English is well underway for the Maltese living in Toronto.*

## Introduction

During the decades following the Second World War, thousands of Maltese emigrated to Australia (York 1986, 1990), the United Kingdom (Attard 1998; Dench 1975), the United States (Attard 1983, 1989, 1997) and Canada (Attard 1983, 1989, 1997; Bonavia 1980). In Canada, most joined the small but well-established community of Maltese in the Junction area of Toronto. The Maltese in Canada were faced with the same question that faces all immigrant communities : how can the immigrant community maintain something of its cultural heritage and identity and at the same time integrate into the host society? The Maltese in Canada have established an ethnic church, clubs, Maltese language press, radio, television and a language school in order to help maintain their cultural heritage. However, participation in these organisations has dropped in the past few decades due to the spread of Mal-

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<sup>1</sup> Lydia Sciriha first investigated the maintenance and shift of the Maltese language among the Maltese-Canadian community in Toronto. She conducted her fieldwork in 1988 and the results of her study were subsequently published in the *Journal of Maltese Studies*, 19-20, pp. 34-41 in 1989.

tese-Canadians to the suburbs of Toronto. The Junction area has lost its unique Maltese atmosphere. Second and third generation Maltese-Canadians have adopted a Canadian identity and have little interest in learning the language or culture of their parents.

In 1989 Sciriha investigated the level of Maltese language maintenance among first, second and third generation Maltese migrants in the Junction area of Toronto. Sciriha (1989 : 40) concluded that language shift was well underway in the Maltese community of Toronto, and *"that Maltese language death in the community studied seems to be inevitable within twenty or thirty years"*. This paper, based on M.A. thesis research conducted during October and November 1998, seeks to assess the situation ten years after Sciriha's study. Although the scope of the thesis research was wider than that of Sciriha's study, specific relevant information is selected for comparison. Such a comparison serves two purposes : first, it will establish the extent to which Sciriha's predictions are being realised, and secondly, comparison to the previous study can support the validity of the present study.

### **Language maintenance and language shift**

The term language maintenance describes a stable situation where a group of speakers of one language living with speakers of another language continue to use their own language, at least some of the time, in some domains. The term language shift describes a process whereby a group of speakers of one language give up their language and begin to use another (Fasold 1984; Holmes 1992; Romaine 1994). Sociolinguists have studied language maintenance and language shift in communities worldwide (Aliaga 1994; Dorian 1981; Gal 1979; Hofman and Fisherman 1972; Lewis 1972; Lieberman 1972; Sachdev, Bourhis, Phang and D'Eye 1988).

### **The Maltese in Canada**

The Maltese are a small but well-established ethnic group in Canada. The first Maltese arrived in Canada before the year 1900 (Attard 1989; Bonavia 1980; Cumbo and Portelli 1997). The 1996 Canadian census reports 29,820 people of Maltese ethnic origin in Canada. Of these, 9,445 were born in Malta and the rest are second or third generation, born in Canada. Maltese was reported as a mother tongue by 7,115 people, 6,590 of whom were born in Malta. Only 1,520 reported Maltese as their only home language



(Statistics Canada 1998). The vast majority of Maltese-Canadians, 26,250 live in Ontario (Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, London, Windsor, etc.).

Until recently, a large Maltese community of over 6,000 could be found in an area of West Toronto known as 'the Junction'; in the last 20 years this community has largely dispersed to the suburbs of Toronto, especially to Mississauga and Brampton. Today, probably 2,000 Maltese live in the Junction area, near to the Maltese church of St. Paul the Apostle and the several remaining Maltese owned businesses.<sup>2</sup>

The early Maltese established several Maltese institutions which still exist. The Maltese church of St. Paul the Apostle was built in 1930 by the Toronto Maltese community. The church offers four masses a week in Maltese, which are well attended by older community members. The Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto was established in 1922. In the 1960s and 1970s a band club, soccer club and other clubs were established. All had the aim to bringing community members together, helping new migrants adjust to life in Canada, and maintaining Maltese culture (Cumbo 1984). The Maltese Heritage Programme was established in the 1970s to provide Maltese language lessons (Cumbo 1989). Presently half an hour of Maltese language television programming is broadcast weekly. A Maltese language newspaper, the only one in North America, is published monthly in Toronto.

### **Survey methodology**

This analysis is based on the results of 100 questionnaires distributed by mail to first and second generation Maltese-Canadians in Toronto and suburbs (Mississauga, Brampton). Respondents were asked questions of a demographic nature, about language use with various family members, and about their attitudes towards the importance of maintaining the Maltese language in Canada. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. Results were confidential and all respondents had the option of returning surveys anonymously, in unmarked envelopes.

Several different means of distribution were used in an attempt to cover a wide range of population: the questionnaires were distributed first through the Maltese-Canadian clubs and personal contacts in the Maltese-Canadian community. Second, the Bank of Valletta in Canada sent out ques-

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Richard Cumbo, 8 October 1998

tionnaires to a random list of Maltese-Canadians, and finally surveys were sent by e-mail to Maltese-Canadians listed on the website <http://www.searchmalta.com>. Because the sample population is not representative, the survey results cannot be said to predict the future of the Maltese language in Toronto with any certainty; however, they can be used to make strong suggestions.

Sciriha's (1989) survey included a smaller number of respondents : 20 from each of the three generations. Sciriha's method of recruitment, solely through the Maltese-Canadian church and clubs, was narrower than that of the present survey, and included only Junction area residents.

### Survey results

Survey results cover language use and language attitudes. In each section results are described, discussed, and compared to Sciriha's results.<sup>3</sup> The sample population consists of 77 first generation Maltese respondents and 23 second generation respondents, born in Canada. Of the 100 respondents, 62 are male and 38 female, reflecting the fact that more Maltese men emigrated than women. Most of the first generation respondents fall between the ages of 41 and 60 while most of the second generation respondents fall between the ages of 19 and 40.

Some 76.8% of married respondents are married to a Maltese person : 78.5% of first generation respondents and 72.7% of second generation respondents. However, as only 11 second generation respondents are married this number is perhaps too small to draw conclusions. In contrast, Sciriha found that all of her first generation respondents had a Maltese spouse while 40% of second generation respondents had a Maltese spouse.

Sciriha noted a trend of upward mobility among her respondents : although second generation male respondents tended to adopt the profession of their fathers, 30% of third generation respondents were university students following an education which would lead to higher status employment than that of their fathers. The present study confirms the trend of upward mobility both in occupation and in education levels starting in the second generation. Table 1 shows the occupational distribution of the

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<sup>3</sup> Some respondents did not answer every question. When the results are summarised, the total number may not add up to 100, but to the total number of respondents who answered that particular question. Percentages given are calculated based on the total number of people answering each question rather than on the total sample size of 100.

two generations of Maltese-Canadians and of the group as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Table 2 shows the educational level distribution of the two generations of Maltese-Canadians and of the group as a whole. It should be noted that the high percentage of respondents falling into the upper occupation and educational level groups is probably unrepresentative of the Maltese-Canadian population as a whole due to the non-representative sampling methods used. The contact people in the Maltese-Canadian community were largely professionals and apparently most likely to associate with and pass the questionnaire on to other professionals.

**Table 1 : Occupational Distribution**

|         | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation | Total |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| N=      | 75                         | 23                         | 98    |
|         | %                          | %                          | %     |
| Group 1 | 24.0                       | 60.9                       | 32.7  |
| Group 2 | 30.7                       | 34.8                       | 31.6  |
| Group 3 | 21.3                       | 4.3                        | 17.3  |
| Group 4 | 24.0                       | 0.0                        | 18.4  |

**Table 2 : Educational Level Distribution**

| Educational level                       | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation | Total |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| N=                                      | 75                         | 23                         | 100   |
|                                         | %                          | %                          | %     |
| Elementary                              | 18.7                       | 0.0                        | 14.3  |
| Part of high school                     | 21.3                       | 4.3                        | 17.3  |
| High school                             | 33.3                       | 34.8                       | 33.7  |
| College/part of university/trade school | 13.3                       | 34.8                       | 18.4  |
| University graduate                     | 10.7                       | 17.4                       | 12.2  |
| Graduate degree                         | 2.7                        | 8.7                        | 4.1   |

<sup>4</sup> Occupations were divided into four categories, adapted from Vassallo, Sant'Angelo and Sciriha (1994: 26): Group 1: professional, managerial, administrative occupations, university students; Group 2: high clerical, clerical, supervisor, skilled craftsman, technical, small business owner or manager, high school students; Group 3: skilled manual workers, foremen; Group 4: semi-skilled and unskilled labourers, casual workers, those whose income is provided by the state.

## Language use

When one examines the first language learned by Maltese-Canadians of different generations a discrepancy appears between the two studies. Sciriha found that 95% of first generation respondents learned Maltese as their first language and 55% of second generation respondents learned Maltese as their first language. It was not until the third generation that the number of those learning Maltese as a first language fell sharply, to 10%.

The present study found, similarly, that 94.8% of first generation respondents learned Maltese as a first language. However, only 26.1% of second generation respondents learned Maltese as a first language. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is the different sampling methods used: as previously mentioned, all of Sciriha's respondents came from the Junction area. A second possible explanation is the passage of time. Respondents from the present study are probably younger in general than those of Sciriha's study which required families of three generations. Very few of the first generation respondents in the present study report having grandchildren. Thus, the respondents in the present study brought their children up on average probably 10 to 20 years later than those of Sciriha's study in an environment less conducive to language maintenance.

Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 compare the language spoken with various family members by the three generations of respondents in Sciriha's study and the two generations of respondents in the present study (referred to as 1989 and 1998, respectively).<sup>5</sup>

**Table 3 : Language Spoken with Father and Mother**

|         | 1989                       |                            |                            | 1998                       |                            |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|         | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation | 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation |
| N=      | 20                         | 20                         | 20                         | 62                         | 20                         |
| Maltese | 95%                        | 50%                        | 10%                        | 69%                        | 151%                       |
| ME      | 5%                         | 10%                        | 20%                        | 20.9%                      | 12.4%                      |
| EM      | -                          | -                          | -                          | 6.5%                       | 42.5%                      |
| English | 0%                         | 40%                        | 70%                        | 3.3%                       | 30.0%                      |

<sup>5</sup> When investigating language spoken to family members Sciriha divided language use into three categories: Maltese (M), Maltese and English (ME) and English (E), while the present study made four distinctions: Maltese (M), Maltese with some English (ME), English with some Maltese (EM), and English (E). The reader should be aware of these different methods of categorisation.

The difference between the language spoken to parents by the first generation and the second generation in the 1998 study is striking. The second generation is clearly more comfortable speaking English, perhaps with a little Maltese. Maltese language use with parents is also clearly less than in Sciriha's study, where the third generation is almost as likely to use Maltese as the second generation in the 1998 study.

**Table 4 : Language Spoken with Spouse**

|         | 1989                       |                            |                            | 1998                       |                            |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|         | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation | 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation |
| N=      | 20                         | 20                         | N/A                        | 62                         | 12                         |
| Maltese | 90%                        | 45%                        | N/A                        | 50%                        | 16.7%                      |
| ME      | 5%                         | -                          | N/A                        | 21.0%                      | -                          |
| EM      | -                          | -                          | -                          | 11.3%                      | 41.7%                      |
| English | 5%                         | 50%                        | N/A                        | 17.7%                      | 41.7%                      |

The percentage of first generation respondents in the 1998 study using Maltese or Maltese with some English with spouses is very similar to the percentage of first generation Maltese-Canadians with Maltese spouses. However, while 72.7% of second generation respondents also have Maltese spouses, only 16.7% use Maltese or Maltese with some English with their spouses. Again, significantly fewer in the 1998 study use Maltese with spouses than in the 1989 study.

**Table 5 : Language Spoken with Siblings**

|         | 1989                       |                            |                            | 1998                       |                            |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|         | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation | 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation |
| N=      | 20                         | 20                         | 20                         | 74                         | 22                         |
| Maltese | 80%                        | 40%                        | 5%                         | 59.5%                      | 13.6%                      |
| ME      | 0%                         | 5%                         | 15%                        | 21.6%                      | 4.5%                       |
| EM      | -                          | -                          | -                          | 13.5%                      | 13.6%                      |
| English | 20%                        | 55%                        | 80%                        | 5.4%                       | 68.3%                      |

Language use with siblings follows a similar pattern. Few second generation respondents use Maltese or even Maltese with some English with siblings and Maltese language use is less than Sciriha found in 1989.

**Table 6 : Language Spoken with Children**

|         | 1989                       |                            |                            | 1998                       |                            |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|         | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation | 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation |
| N=      | 20                         | 20                         | N/A                        | 59                         | 8                          |
| Maltese | 65%                        | 15%                        | N/A                        | 6.8%                       | 12.5%                      |
| ME      | 5%                         | 20%                        | N/A                        | 13.6%                      | -                          |
| EM      | -                          | -                          | -                          | 44.1%                      | 50.0%                      |
| English | 30%                        | 65%                        | N/A                        | 35.6%                      | 37.5%                      |

Language maintenance is not possible unless parents pass on their language to their children. The low number of first generation Maltese-Canadians who speak Maltese to their children indicates that the use of Maltese rarely passes even into the second generation. Significantly fewer report using Maltese in the 1998 study than in the 1989 study.

Sciriha found that 85% of first generation respondents, 20% of second generation respondents and 10% of third generation respondents read Maltese books or newspapers. Results from this question in the present study are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7 : Frequency of Reading in Maltese**

|              | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation | Total |
|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| N=           | 77                         | 23                         | 100   |
|              | %                          | %                          | %     |
| Never        | 13.0                       | 43.5                       | 20.0  |
| Occasionally | 35.1                       | 34.8                       | 35.0  |
| Sometimes    | 32.5                       | 13.0                       | 28.0  |
| Frequently   | 14.3                       | 8.7                        | 13.0  |
| Always       | 5.2                        | 0.0                        | 4.0   |

Although comparison is difficult due to the different categories used, the two studies found similar results for the first generation, but the present study found a higher frequency of Maltese reading in the second generation. This could be related to the difference in categories : many of the

second generation who read Maltese materials occasionally do so to practise or improve their Maltese. Given the choice of only yes or no, they might have answered no. Many of the respondents who never read in Maltese explained that this is because they do not read Maltese or read Maltese well. Many of these were first generation respondents who had learned Maltese as a first language : they were never taught to read Maltese, although they spoke fluently. Others mentioned the difficulty of reading Maltese compared to speaking.

In contrast, most respondents watch some Maltese television : only 10% never watch Maltese television. Respondents are more likely to watch Maltese television than to read in Maltese. This may be related to the fact that television viewing does not require literacy. Also, a person with limited ability in Maltese can probably enjoy Maltese television programming, while reading a paper would be difficult and therefore not enjoyable. Although the second generation seems slightly less likely to watch Maltese programming than the first generation, differences are not striking.

### Language attitudes

Sciriha asked only one question related to language attitudes : whether parents encouraged their children to speak Maltese. Some 40% of the first generation responded that they encourage their children to speak Maltese, while 20% of second generation parents responded that they encourage their children to speak Maltese. The present study showed much stronger levels of support for children learning Maltese : 80.3% of the first generation and 66.7% of the second generation responded that it is important to them that their children learn Maltese.

The reason most Maltese-Canadians believe it is important that their children learn Maltese is to keep the Maltese heritage alive and pass it on to the next generation. Language is seen as strongly tied to culture and identity. One first generation respondent articulated this point of view clearly : *"It is important for my children to learn Maltese because I believe we are defined by the language we speak, and I don't want my daughter to lose touch with Malta and her background"*. Reasons for not considering it important that children learn Maltese include the belief that Maltese is not a useful language in Canada or the world, and that children are unlikely to meet other Maltese people in Canada. A first generation respondent commented, *"I feel Maltese is a dead-end language. Outside of*

*the narrow confines of Malta and Maltese culture, it is simply useless as a second language".*

In 1989, 130 students attended Maltese Heritage Program language classes, held in the Junction area : a rather low percentage compared to the Maltese population of Toronto. At present, only 70 students attend these classes : the decrease in attendance reflecting the dispersion of Maltese from the Junction area to the suburbs. Despite a growth in the numbers with an interest in having their children learn Maltese, the number willing to take active steps to ensure this happens seems to be decreasing. Fewer speak Maltese to their children and few are willing to make the effort to bring their children in from the suburbs once a week for Maltese language classes.<sup>6</sup>

The present study went further than Sciriha's in investigating attitudes towards the maintenance of Maltese. The questionnaire asked respondents whether it is important to them to maintain their own ability to speak Maltese. The overwhelmingly positive results are summarised in Table 8.

**Table 8 : Importance of Maintaining Maltese**

|                    | 1 <sup>st</sup> generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation | Total |
|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| N=                 | 75                         | 23                         | 98    |
|                    | %                          | %                          | %     |
| Important          | 88.0                       | 73.9                       | 84.7  |
| Somewhat important | -                          | 4.3                        | 1.0   |
| Not important      | 120                        | 21.7                       | 14.3  |

It is interesting to note that the positive attitudes towards maintaining Maltese far exceed Maltese language ability in the second generation. The most frequent reason respondents feel it is important to maintain their ability in Maltese is a feeling of pride or awareness of their Maltese identity, strongly linked to ability in the Maltese language. As one first generation respondent said, *"How can anyone stop speaking his/her first language? It's what defines us"*.

Contrary to the researcher's expectations, positive attitudes towards Maltese language maintenance do not lead directly to efforts to maintain and pass on the language to subsequent generations. This is illustrated by

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Maria Vella, 13 October, 1998.



the present study : most parents (73.5%) believe it is important for their children to learn Maltese but few (9.7%) make the effort to speak Maltese to their children thus ensuring that they learn. Those with positive attitudes towards passing Maltese on to their children, however, do tend to use English with some Maltese rather than pure English with children, demonstrating some relationship between attitudes and behaviour. The overall discrepancy is further demonstrated by a comparison of the two studies : the present study found lower levels of Maltese language use than Sciriha's study, but more positive attitudes towards language maintenance. Fishman (1972 : 105) has found among pre-World War One migrants in the United States from rural Eastern and Southern Europe, a

*Long-term distinction between attitudes and use, namely, an increased esteem for non-English mother tongues concomitant with the increased relegation of these languages to fewer and narrower domains of language use.*

One can observe a negative relationship between ethnic language use and positive attitudes over time : the languages are used less now but held in higher regard than previously.

Generation clearly relates to levels of language use and to a lesser degree, to attitudes towards language maintenance. Another variable that affects Maltese language use and attitudes is participation in Maltese community activities. Sciriha recruited her respondents through the Maltese-Canadian church and clubs, therefore we can assume that all of her respondents participated in Maltese community activities. Due to the variety of methods of distribution, 22% of the respondents of the present study do not participate in community activities. Of the first generation respondents, 83% participate while of the second generation, 60% participate.

Those respondents who participate in community events are those most likely to use the Maltese language with their children : 69.4% use at least some Maltese with their children (predominantly English with some Maltese - 42.9%), while only 29.4% of those who do not participate use any Maltese with children. Of those who participate in community activities, 54.1% use only Maltese with siblings, while of those who do not participate, 30.0% use only Maltese with siblings. Some 86.0% of those who participate believe that it is important to maintain their ability in Maltese, while 68.2% of those who do not participate believe that it is important to maintain their ability to speak Maltese. Finally, 86.0% of

those who participate in Maltese community activities feel that it is important that their children learn Maltese, while only 50.0% of those who do not participate feel it is important.

Language use, attitudes and participation in Maltese community activities are probably related in several, intertwined ways. Maltese-Canadians who are interested in maintaining Maltese culture, including language, are those who are most likely to join a Maltese community club. Those who attend a club have many opportunities to use Maltese, thus keeping in practice. Club policy and other club members may encourage and support language maintenance efforts. For those who participate in community activities, other Maltese speakers are readily available.

## Conclusions

The results of the questionnaire distributed to Maltese-Canadians in the Toronto area are clear and unambiguous. The use of the Maltese language is still predominant among first generation immigrants when speaking to other first generation Maltese immigrants. Most first generation Maltese-Canadians read at least occasionally in Maltese. Almost all first generation Maltese-Canadians feel that it is important to retain their ability to speak Maltese and most feel that it is important that their children learn to speak Maltese.

However, few first generation Maltese-Canadians speak Maltese to their children. Thus only 26.1% of second generation Maltese-Canadians learned Maltese as a mother tongue. Most second generation Maltese-Canadians do not use Maltese when speaking to others of the same generation or even to first generation Maltese migrants. Most do not read in Maltese. Somewhat paradoxically, second generation Maltese-Canadians claim that they feel it important to maintain the Maltese language, yet the majority do not speak Maltese fluently. The low levels of Maltese language use in the second generation suggest that language shift is well underway.

A major factor often leading to language shift is socio-economic pressure : the majority language must be learned to function successfully and move up in the majority culture (Fasold 1984; Holmes 1992). This is true of the Maltese and all immigrant groups in Canada. Workers in any field except the most manual need to speak English. The Maltese migrants in Canada tend to be upwardly mobile : children are more educated than their parents and tend to occupy higher status jobs. Parents may speak

only English in the home, hoping to give their children an advantage from an early stage.

Demographic factors such as settlement patterns and group size can be decisive (Fasold 1984; Fishman 1972; Holmes 1992). Many Maltese-Canadians commented on the negative effects of the shift of Maltese population from the Junction area to the suburbs. Small group size may promote language maintenance if the group is geographically concentrated. In the Maltese-Canadian community the trend is towards dispersal, so small group size is not an asset.

Fishman (1985) and Holmes (1992) mention that government policy can support shift to the majority language even if the minority language is not actively discouraged. This is certainly the case in Canada. Although the government supports language maintenance efforts such as heritage language classes, all public education is in the official languages: English and French. Public education has gone a long way to encourage shift from immigrant languages to the official languages for Maltese-Canadians and other immigrant groups in North America.

The support of ethnic institutions such as clubs, church, press, radio, television and language classes can strongly promote language maintenance (Holmes 1992). The Maltese-Canadians are fortunate to have several such strong institutions; the positive effects of these institutions on Maltese language use and attitudes can be seen in survey results. However, even these institutions face the diminishing use of the Maltese language in Canada and many have adjusted their policy accordingly. The clubs publish newsletters and hold meetings mainly in English. If all institutions eventually shift completely to English, their role as promoters of the Maltese language will end, even if they continue to promote Maltese culture.

These common factors promoting language shift may explain the occurrence of language shift among the Maltese migrants, but do not explain the rapidity of such change. While some migrant groups in Canada retain their ethnic language through the second generation (O'Bryan, Reitz and Kuplowska 1976; Pendakur 1990), the Maltese have largely lost the Maltese language by the second generation. Several additional factors more specific to the Maltese may explain the rapidity of such shift.

As a British colony, Malta has long been exposed to the English language. By the post-World War Two period, when most emigration to Canada took place, English was taught in state schools. Thus, most Maltese migrants arriving in Canada already spoke some English. This ability aided

in their easy integration into Canadian society, allowing them to quickly obtain higher status employment. Quick integration into Canadian society led to quick abandonment of the Maltese language. Those immigrants with no exposure to the English language or British lifestyle take longer to integrate, tending to rely more on ethnic group support to get them through the difficult transitional period of learning English and adjusting to a different lifestyle. The Maltese migrants, on the other hand, quickly blended in and had less need for group support. In fact, several Maltese-Canadians mentioned with pride the ability of the Maltese to quickly blend in and adopt the Canadian language, culture and lifestyle.

Positive attitudes within a group towards its language may slow shift while negative attitudes may lead to a lack of effort towards active language maintenance (Holmes 1992; Romaine 1994). Probably the strongest factor contributing to the rapid shift to English among Maltese migrants in Canada is the negative attitudes many Maltese hold towards the Maltese language. Language attitudes in Malta have traditionally been quite negative towards Maltese (Aquilina 1975; Frendo 1993; Hull 1993). Although this has started to change in recent years, during the period of mass immigration from Malta, Maltese was considered by many to be a less valuable language than English. Emigrants brought these attitudes with them to Canada.

In contradiction to this statement, the majority of the Maltese-Canadian interviewees and survey respondents stated that it was important to them to maintain their own ability in Maltese and to pass Maltese on to their children. This contradiction can be explained in several ways. First, the interviewees, and many survey respondents are actively involved in the Maltese community. Of all Maltese-Canadians, these are the ones most likely to have positive attitudes and to support Maltese language maintenance. The strong negative attitudes expressed by a minority of respondents may be in reality more representative of the feelings of most Maltese-Canadians. Second, as Fishman (1972) and Fasold (1984) point out, overt positive attitudes towards a language do not necessarily lead to maintenance efforts. In the case of the Maltese-Canadians, stated positive attitudes towards language maintenance have only minimal relationship to Maltese language use.

In addition, negative attitudes are not always overtly expressed. Many Maltese-Canadians claim that it is important to them that their children learn Maltese yet they do not speak any Maltese to their children. One possible explanation for this discrepancy between stated positive attitudes

and behaviour is a deeper, unstated or even unacknowledged negative attitude towards the Maltese language. Comments from several respondents reveal the feeling that Maltese is not an important language internationally and therefore not worth learning outside of Malta. One first generation respondent expressed this view thus :

*The languages spoken here are English and/or French, as in most of the rest of the world outside of Malta. I wish someone pointed that out to me, or at least emphasised it more, when I was growing up. Perhaps I would have paid more attention to those subjects in school.*

These Maltese-Canadians may still feel pride in their cultural heritage and even in the Maltese language as a symbol of their identity. However, the feeling that the Maltese language is not valuable in any larger sense and not worth taking the time to learn has led to a lack of effort on the part of Maltese-Canadians to maintain and pass on their language. While positive attitudes may not lead to language maintenance efforts, negative attitudes almost certainly lead to a lack of such efforts.

One final factor may have affected the speed of language shift among Maltese-Canadians. Many Maltese-Canadians expressed their loyalty to their adopted home, Canada. Borg and Mayo (1994 : 216) write :

*These people (second and third generation Maltese-Canadians) see themselves as Canadian and refer only to their parents and grandparents as being Maltese. The sense of Maltese identity, therefore, gets progressively lost within the family across generations.*

One first generation respondent commented that "at this point in my life being able to speak Maltese or not is a non-issue. Canada is my home". Thus, partially out of loyalty to their new home, some Maltese-Canadians feel that it is more important for their children to learn English and French than Maltese. Maltese-Canadians speak fondly of Malta, but most do not intend to return, having settled permanently in Canada. When this step has been made, no practical and few idealistic reasons remain to maintain the Maltese language.

On the basis of her 1989 study of Maltese-Canadians living in the Junction area and recruited from the Maltese-Canadian church and clubs, Sciriha noted that the shift to English was at an advanced stage. She predicted the death of the Maltese language in the Toronto Maltese commu-

nity within 20 to 30 years, despite the support of various institutions. If this is the prognosis for the Maltese language in the most concentrated Maltese area, with the support of various institutions, even less hope exists for the maintenance of Maltese by those Maltese living away from Toronto.

Results of the survey conducted in October 1998 point to a process of advanced and irreversible shift. Statistics on home language use of Maltese-Canadians further support this conclusion. Although a direct comparison with Sciriha's study is difficult due to differences in the sample population, it appears that the Maltese language is used less than it was ten years ago among Maltese-Canadian families. As the first generation of Maltese-Canadians ages and disperses, increasingly fewer find Maltese a practical means of communication. The second generation simply has no practical need for the Maltese language. Although both first and second generation Maltese-Canadians still feel a sentimental attachment to Maltese, faced with the need to fit in and move up in Canadian society, this attachment leads to positive attitudes but very little action in maintaining the Maltese language in Canada.

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# THE ROLE OF THE TOURIST GUIDE: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

JOE INGUANEZ

*Abstract* - One can view tourism as a socio-cultural subsystem implanted in a particular society and which according to Jafari (1982), promotes the interaction of three cultures: the local culture, the tourist culture and the imported culture. This paper discusses the role of tourist guides in social mediation and cultural brokerage. Examples from the local scene are also given by the author to show the manipulative power tourist guides can wield.

## Introduction

The concept of a system immediately makes one think of functionalism. Despite the fact that since the sixties, this school has lost all its popularity among mainstream European sociologists, one can safely make use of some of its concepts for sociological analysis. One can look at the phenomenon of tourism as a socio-cultural sub-system implanted in a particular society. It establishes a set of relationships with the rest of the system. Even though tourism has its dysfunctional aspect, together with the other subsystems, tourism makes a specific contribution to the maintenance of the whole economic sub-system. Jafar Jafari<sup>1</sup> argues that tourism promotes the interaction of three cultures: (1) the Local Culture, (2) the Tourist Culture and (3) Imported Culture.

## The interaction of culture with tourism

Clifford Geertz, conceives culture as an integrated system of meanings through which the nature of reality is established and maintained. It is a blueprint-for-living of a human collectivity. These basic meanings are very often dramaturgically enacted in public rituals. This leads us to two im-

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<sup>1</sup> The author prefers Jafari's model because of its anthropological perspective. Mill and Morrison (1985) present a different model based on a market research perspective. Their model identifies the main components of the system as market, travel, destination and marketing.

portant foci: on the one hand, culture is concerned with the everyday life of the members of a particular society; on the other hand, society, refers to the system of inter-relationships which bind together people who share the same culture (Giddens 1989). Consequently, culture neither exists in a vacuum, nor is it simply a mental abstraction : it is enacted in society in time and space in our homes, our villages, shops and workshops. Neither do cultures exist only in chronological succession; they exist also contiguously. When different cultures meet in the same space and at the same time, the result may vary from conflict to acculturation. The result of cultural interaction is always change.

At a certain level of discourse, one can argue that a single global culture is an impossibility, because the world can become a global village only through technological mediation. And the latter is never a perfect substitute to human face-to-face relationship. The values which survived in Soviet Russia during half a century of imposed hegemonic culture are an ample proof of this argument. Every human community has its distinctive culture bound by space and time. It is the glue which binds individuals to form a community. However, cultural boundaries are more often than not harder to cross than territorial ones.

With this mental framework, Jafari (1982) refers to the culture of the tourist-receiving country as the *local culture*. The *tourist culture* consists of the behaviour patterns exhibited by tourists while they are on a tour. It is a culture *sui generis*, in the sense, that it does not have a territorial base and is temporary in nature. It is basically one culture, even if tourists come from different cultural 'communities'. According to John Urry (1990 : 66) "*There are the cultural practices of tourism, which constitute a set of preferred social activities highly structured by distinction of taste*".

In my view, as far as the tourist is concerned, the tourist culture is essentially an episodic cultural expression rather than a way of life. However, though it is transient, as far as the tourist himself is concerned, it is quite permanent from the local community's point of view. In spite of its characteristic peaceful invasion, the tourist culture can interfere and *de facto*, does interfere with the culture of the local community and sometimes threatens to dominate it. Consequently, it can create a conflict-prone encounter between tourists and locals. Its manifestation includes a mixture of customs and costumes, language, play, celebration, ostentation, consumption and peculiar place of residence. It is characterised by a dedication to 'pleasure' and an escape from 'pain'.

Finally, Jafari refers to the *imported culture*, that is, the native culture

of the tourist. Together with his luggage full of personal belongings, the tourist carries also an apparently 'invisible' cultural bag. It is not one culture but a group of cultures reflecting the cultures of different 'foreign' communities.

### Tourism and the culture mix

The multi-directional interaction between these three subcultures gives rise to a new cultural dimension, which Jafari calls the *culture mix*. In the creation of this, the host country serves the function of a melting pot. The culture mix depends on a number of variables. On one hand, there are the various characteristics of the tourist namely, the age, nationality, social class and the size of a given group of tourists. On the other hand, there is the culture, history, economic development and size of the receiving country or holiday resort and other intervening variables. All these variables create a dialectical and osmotic relationship between the stimulus, the response and the environment.

It is within the above framework that it is pertinent to ask: what role do tourist guides play in the tourist system? Tourist guides are a specific category of workers in the service industry. One can include this category among the newly emerging group, which Bourdieu (1984) calls the 'new petit bourgeois' of occupations involving presentation and representation. Much of their work is symbolic. They are acting as cultural intermediaries, that is, as culture brokers (Nash 1978).

The tutor<sup>2</sup> or mentor who used to accompany the young Englishman on the Grand Tour is the historic prototype of the contemporary tourist guide. A similar though less intellectual role during that period, was that of the Italian *vetturino* who would help foreigners find their way, especially in mountainous regions<sup>3</sup> In this paper, the tourist guide's role is considered to be more similar to that of the tutor and the mentor rather than that of the pathfinder. His role is here considered to consist in social mediation and cultural brokerage. The skills required are communicative ones. These skills relate to the guide's role as a broker between the tourist(s)

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<sup>2</sup> V. Knox describes the tutor as "...a grave, respectable man of mature age, who would in addition to his duties as pedagogue and guide, 'watch over the morals and religion of his pupil'", quoted by Eric Cohen (1985:8).

<sup>3</sup> See Brodsky-Porges, E. (1981).

and the local population, local institutions/organisations and the "*objects of the tourist gaze*" (Urry 1990).

In his analysis of the communicative component of the mediatory sphere, Cohen (1985) distinguishes four principal elements, namely, selection, information, interpretation and fabrication.

Guides have necessarily to select the "*object of the tourist gaze*" and the object of the tourist consumption. No tourist can see every object worthy of his "*gaze*", not even in a small country like Malta. Neither can the tourist "*consume*" in an unlimited manner! Hence selection is a principal element in the guide's role. It is often left to the discretion, often unchallenged, of the guide's employer. Thus, tourist guides enjoy significant manipulative power. This power can be used for the benefit of the receiving country. For example, this can be achieved not only by showing the tourist what is 'beautiful', but also by positively not allowing them to see what the guide or his 'masters' does not want them to see. This was the stance commonly taken by guides in Communist countries before the fall of the Berlin Wall. It also happens in some Third World countries where tourists are not 'allowed' to gaze on abject poverty. Besides this, tourist guides can use their power to select sites according to their own personal benefit. In Malta, for example, there are some guides who have established a veritable racket. In some instances, some tourists are only taken to those shops and restaurants that pay these tourist guides a commission.<sup>4</sup>

The tourist guide's role includes also the transmission of correct or incorrect information to tourists. It is agreed that guides do sometimes give meagre and insignificant information. They do so, notwithstanding the fact that the information they relay is of utmost importance owing to the impact it leaves on tourists' attitudes towards the host country. There is a commonly-held opinion among Maltese tourist guides that the knowledge which tourists have of the receiving country, varies from one nationality to another. As the Germans are renowned to be very knowledgeable about the countries they visit, very often they are stereotyped as being finicky. This might, in turn, create reciprocal irritation.

However, the key element in the tourist guide's role is interpretation. For the same reason that most tourists do not succeed in seeing a country but a broker's 'selection' of a country, similarly they do not get 'informa-

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<sup>4</sup> This issue was also raised in the Maltese Parliament.

tion' but 'interpretation'. This interpretation is as important as it is difficult, especially when one is mediating between two cultures. For the tourist guides it becomes significantly more difficult because they have to mediate between the three cultures mentioned earlier, namely the local culture, the tourist culture and the imported culture. It is the role of the interpreter that makes the tourist guide a real culture-broker. Very often, repeated interpretation brings about the sacralisation<sup>5</sup> of "*the object of the tourist gaze*".

When the interpretation given by guides to tourists is not based on reality or facts but on imagination or fiction, the result is fabrication. Tourist guides resort to this device when they are faced with either difficult questions, which they are unable to answer or awkward questions which they embarrassing.

## Conclusion

It follows from the above that the tourist guide has the power to structure the tourist's perception of the country that is being visited. Consequently, though extremely important, the role of the tourist guide in the tourist system described above is highly ambivalent. If performed professionally, it is very functional to a tourist destination. The product will be a beneficial "*culture mix*" to which Jafari refers. If it is performed in a manner which suits only the interests of the tourist guides or their employers, it will be dysfunctional. The tourists will feel cheated and on their return home they will transmit either a harmful image or a thwarted view of the country visited. The end result will be culture conflict and social friction. It can also 'enshrine' pseudo-attractions at the expense of authentic ones.

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<sup>5</sup> Sacralisation here has the same connotation as in MacCannel (1976).

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# SICILIA E MALTA NELLE RELAZIONI DI VIAGGIO DEL SECOLO DICIASSETTESIMO

JOSEPH EYNAUD

*Abstract - For 18th century intellectuals, travelling to Europe meant a fundamental moment of cultural formation in their lives. Their favourite countries, besides Italy and its south, were Northern Europe, the Balkans, Russia and Spain. In their travel accounts the reader finds fascinating descriptions of cities, landscapes, famous and common people, traditions. Diaries and travel accounts become, therefore, the first studies of a sociological nature. This article will focus on the travel accounts written by European writers, such as Rezzonico, Byrdone and De Non, who included Malta in their itineraries. The Maltese intellectuals of that epoch, such as Leonardo Abela, Domenico Magri and Francesco Buonamico, have also left interesting accounts of their travels especially to Africa, Northern Europe and the Middle East.*

## Esperienze e incontri di viaggio

Nel Settecento il viaggio assume un'importanza particolare. Innanzitutto, gli uomini si muovono con maggiore facilità: il commercio si espande in modo considerevole, anche in rapporto alla regolare ricognizione del mondo, alla penetrazione in terre sconosciute; Europa, Africa e Americhe sono unite da buone vie di comunicazione; la navigazione - grazie all'introduzione del vapore quale fonte di energia - fa notevoli progressi. Parallelamente, si assiste a un considerevole aumento demografico, e a un accentuarsi del fenomeno dell'urbanizzazione. Soprattutto, si muovono gli intellettuali, per i quali un viaggio attraverso l'Europa è un fondamentale momento di formazione. Le mete predilette, oltre a quelle tradizionali - l'Italia, soprattutto quella meridionale - sono il Nord dell'Europa, i paesi baltici, la Russia, la Spagna. Oltre che ai luoghi e agli ambienti naturali, l'interesse si rivolge ai grandi personaggi del tempo, e in generale alle condizioni di vita degli uomini, e alle città come centro privilegiato di analisi sociale. Diari e relazioni di viaggio assumono il carattere di prime inchieste di tipo sociologico.

Gli intellettuali oggetti di maggiore interesse sono indubbiamente Voltaire e Rousseau, entrambi, alla metà del Settecento, residenti in

Svizzera: nel *grand tour* per l'Europa degli scrittori del periodo una visita ai due grandi finisce per essere una tappa d'obbligo, oltre che un'esperienza delle più eccitanti. Furono in visita a Rousseau e Voltaire lo scrittore scozzese James Boswell, un eccentrico che fece della conoscenza e della frequentazione degli uomini del suo tempo il proprio ideale di vita, e, tra gli italiani, il gesuita Saverio Bettinelli e Giacomo Casanova. Accanto ai grandi intellettuali, la città e la vita urbana degli uomini costituiscono un elemento di notevole attrattiva per i viaggiatori europei. E, tra le città, le più popolate e le più ricche di sollecitazioni: Napoli, Roma, Parigi, Londra. Napoli, per esempio, nonostante le difficoltà dell'itinerario, fu oggetto dell'interesse di numerosi scrittori, per le bellezze naturali e artistiche e insieme per gli elementi di vivacità intellettuale, di creatività popolare, per le sue contraddizioni e per i contrasti interni. Visitarono Napoli tra gli altri Goethe, Montesquieu, de Brosses; ne parlarono - con toni spesso allarmanti e comunque di critica - economisti di fama, come Genovesi e Galiani. Un analogo gusto per i contrasti spingeva i visitatori a Roma, città del fasto papale e di grandiosità monumentali, e insieme città popolata di povera gente, e a Venezia, che mescolava aspetti di splendore - legati alla sua eccezionalità urbanistica - a segni di evidente decadenza. Ciò che accomunava le analisi dei vari autori era una profonda curiosità intellettuale, un acuto spirito di osservazione, un'attenzione specifica ai fenomeni sociali e alle loro motivazioni: un esempio di notevole efficacia è fornito dalle riflessioni sul gioco d'azzardo - di sapore volutamente paradossale e ironico - del francese Ange Goudar, in occasione della chiusura a Venezia, nel 1774, della casa da gioco del Ridotto. L'itinerario-tipo in Italia prevedeva comunque soste anche in città minori: Milano, Torino, Firenze.

Le capitali europee, Parigi, Londra suscitavano interesse soprattutto in quanto esempi di città moderne, popolate, ricche di traffici e commerci, fucine di mode e di idee. In questo senso, esse influenzavano in particolare i viaggiatori italiani - Verri, Beccaria, Baretti, Carlo Rezzonico, Luigi Angiolini, Ferdinando Galiani - per i quali la grande città era una realtà inconsueta e costitutiva, Parigi soprattutto, un fondamentale elemento di formazione culturale: si pensi ad Alessandro Verri e Cesare Beccaria, che vanno a Parigi per entrare in rapporto diretto con i circoli illuministi francesi. Ma i viaggiatori non si limitano a visitare l'Europa occidentale: un aspetto particolare dell'interesse settecentesco per i viaggi è costituito infatti dal rilievo dato al tema dell'esotico (il viaggio verso località lontane, inusuali) e al tema della solitudine (il viaggio verso terre solitarie, l'ansia



di vivere un'esperienza di grande coinvolgimento emotivo: non si dimentichi che questo è il periodo in cui si sviluppa il gusto detto 'romantico'). Qualche esempio: il viterbese Giambattista Casti si spinge fino a Costantinopoli; il veneziano Francesco Algarotti compie una serie di viaggi in Russia, di cui lascia analitiche relazioni; allo stesso modo Alfieri visita le terre del Baltico, rievocando la sua esperienza nella *Vita* in pagine di particolare espressività, per temi e per stile, nelle quali emerge una sensibilità nuova, il gusto per le solitudini sconfinite, la costante ricerca - per lo più destinata a essere insoddisfatta, in un continuo mutare di luoghi - di sintonia con il paesaggio circostante.

Considerando complessivamente l'esperienza settecentesca, possiamo ritenere che la dimensione del viaggio sia ormai divenuta una componente peculiare della vita e delle vicende degli intellettuali. Accanto al viaggio di formazione e di esperienza, trova di fatto sempre più largo spazio lo spostamento alla ricerca di nuove e migliori condizioni sociali, di maggiori possibilità di realizzazione professionale. Le esperienze di scrittori come Metastasio, che si trasferisce alla corte di Vienna, o di Goldoni, che dopo lunghe peregrinazioni per l'Italia si stabilisce infine a Parigi, sono significative di un atteggiamento mentale nuovo, di un'apertura al cambiamento. Apertura che si riflette anche in opere che non siano specificamente relazioni di viaggio: il tema dell'esotico, l'ambientazione in terre lontane sono una caratteristica della produzione letteraria del tempo, e basti citare le commedie 'esotiche' di Goldoni (*La sposa persiana*, 1753; *L'impresario di Smirne*, 1760), le fiabe di Carlo Gozzi (*Turandot*, 1762), o alcuni testi teatrali di Metastasio (*L'impresario delle Canarie*, 1724; *Le Cinesi*, 1735 (Mila 1963).

*Si ha un bel predicare contro a' viaggi! Lorenzo Sterne, scrivendo agl'inglesi di starsene a casa loro, viaggiava sempre; il Cav. Pindemonte viaggiò, pubblicò un sermone contro a' viaggi e tornò a viaggiare. Per me invece di tante prediche, smentite dall'esempio vorrei piuttosto si scrivesse un libretto utilissimo del modo di viaggiare con profitto (Brilli 1995 : 7).*

## La letteratura di viaggio

La letteratura di viaggio sembra valicare età e culture, costituendo così un vero movimento che abbraccia l'intera Europa, nel quale si rispecchiano realtà linguistiche ed esperienze conoscitive diversissime.

Mercanti, pellegrini e religiosi hanno traversato per secoli l'Europa,

assieme a soldati d'ogni bandiera, prima che il viaggio di formazione culturale assumesse una certa importanza a livello sociologico.

I tradizionali motivi di viaggio furono lo studio e soprattutto il commercio. Nel caso particolare di Malta, non va dimenticato che l'arcipelago maltese, vista la singolare posizione geografica, dominava il commercio di tutto il mediterraneo, fungendo così da ponte di scambi economici, divenendo ben presto un punto di incontro di svariate culture e tradizioni *"Malta divenne l'emporio e un luogo di sosta per tutti i vascelli europei che commerciavano nel Mediterraneo"* (Feliziani 1987 : 3).

Molti erano i viaggiatori, che traversata l'Italia, si fermavano a Malta, non solo per riposarsi ma anche per conoscere la storia, gli usi ed i costumi di un popolo tanto particolare. Malta era allora una tappa forzata: le navi vi sostavano per la quarantena prima di raggiungere i vari porti europei, impedendo così che le malattie infettive potessero diffondersi nuovamente in Europa.

Con la fine del Seicento e il radicarsi dello spirito settecentesco nasce la curiosità per costumi ed usi diversi dai propri. Da condizione di conferma e di verifica, il viaggio diventa una condizione di scoperta: culturale, artistica, sociale, politica. Anche la letteratura di viaggio, di conseguenza, cresce e si ramifica a dismisura. Se il pellegrino e il cavaliere crociato non hanno lasciato testimonianza delle loro avventure, il nuovo viaggiatore settecentesco si trova nelle condizioni di creare una fiorente letteratura di viaggio: una miriade di diari, lettere, resoconti di viaggio e guide.

Le varie opere si distinguono non solo in base alle aree di cui si occupano ma anche in base ai temi tipici che affrontano, quali: avvisi e consigli ai viaggiatori, motivazioni del viaggio, preparativi, partenza, prime impressioni, mezzi di trasporto, percorsi ed escursioni, architettura, natura, città, isole ed altri luoghi, carattere degli scambi sociali, compagni di viaggio, difficoltà-avversità, salute ed igiene, animali, usi locali, abbigliamento, cucina, cattivi incontri, divertimenti e spettacoli, ritorno a casa. Queste sono le osservazioni ed i problemi che in linea di massima i viaggiatori di ogni paese hanno per secoli incontrato e testimoniato poi nei loro scritti. Cartago Gabriella scrivendo sui viaggiatori inglesi del Settecento, come Edward Gibbon, Richard Lassels e Henry Swinburne, nota come questi scrittori hanno preso in prestito un vario e ricco lessico italiano. Ecco qualche esempio: bora, farfalla, cicala, laguna (area semantica della natura); polenta, focaccia, parmigiano, ricotta, polpetta, frittata, pasta, mortadella, minestra (area semantica dell'alimentazione); aria, grottesco, tarantella, duomo, cantabile (area semantica dell'arte) (Cartago 1990).

Viaggiare significava conoscere gente diversa in semplici case, botteghe e mercati: quasi sempre gente aperta, cordiale, allegra e disponibile. Ma oltre alla gente, viaggiare significava anche incontrarsi con realtà fisiche molto diverse dalle proprie; il clima, la vegetazione. Inoltre i tempi sempre molto lunghi e le difficoltà del ritorno erano una valida occasione per meditare sulle cose viste, sulle persone incontrate.

### Diario di viaggio inedito

A questo punto vorrei parlare di un manoscritto inedito che ho rintracciato nella Biblioteca Nazionale di Malta<sup>1</sup>. Si tratta del diario di viaggio di nozze della nobildonna Felice Colonna. Donna Felice Colonna figlia del Signore Contestabile Colonna e sposa di Giuseppe Alliata Di Giovanni, principe di Buccheri e primogenito del principe di Villa Franca, messinese, racconta le esperienze di viaggio da Gaeta a Malta nell'anno 1752. Donna Felice delinea le tappe di viaggio, ma l'attenzione della protagonista viene rivolta soprattutto agli avvenimenti di cui lei stessa è coinvolta. Vengono perciò descritti i pranzi, le feste e le occasioni solenni, i nobili incontrati a Messina, gli incontri con il Gran Maestro, l'Arcivescovo e l'Inquisitore a Malta. Nel racconto di viaggio non mancano le descrizioni di fatti di cronaca, di aspetti folcloristici specialmente messinesi. Si possono pure gustare dettagli riguardanti il cibo, il teatro, la musica, la caccia e la pesca.

Ecco qualche esempio (gli sposi sono appena sbarcati a Messina)

*...Un gran concorso di Nobiltà consistente in molte principesse, dame, officialità, molti principi e cavalieri che si trattennero sino quasi alle ore quattro, in conversazione e vi fu un'accademia di sono consistente un cembalo, violincello, quattro violini, due trombe, e cantarono diverse arie un tenore ed un soprano. Il pranzo fu sontuoso, e fummo quindici di tavola (Colonna : f.9).*

*Doppo la cena della scorsa sera andiedero a dormire l'Eccmi sposi assieme per la prima volta, non essendo stato permesso prima a causa di giusto impedimento, e tutta notte fecero strepito l'istrumenti da fiato con diversi concerti (Colonna : f.10).*

Delizioso il brano che descrive i regali ricevuti dalla sposa:

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<sup>1</sup> Manoscritto 1186 della Biblioteca Nazionale di Malta.

*Un cappio di diamanti con devotina di smalto e diamanti, a piè della quale vi è un pappagallo di smalto, nel petto del quale vi è un brillante con suoi pendenti compagni (Colonna : f.10).*

*Una borsetta con molla d'oro col fondo argento ricamata superbamente d'oro, entro la quale vi erano cento zecchini venezian.*

*Un bellissimo stucco legato in oro con sua catena et attaccaglia d'oro smaltato e gioellata con rubini e diamanti (Colonna : f.10).*

Ecco la descrizione di una serata a teatro:

*La sera dal Vice Rè vi fu una propria e ben intesa cantata in una galleria nobilmente adorna, e ricca di lumi, alla quale intervenne tanto l'Ecc Sposa, quanto l'Ecc Padrone, e l'Ecc Duca Benedetti, e S.E. il Vice Rè usò tanto a detta Ecc Sposa che all'Ecc Padrone tutti l'atti di contradistinzione immaginabili collocando il Principe Padrone alla sua destra nel mezzo del circolo delle principesse e dame (Colonna : f.11).*

Il 16 luglio la principessa in comitiva preceduta "da due trombe a cavallo e servitori appresso", si allontana circa sei miglia da Messina, sempre per la riva del mare, ad un luogo detto 'la grotta', dove si diverte facendo la pesca al pescespada.

La relazione di viaggio contiene pure due sonetti dedicati ai novelli sposi in occasione del loro arrivo a Messina. I sonetti di stile baroccheggianti per l'uso di termini ampollosi sono esempi chiari di poesia encomiastica. Ritengo opportuno riportare per intero uno dei sonetti scritto da un certo Periclitante Peloritano :

Amor, chi è questa che sì lieta move  
Il piè sul faro in vista agile, e snella,  
Questa cui pari non si vide altrove  
Al volto, al Testo, al Riso e alla favella.

Adorna in poggie sì vezzose e nuove  
Forse è la sposa a Menelao Rubbella.  
Disse: è Felice, la più cara a Giove  
Figlia del febro è la più vaga e bella.

Dunque; soggiunsi allor di già Messina  
Supera Sparta per sì bel possesso  
Ceduto a lei dalla Città Latina.

E amor: supera, Sparta, argo e Micene  
Siccome io pure superai me stesso,  
Unendo si bei sposi in queste arene (Colonna : f.14).

Interessanti dal punto di vista folcloristico le descrizioni delle feste messinesi durante il mese di agosto; feste molto simili a quelle che si celebrano qui a Malta nei mesi estivi. Il 3 agosto, festa di San Placido, protettore della città, la sposa si reca alla marina dove assiste alla processione in onore del santo. Il giorno successivo *"si portò a vedere il corpo di S. Placido, e di altri corpi santi alla chiesa di S. Pio di Malta"*. Il 4 agosto, festa di San Domenico, l'allegra comitiva festeggia con balli e giochi. La festa di San Lorenzo viene festeggiata con una banda di tamburi. Il 14 agosto viene celebrata la festa del cammello in memoria del conte Ruggiero quando liberò la Sicilia dai saraceni e fece il suo ingresso trionfale a Messina sopra un cammello. Saturno e Cibale, fondatori di Messina, vengono celebrati pure il 14 agosto. Infatti davanti al palazzo della città, vengono portati due giganti sopra due cavalli robusti. La *'machina detta della bara'* è un'altra festa celebrata il 15 agosto che *"è d'altezza palmi 54 tirata da omini a petto senza che abbia rote, ma solo due ferri a guisa da slitta."* La macchina *"rappresenta la Vergine Ssma nella bara circondata dagl'Apostoli rappresentati da tutti ragazzi vestiti in quella guisa"*. Un gruppo di angeli girano in cerchio e innalzano il Padre Eterno, raffigurato da un ragazzo di dodici anni, che conduce la Vergine in Paradiso, rappresentata da una ragazza vestita di bianco.

Arrivati a Malta il 15 settembre vengono accolti dal Gran Maestro Pinto che li riceve *"nel modo e forma che suol ricevere li Principi di Sangue"*. Qui incontrano la nobiltà dell'Isola, le Gran Croci, il Balì, le autorità ecclesiastiche. Da turisti di lusso visitano le chiese, le fortificazioni della Valletta e della Floriana, il Boschetto, il palazzo del Gran Maestro, la cattedrale di San Giovanni e la città medioevale di Mdina. Al Teatro Manoel assistono ad una commedia in musica in lingua napoletana, ma sembra che la commedia non sia stata gradita dalla principessa per colpa delle cantarine. Il 17 settembre pranzano dall'Arcivescovo e dopo il pranzo ammirano il panorama dalla Barracca:

*Dalla punta della Barracca nella quale vi è una loggia, mirabilmente si godevano il Forte S. Angelo, ed il Forte S. Michele, staccati dalla città da un canale di mare (Colonna : f.27).*

## Malta nelle relazioni di viaggio

Altri viaggiatori che giunsero a Malta e lasciarono le loro testimonianze sono il parmense, Caslo Castone Della Torre di Rezzonico (Eynaud 1989), il veneziano Giacomo Capello (Mallia-Milanes 1988), l'inglese Patrick Brydone (Frosini 1968), i francesi Saint Priest e De Non.

Tra le attività per cui il Rezzonico è più frequentemente ricordato è quella di viaggiatore e di scrittore di viaggi. Lo spirito cosmopolitico si manifesta nel Settecento, anche in Italia, in un accrescimento di interesse per le condizioni di esistenza delle altre nazioni, soprattutto europee, e per un intensificarsi dei viaggi dovuti anche alla volontà di conoscenza di nuovi ambienti e climi politici, umani e culturali da cui ricavare esperienze e cognizioni. Francia e Inghilterra sono, per ragioni evidenti di prestigio economico, politico e culturale, i Paesi sui quali si concentra la maggiore attenzione dei viaggiatori del secolo. Tra gli autori del Settecento che scrissero di viaggi in Inghilterra - si ricordino, tra gli altri, il Baretti, e, meno noti ma non meno importanti, Vincenzo Martinelli, attento alle istituzioni civili, alla vita politica e culturale e ai costumi di quel Paese, e Luigi Angiolini, interessato soprattutto agli aspetti economici, industriali, civili, politici e religiosi - il Rezzonico occupa una posizione particolare. Non c'è aspetto del Paese che non lo interessi: dalla lettura del *Giornale di viaggio in Inghilterra*, che descrive la visita compiuta nel 1787 a numerose province e ai più importanti centri storici, artistici e culturali inglesi, si ha l'impressione di un affastellamento di notizie di tutti i generi. Ma il ritratto di viaggiatore che ne esce, tenendo conto della prevalenza di certe notizie e descrizioni, è quello di un aristocratico cultore di cose d'arte, interessato soprattutto a descrivere il costume artistico e il gusto dell'epoca nelle costruzioni e nelle dimore nobiliari visitate: l'Inghilterra delle ville e dei parchi, dei giardini, dei monumenti artistici locali, importati o copiati. Gli stessi caratteri del *Giornale* si ritrovano anche nel *Viaggio della Sicilia e di Malta* negli anni 1793 e 1794, memoria di un viaggio nel meridione alla ricerca soprattutto di antichità. Questa opera rivela, anche rispetto al precedente *Giornale di viaggio in Inghilterra*, i segni di una progressiva chiusura in angusti interessi antiquari, archeologici ed eruditi. Rispetto alle pagine inglesi, il Rezzonico appare sempre meno curioso del presente, sempre più studioso e cercatore di vestigia del passato, interessato a curiosità lontane e meno preoccupato dei problemi del suo tempo. Lo stesso paesaggio, che qualche anno prima lo sollecitava a qualche notazione di gusto moderno, a considerazioni sul sentimento, e sulla sensibilità anche

in chiave di osservazioni estetiche, ora lo interessa solo per i riferimenti colti, per lontane reminiscenze suscitate dai suoi monumenti.

Ecco come il parmense descrive la chiesa di San Giovanni :

*Questo gran Tempio fu fabbricato dal G. M. La Cassiere, e consagrato da D. Ludovico Torres Arcivescovo di Monreale. L'architettura non è delle migliori; ma tutto l'insieme è maestoso, e qui la ricchezza offende assai meno, che negli operosi Tempi della Sicilia arabescati di vari marmi. Ogni modano è riccamente intagliato, ma non sono tutti grecanici, e l'oro, che gli ricopre, non toglie la barbarie del gusto. Il Calabrese si è qui distinto, e qui veracemente apparisce uomo di gran genio nella pittura, e pieno d'intelligenza nell'arte difficilissima dello scorciar le figure, e nell'audacia del sotto in su (Eynaud 1989 : 54). Segue la descrizione del Caravaggio:*

*Nella cappella di S. Giovanni vie più m'addolorai veggendo nelle tenebre quasi interamente sepolto il terribile quadro del Merigi dietro l'altare. Il santo Precursore colle mani legate dietro le spalle giace, fatto cadavero, sul pavimento della tetra carcere, ed un membruto carnefice ne ricoglie la recisa testa alla presenza d'un soldato, e di due donne, che s'apparecchiano a riceverla in un largo bacile. La composizione è semplicissima, e ripiena di verità, che reca spavento. Il fondo della prigione debolmente illuminato dal cancello, offre la vista d'alcuni atterriti spettatori in lontananza, e i vasti fornici interni, e le nude pareti mezzo sepolte nella continua notte formano il luogo della melanconica scena pel tragico avvenimento; e ne accrescono l'orrore quella puleggia, e quelle funi per collare i malfattori (Eynaud 1989 : 55).*

Quanta attenzione al dettaglio e che erudita descrizione!

Un altro turista di lusso è l'inglese Patrick Brydone che disse "*la Sicilia è l'estremo lembo dell'Europa mentre Malta è la sintesi dell'Europa*". Segue una citazione tratta dal suo diario che descrive il pavimento della cattedrale di San Giovanni :

*The floor, in particular, is reckoned to be the richest in the world. It is entirely composed of sepulchral monuments of the finest marbles, lapis lazuli, and a variety of other valuable stones; admirably joined together, and at the most incredible expense (Brydone 1774 : 319).*

Dalla ricchezza d'arte passiamo ad un argomento più frivolo e cioè la



bellezza e l'abbigliamento delle donne maltesi. Byrdone nella sua lettera del 4 giugno 1773 scrive che una volta scesi a terra si trovarono in un mondo nuovo: "*The streets were crowded with well-dressed people, who all look healthy and affluent*" (Byrdone 1774 : 306).

Contrariamente a quel che videro a Siracusa dove la pochissima gente che c'era in giro aveva una brutta cera. Anche il francese De Non rimase colpito dal contrasto tra la Sicilia e Malta per quel che riguarda la nettezza delle strade :

*This external and internal cleanliness of Malta contrasted with what is seen in Sicily, is so striking, as to make them imagine themselves 2000 leagues from it* (De Non 1789 : 261).

De Non si sofferma pure sull'abito dei maltesi:

*Large breeches, a shirt of blue linen, a broad sash, and the arms and knees left naked, form the whole description of the light dress and ornaments of the Maltese* (De Non 1789 : 261).

De Non aggiunge che i lineamenti facciali e la carnagione sono tipicamente arabi, come del resto anche la lingua che parlano; ingegnosi ed astuti negli affari sono però:

*Scrupulously faithful in fulfilling every contract, which renders all commercial intercourse with them safe and easy* (De Non 1789 : 261).

Secondo il De Non le donne sono esenti da qualsiasi lavoro anche il minimo lavoro domestico. Imitando le abitudini degli orientali sembra che "*limitarono l'utilità del sesso al solo dipartimento del piacere*" (De Non 1789 : 261).

Le donne maltesi piacquero al viaggiatore francese che rimase meravigliato dal candore della loro pelle e dall'espressione accattivante e passionale: "*la loro bellezza non è né greca né maestosa, ma perciò non di meno seducente*" (De Non 1789 : 262).

Descrivendo lo sguardo aggiunge :

*In which love seems to lie in ambush beneath their long eye-lids, that give them a pleasing air of languour, not a little resembling modesty* (De Non 1789 : 262).

Il Rezzonico non è dello stesso parere e scrive che alcuni viaggiatori,



tra cui il De Non, gli avevano fatto concepire idee lusinghevoli sulla bellezza delle donne :

*Ma la mia mala sorte fé sí, che nessuna ne vidi, che escisse da' limiti d'una volgare venusta, e moltissime poi d'infelicissima statuta, o di fattezze ingrato* (Eynaud 1989 : 52).

De Non rimane meravigliato che nonostante il clima caldo le donne maltesi hanno una carnagione chiara come le donne nordiche; invece il Rezzonico nota che dominano *"le tinte ulivigne, e le brune, anzi che le vermiglie e candide"*. Secondo il viaggiatore parmense le forosette della campagna portano le gonne aperte sul fianco avvinte solo da pochi nastri cosicché nella *"violenza de passi s'allargano sul taglio le vesti lentamente allacciate. Punto non dubbio, che da' Greci non abbian un tal costume d'abbigliarsi ritenuto, e ne fanno fede le statue"* (Eynaud 1989 : 52).

Mentre il Rezzonico trova le ragazze di campagna volgari il De Non dice che soltanto quelle di campagne sono fedeli ai loro mariti. Quelle di città *"non sanno resistere all'oro dei balì e non si curano dei sospiri amorosi dei giovani cavalieri"* (De Non 1789 : 262). Anche il De Non nota che il loro abbigliamento, più che per la praticità, è inteso per sedurre:

*Their dresses display more of coquetry than magnificence. Elegance and neatness constitute their luxury* (De Non 1789 : 262).

Aggiunge che le donne maltesi si depilavano abilmente usando il vetro rotto tanto che :

*bisogna avvicinarle per scoprire l'effetto voluttuoso di questa usanza* (De Non 1789 : 262).

Il veneziano Giacomo Capello descrive il carnevale di Malta del 1716 in questo modo :

*Si fa il carnevale negl'ultimi 4 giorni; le meretrici compariscono alla piazza in certi callessi sgratiati, e tirrati da una mulla; concorrono a tutte le parti del calesso li Cavalieri senza maschera; s'affollano a parlare, a stringere chi quella, chi l'altra, portando loro fazoletti di cose dolci, et il Gran Maestro sopra una ringhiera sta godendo il carnevale. Le donne oneste non compariscono in piazza, né in maschera, la sera fanno il loro carnevale di casa in casa con le compagnie loro. Di quand'*

*in quando tra la folla delle maschere inette sopravengono cavalieri cavalcando asini ebrii come porci mascherati buffonamente, ma col volto scoperto, facendo mille insolenze; guai a chi parla, l'insurrettione sarebbe universale. Per prova di ciò una volta fu attaccato un Maltese da un Cavaliere con la spada, il Maltese diffesosì diede delle piattonate al Cavaliere, e scappò in chiesa; s'unirono li Cavalieri, lo estrassero a forza, e lo uccisero; non fanno però così per l'Isola, perche li villani li prendono a pietre, e per dire il vero quel popolo è sottoposto ad una tirranide, perche guai a chi tocca un Cavaliere, onde tutto deve soffrire, e tacere (Mallia Milanese 1988 : 96).*

### **Relazioni di viaggio di intellettuali maltesi**

Anche gli intellettuali Maltesi ci hanno lasciato le loro relazioni di viaggio. I viaggi in Oriente di Leonardo Abela e di Domenico Magri (1664) e i viaggi nordici di Gianfrancesco Buonamico (1671) sono tra le narrazioni più curiose e svagate. Un viaggio descritto nei suoi minimi dettagli risulta il *Breve racconto del viaggio al Monte Libano*, dato alle stampe a Roma nel 1655 dal maltese Domenico Magri (1604-1671). Onde poter approfondire i suoi studi ecclesiastici, il Magri si trasferì in tenera età dapprima a Palermo e poi a Roma, dove:

*Egli entrò subito nella stima e nella benevolenza del Cardinale Orsini, tantoché questi gli affidò, se bene ancora giovanissimo, a l'età di soli 19 anni, una faticosa ed importantissima missione presso il Patriarca d'Antiochia residente sul Monte Libano. Egli compì la missione felicemente, e al suo ritorno a Roma fu ricevuto dal sommo Pontefice con molto plauso. Da questo suo viaggio nella Storia nacque il suo breve e grazioso racconto del viaggio al Monte Libano.*

Riportiamo qui l'inizio del capitolo terzo, intitolato "*Partenza da Malta verso Alessandretta: Dopo la dimora in Malta di tre mesi, aspettando qualche nave che passasse in Levante, ai 3 di maggio comparve un vascello francese chiamato il buon Angelo e il quale navigava verso Alessandretta in compagnia d'una Pollacco. Subito imbarcato, si piegarono le vele e il vento maestrale rinforzato e favorevole ci accompagnò per molti giorni. Laonde, dopo il quarto giorno, ci ritrovammo sopra l'isola di Candia, detta dagli antichi Creta, vicino alla quale scuoprìmmo non già il portentoso Minotauro racchiuso nel laberinto, ma un vascello corsaro*

*che ci seguitava. Subito i nostri si misero in ordine per combattere, ma col beneficio della notte si perse di vista e noi continuammo la nostra navigazione prosperamente senza sbassar mai le vele. Ma nell'avvicinarsi alla deliziosissima isola di Cipro, detta per la sua fertilità dai Greci Macaria, cioè beata, fu a noi molto infelice perché si voltò il vento contrario e per tre giorni continui si prodreggiò contra il vento procurando almeno di non perder l'acquistato viaggio, tanto che con la santa pazienza, necessario viatico dei naviganti, ai 17 maggio approdammo alla spiaggia di Alessandretta, dopo la navigazione di mille e settecento miglia (Cassola 1991 : 68).*

Il racconto del Magri è reso con stile semplice e scorrevole, che contribuisce a calamitare l'attenzione del lettore. L'autore dà copiose informazioni dei costumi, delle abitudini e dei modi di vivere e di vestire degli abitanti del vicino Oriente, nonché descrizioni delle loro case, delle varie gerarchie sociali. Dal brano riportato si possono ricavare utili informazioni delle abitudini marinaresche dell'epoca : nel Seicento la pirateria nel mediterraneo era diventata un fenomeno del tutto comune, con cui chiunque viaggiasse via mare doveva fare i conti; era anche prassi alquanto usuale passare l'inverno in qualche porto sicuro in attesa della primavera prima di riprendere il viaggio.

Un'altra opera di pregio è intitolata *"Memorie de Viaggi di Giovan Francesco Buonamico nella Francia, Germania, Olandra, Fiandra, Lorena, Svizzera, Italia, Sicilia, Spiaggie e varie Isole della Grecia dall'anno 1657 sin al 1666"*. Il racconto si apre con una lunga lettera, indirizzata a due eruditi ecclesiastici maltesi di origine napoletana, Ignazio e Saverio Costanzi, e che è una commossa e squisita celebrazione dei viaggi, della loro impareggiabile utilità ai fini dell'accrescimento della propria cultura, e del loro fascino, in quanto esplorazione e conoscenza diretta di *"questo sì vasto e stupendo teatro del mondo"*. Concetti e stile fondamentalmente barocchi, con periodi elaborati e fortemente pausati, latinismi, numerose esemplificazioni e citazioni, sfoggio di cultura e uggiosa prolissità. Eppure siamo nel 1672, a pochi lustri, cioè, dal secolo cosmopolita, quando gli europei si serviranno abbondantemente dei viaggi per l'acquisto e la diffusione dei lumi. Già nel Buonamico, infatti, il motivo ispiratore dei viaggi non è e non deve essere il piacere o il divertimento o la necessità materiale, ma il desiderio di conoscere, innanzitutto, ossia la ricerca di quel *"vello d'oro"* che è il sapere, sia pure inteso, secentescamente, come edificazione morale e consolidamento della propria cultura. Concludo

con una citazione latina dello stesso Buonamico : “*Umiles et plebeiae animae domi residunt, et adfixae sunt suae terrae: illa diviniore est quae coelum imitatur, et gaudet motum*” (Mangion 1971 : 303).

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# AN OVERVIEW OF A PROBLEM IN HOSPITALLER NAVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

JOSEPH ANTHONY DEBONO

**Abstract** - *The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, frequently referred to as the Religion or the Hospital, is a particular institution. Recognised by Pope Paschal II in 1113, this centuries old Order had a double raison d'être - To offer hospitality to Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem and to pursue the Holy War against the Infidel. However, the fall of Acre to the Saracens in 1291, made it impossible for the Hospitallers to fulfill their original vocation. After the capture and transformation of Rhodes into their base, they had to find a way of justifying their existence. They quickly came up with a characteristic answer - to wage naval war against Islam. So successful did the Knights become in this new role that the marine branch of the Order's military activities was to come to the greatest prominence, in Rhodes and later in Malta. What were the characteristics of the Order's navy? Small numbers, excellent design and an enviable tradition became the chief qualities of this small but effective navy. What, however, did the Hospitallers do with their galleys? Did they wage war on Islam? Or did their activities degenerate into privateering? This issue is hotly debated by historians of the Order. European Historians have a habit of shuddering away from accusing the Hospitallers of indulging in the corso, as corsairing is known in this context. This paper examines the topic in an attempt to unravel what has become a veritable Gordian knot.*

## Introduction

Since the dawn of civilization, dark deeds and tales of derring-do have always fascinated mankind. As such, tales of piracy and privateering have simultaneously chilled and delighted countless generations. The breathtaking daring of a Drake or a Sir Henry Morgan, the black deeds of a Barbarossa or a Dragut and the literary delights of Long John Silver and Captain James Hook are all part of a tradition reaching back to Greek myths such as Jason's expedition for the Golden Fleece and Homer's Odyssey.

The Mediterranean has only relatively recently been purged of the tor-

ment of the corsairs. Since classical times, piracy has been the scourge of the Inland Sea. From the corsair republic of Cilicia in classical times to the corsair states of North Africa and Europe, such as Valletta, Leghorn and Pisa, these reckless brigands of the sea have carved their crime stained legends on both the Europeans and Mediterraneans alike, thus, in doing so, providing ample material for scrutiny and criticism.

The advent of Islam imparted a new impetus to this age old profession by providing a framework of sanctimoniousness within the parameters of a *Jihad* (the Just War of the Hospitallers), effectively granting moral justification for what was already an extremely appealing way of life. Now, by having pandered to the veneer of civilization that stops most men from indulging wholesale the more reprehensible modes of behaviour, Christianity and Islam had condemned man to several centuries more of legalised brigandage.

After the expulsion of the last Moors from Granada in 1492 and the conquest of Rhodes in 1522, the political situation in the Mediterranean flared up dramatically. On one side of the Mediterranean, the dispossessed Moriscos of Spain faced making the hard choice between starvation or resorting to the *corso*, while the fall of Rhodes finally gave the Turks unrestricted access to the sea, thus paving the way for them to play a much greater role in the politics of the Mediterranean. In a matter of 30 years the North-Western region of the Mediterranean found itself under siege from the very virile and desperate corsairs by sea and the might of the Turkish Army by land. However, by 1574, owing to the Hapsburg recapture of Tunis and *La Goletta*, the powder keg created by Christendom's precarious situation, was appreciably defused to the extent that Salvatore Bono (1993 : 358) feels justified in writing that by this time was produced

*An equilibrium between the two rival blocs ... with Turkey and Spain swiftly diverted away from the Mediterranean by the force of other threats and more pressing problems elsewhere, the grand old sea faded says Braudel "out of the limelight" of history.*

It is upon this canvas, a background of gradual decline, that the author purposes to tackle a major historiographical problem, of this "minor and anarchic" war in the Mediterranean, through the sources of secondary literature. One hardly needs to describe how valuable such sources can be as a gauge of the mentality that produced them and on those other works that

made use of them. As befits the scope of this work, this paper will be focusing in particular on the public participation of the Hospitallers in the *corso*.

### **Were the Hospitallers corsairs?**

A major problem faced by historians is whether and to what extent the Hospitallers were corsairs. Can one correctly define all those expeditions that yield booty as corsair expeditions? Or do we have to stick to the formal definition of corsairing? The problems that lie here are manifold, particularly for the unwary, and this is the single most glaring problem the author has encountered in this field during his researches on Hospitaller naval history. Many historians studying the corsairs may deal with either the Hospitallers as private or lay individuals or both, but very few deal with the Hospitallers as an Order. Indeed so intricately are the two issues combined that any scholar trying to assess the Order's formal participation in corsairing runs into very real difficulties.

For the sake of clarity the author is going to adopt Michel Fontenay's definition of corsairing, as it is the most exhaustive and pertinent and, due to this reason, it is going to be quoted in its entirety. Michel Fontenay (1975 : 78) says that:

*The corsair ... works privately on his own account (whence his English appellation: Privateer), but recognized by the law of man, he makes part of the armed forces of the country whose flag he flies. Thus, the corso, was effectively a compromise between individual and state interest: It was for this last reason that he was particularly eager to get rid of his prizes through commerce which in this respect (and others) was an essential activity. This results in two main distinctive characteristics of privateering:*

1. *It was only possible during times of war, which makes us conclude that far from being the norm, it is a sporadic activity.*
2. *An essential part of international law, thanks to the evolution of neutrals' rights, was that privateering was directed exclusively against the enemy.*

Henceforth any use of the word "corsair" and "*corso*" will refer to Fontenay's definition while piracy will be used to describe such illegiti-



mate activity as preying on all and sundry, regardless of state, faith and race. Incidentally, the first characteristic of Fontenay's definition is still in keeping with the Hospitaller corsair war, because for the Hospitallers the enemy was the infidel and thus in this respect, the war perpetual.

This definition might be expected to solve the problem of the Order's participation in the *corso* because according to Michel Fontenay (1975 : 78), corsairing is the domain of the private individual. Unfortunately it does not, as in another work of his, Michel Fontenay (1988 : 365) says that:

*The study of the instructions of the Grand Master to the captains and generals of the galleys show that there were three types of belligerent missions...the third of which was and these were the most frequent, ordinary missions of this type, to corseggiare a danno d'infedeli.*

This is undoubtedly an anomaly as with very few exceptions, no formal navy engaged in practices so manifestly individual. In fact, it clearly contradicts Fontenay's (1975 : 78) definition in that "*the corsair works privately on his own account*". Numerous examples can be given of this. Probably the most famous example to spring to mind is the notorious Sir Francis Drake who, whilst occasionally serving in the queen's navy, certainly falls into this category as any privateering he indulged in, was on his own account. In fact it was only the wiliness of the queen's decision to knight him that obtained, for the crown, a proportion of the spoil he captured during his circumnavigation of the globe.

As Peter Earle (1970 : 107) observes, amongst the exceptions to this general rule were the Barbary Corsairs, for whom the distinction in organization between state-owned and private ships was non-existent. In the anarchical state of affairs that prevailed on the North African coast, a rapacious though skillful freebooter such as Kheyr-ed Din Barbarossa would find the throne of a territory, or city, ripe for him to take, creating a situation wherein it becomes impossible to define precisely where State interests end and private interests begin. This, however, is not applicable to the Hospitallers who were a (relatively) law-abiding order and even if they were not disposed to respect the law, financial considerations would -and indeed did- prove effective at keeping them in a reasonable frame of mind. From this perspective, the very specific Magistral instructions are very surprising indeed, especially as there were no lack of adventurous characters on the island willing to supply the proper corsair element and a cut of their profits to the government.



As it is an undoubted fact that the Hospitallers, both on private owned ships and on the Order's galleys *did* practise corsairing, many historians do not deny it but seek instead to exculpate the Order from the "crimes" committed by its members, on one ground or another. Peter Earle (1970 : 107) states that the reason he considers the navy of the Order as a navy and not as corsairs is because the navy was "*guilty of behaviour which could not be true of any self-respecting corsair. It did not make a profit!*". This is contradicted by Schermahorn (1929 : 227), who says that the Order's navy had:

*The advantage of being largely self-supporting, of making one hand wash the other so to speak. For the rich booty, the captured cargoes and ships and the ransom or sale of Moslem slaves, supplied a substantial subsidy not only to the maintenance of the fleet but also to the order itself.*

A few pages later on, Schermahorn (1929 : 231) goes on to give an example of the importance of these noble corsairs, not only to the Maltese economy but even more so to the Order's, when in 1679, the Grand Master had to recall all corsairs sailing under the flag of St. John due to pressure from Rome and Venice. These must have all been knights because the Grand Master threatened them with the loss of their habit if they failed to comply. However "*the treasury would have become bankrupt without them, and they were soon re-armed*". Michel Fontenay (1988 : 365) has this to say on the matter:

*Many historians seek to exculpate the Order's naval activities from semantic and thematic association with corsairing on the grounds that the Order was a Sovereign state with its own politics and ideological motivations. However the Order itself did not bother overmuch with these scruples. The Magistral instructions are very clear: fare una scorribanda on the enemy coast in wait of di qualche buon effetto al profitto della nostra Sacra Religione et della Cristianita and the word 'profit' is not used figuratively: di qualche ricca presa, di qualche guadagno.*

Approaching this problem from another angle demanded an examination of the mode of attack the Hospitallers employed at sea. If they were, as many apologists insist, mainly employed in policing the seas against the infidel corsairs, one would expect this to be reflected in the type of

tactics they employed during battle, i.e. that of sinking their enemies. If on the other hand they were involved in active corsairing, then it is more likely that they relied on boarding their prey. Unfortunately, one tends to find controversy even in this field. Salvatore Bono (1993 : 377) says that the firing capacity of the Hospitaller galley must have served solely to distract the enemy vessel. He goes on to say that it was important to make the largest number of men prisoners and therefore slaves and to take possession of the ship's cargo. This, of course, is the behaviour of a corsair and thus Bono's view is directly at odds with what Sire (1994 : 90) has to say:

*The Barbary vessels carried few guns and large crews, aiming at swarming aboard their victim and capturing it intact; the Maltese ships, by contrast, were more famous for their gunnery, since their ethos emphasized combat more than rapine.*

Sire's statement is fallacious both in substance and in implication. In the first place, it does not follow that the Maltese were famous for gunnery because their ethos emphasized combat more than rapine. It simply means that the Maltese crews had more practice in battle than their Barbary counterparts which, of course, makes sense if one considers that for the Hospitallers the *corso* was but one aspect of the whole war itself. Also the tone of Sire's statement implies that the Knights were more interested in keeping the waters clear from Barbary corsairs than corsairing for profit. This apologetic position is confuted by Fontenay's revelation in the paragraph above. Further investigation reveals that Sire lifted his statement almost bodily from Earle (1970 : 133), however Earle does not tell us that the Maltese relied on their excellent gunnery because they were out to sink and not loot, he merely states the fact that they relied heavily on artillery when they had to fight a battle against a well armed opponent and this is common sense as artillery is just as effective against personnel as it is against the vessels themselves. In fact, the artillery's main function was to overwhelm the enemy defense or to disable a ship by shooting two hemispheres linked with a chain to destroy the enemy ship's masts or oars. This naval tactic had been utilised since classical times when a galley would first shower its opponent with arrows and then board. It is true that artillery greatly reduces the number of slaves but it does not - usually - kill the passengers, probably cowering below deck, who being more important than the crew would obtain a

higher ransom. Furthermore, the risk of damaging the cargo, well packed in the hold, was minimal.

Further investigation reveals more lack of consensus. In the course of his research, the author got the impression that the Maltese were excellent gunners, probably due to the enthusiasm with which this point is usually emphasised. He was therefore intrigued to read in a work by Claire-Elaine Engel (1968 : 228) that "*the gunners of Malta were bad.*" This is quite a departure from the other views so an attempt was made to find further evidence of this in the pages of a work that focused entirely on the Maltese crews of the Order's ships, Ettore Rossi's *I Maltesi Dell'Ordine Di San Giovanni* but no mention was made of the quality of Maltese gunners. However, the importance of Engel's work lies in the fact that for her, there is no question about the corsairing activities of the Order. Unequivocally, Engel (1968 : 228) states that

*In Malta, corsairing was carried out in three different forms. In the first place, one had the fleet of the Order, flying the flag of Malta (white cross on a red background), commanded by the knights and manned by the slaves of the Order"*

Engel clearly distinguishes between the public and private *corso* of the knights because she goes on to describe the latter as the second form (the third form being private *corso* by the Maltese subjects of the Grand Master) and in fact her description of the Hospitaller mode of attack tallies perfectly with her views:

*The attacks on enemy ships were every day more audacious. Boarding was the established rule of the day for quite a number of reasons: it was more dashing, the gunners of Malta were bad, and there was less risk of sending the booty to the bottom of the sea or of the enemy ship managing to escape.*

I find this the more plausible interpretation of the lot. Some of its component parts agree with those of other scholars like Salvatore Bono and I think that it fits in well with the available evidence.

In an interesting postscript to the Hospitaller private vs. public *corso* argument, in Schermahorn (1929 : 137), one reads of the Cardinal Grand Master Verdala's desire to send a galley on the *corso* and this appears to

have stirred up a hornet's nest. The Inquisitor Cefalotto complained about this saying that :

*The private corso is damaging to the public corso of the Order, because it takes the best slaves and interferes with the arming of the Religion's navy.*

On its own, this evidence would be very convincing on the subject, but taken together with the others, it seems to be a pretty damning indictment.

## Conclusion

If the evidence seems to make it clear that the Order had no hesitation in engaging in overt corsair activities, why do so many of its apologists insist on defending the Order from a charge the Hospitallers pleaded guilty to with disarming honesty? There are many reasons why authors and historians would seek to liberate the Order from the accusation of privateering and piracy and this is mainly due to the very negative fame of the Moslem Corsairs<sup>1</sup> -whose notoriety shines undimmed even today- and to a jingoism that pervades the older works, particularly of amateur historians<sup>2</sup> who, even when glorifying the cut-throat feats of the knights, insist on describing them as activities substantially more virtuous than those of their Moslem counterparts. There are also those who do so either because they have some pretensions of association with the Hospitallers or are actually knights themselves. In this context one can mention people like Robert Von Dauber. By their omission and ambiguity, such historians appear to feel, and certainly imply, that the participation of the knights in the "*guerrue de corse*" proper is not worthy of the spirit of the sieges of Rhodes and Malta. As Engel (1968: 233) points out, the war of the *corso*, however, "*was a political, economic and religious necessity for Malta*" and thus, there is no reason why the public *corso* should be considered shameful or unworthy.

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<sup>1</sup> Dragut remains the best known villain in local folklore

<sup>2</sup> see Vincenzo Bonello's article on "*La Marina Del'Ordine di Malta*" for an excellent example of this type of history.

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