HYPHEN

A Journal of Melitensia and the Humanities

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CONTENTS

Eighteenth-Century Malta: Prosperity and Problems
Anthony Luttrell 37

The First Documented Case of Drug Addiction in Malta — Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Paul Cassar 52

A Concise Glossary of Critical Terms
Louis J. Scerri 62

An Introduction to Accountancy
John Fernandez 73

New Directions in Maltese Poetry
Frans Sammut 78

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MALTA: PROSPERITY AND PROBLEMS*

ANTHONY LUTTRELL

A fundamental difficulty with the history of eighteenth-century Malta is that no major sustained research on it has been published; no institution or individual has made a serious overall approach to the extensive materials.[1] The standard modern treatment is contained in two chapters of a general history of Malta by Brian Blouet, whose brief account was based on a thesis covering the years 1530 to 1798 in which the emphasis was on the period before the eighteenth century.[2] Fr. Andrew Vella's *Storja ta' Malta* presents a more recent general approach.[3] A number of works by lawyers, doctors, architects and others treat various particular topics, most of them probably chosen either because they are glamorous in themselves or because they are conveniently well documented; many such publications are of high quality and interest, but they do not add up to a history of Malta which can be regarded as satisfactory in an age when social and economic rather than political, religious or cultural topics are at the centre of the historian's concern. An independent Malta presumably needs a public which has a correct consciousness of its past as a point of reference for its modern problems. The basis for such a history lies in the Maltese archives,[4] and the results of preliminary assaults on the wealth of documents there are available in a number of important but unpublished theses presented

* The present essay seeks merely to identify certain major problems and to outline a working hypothesis. That hypothesis, which is scarcely an original one, is based on crude and approximate figures, most of them taken at second-hand and many of them ignoring the effects of inflation, exchange-rates, currency variations and other confusing factors; inevitably it will require detailed revision and correction. Victor Mallia-Milanes, Roger Vella Bonavita and Godfrey Wettinger most kindly gave advice on various points.

1. No attempt is made here to present a full bibliography; P. Xuereb, *A Bibliography of Maltese Bibliographies* (Malta, 1978), provides a point of departure.
2. B. Blouet, *The Story of Malta* (3rd ed: Malta, 1981); unfortunately this work lacks annotation.
3. A. Vella, *Storja ta' Malta*, ii (Malta, 1979).
4. On the sources, see *Maltese History: What Future?*, ed. A. Williams — R. Vella Bonavita (Malta, 1974).

both in Malta and abroad.[6]

An especially awkward problem is that of the relation between the history of the Order of Malta and that of the Maltese people. The Maltese have, understandably, reacted against a vision of their past conceived in terms of the dominant foreigner, and historians of Malta have tended more recently to write a history of the Maltese from which the Knights are omitted. However, this trend can be taken too far since there can be no doubt that without an understanding of the Knights and the utilization of their archives many fundamental aspects of Maltese history cannot properly be appreciated. Though there is much to be done on the Order's history, solid starting points have been provided by Roderick Cavaliero's book[6] and by the financial details given by Alison Hoppen.[7] Another work of value, published in 1836, is W.H. Thornton's *Memoir* on the Order's finances between 1778 and 1788; it contains calculations and researches which have not been reworked and which have not always been sufficiently appreciated by subsequent historians.[8] Some consideration of the Knights' financial contribution is crucial to any serious study of Maltese economic history. Economic grievances played some part in Maltese resentments against the Order, resentments which should also be understood through a consideration of Maltese "proto-national" sentiment, of the people's religiosity and of their growing cultural and linguistic self-awareness.

* * * *

The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, which had ruled and defended Malta since 1530, had no exact parallel. It was an aristocratic religious corporation of Roman Catholic brethren bound together by their vows and governed by a Grand Master elected for life. Their numbers were limited. 226 Knights were at Malta for the election of De Rohan in 1775 and 239 for that of Von Hompesch in 1797; there were 332, of whom about 200 were French and some fifty were too old

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5. Lists of theses in *Storja 78* (Malta, 1978), 138-153; the present author is most grateful to those who have permitted their theses to be used below.
6. R. Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders: The Knights of St. John and Malta in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1960). C. Engel, *Knights of Malta: a Gallery of Portraits* (London, 1963), provides excellent studies of individual Knights and their milieu.
7. A. Hoppen, *The Fortification of Malta by the Order of St. John* (Edinburgh, 1979).
8. W. Thornton, *Memoir on the Finances of Malta under the Government of the Order* ... (Malta, 1836). Thornton, 42-44, assumes a silver scudo to be roughly 2 shillings sterling, although the British fixed it at one shilling and eight pence in 1800: Hoppen, 169. Note that currency matters were complex and fluctuating. In 1741 both the Roman and Sicilian scudo were said to be worth two Maltese scudi: text in M. Sant, *Coinage Problems facing the Order of St. John in Malta* (MA thesis: University of Malta, 1967), 326 n. 1.

or ill to fight, when Napoleon landed about 40,000 men in 1798.[9] The Hospital held estates and properties throughout Catholic Europe which were organized in commanderies, priories and *langues*, and which provided the manpower, the knights, priests and serjeants, as well as the *responsiones* and other incomes which supported their Convent or headquarters in Malta. Within the Order, the Grand Master was a constitutional monarch subject to the Rule and Statutes, to the various councils at Malta and to the Chapter-General; the latter, however, was not once convoked between 1631 and 1776. On Malta the Grand Master was a quasi-despotic prince whose powers were limited only by an allegiance to the pope, by a theoretical dependence on the Sicilian Crown which derived from the grant of Malta in 1530, and by a Congregation of State which ruled the island but whose membership the Grand Master himself could control. The Master's arbitrary powers were enshrined in the *Code de Rohan* issued in 1782. The Hospitallers' Convent was the city of Valletta which they themselves had built, with their Conventual church, their *auberges* and their magnificent hospital. The Grand Harbour was the centre of their fleet, their troops, their slave-gangs and their extended system of defensive fortifications which even in the eighteenth century were still occasionally threatened by the Turks; there were major scares in 1722 and 1761, for example.

Grand Masters were usually old and rich, and once elected they exercised an extensive patronage. Somewhat surprisingly, between 1697 and 1775 there was no French Grand Master, and even Emmanuel de Rohan, elected in 1775, had been born in Spain of a Spanish mother and had spent several years in Spanish service. The others were Spaniards or Portuguese, except for the Italian Zondadari who secured the Grand Mastership in 1720 when two Portuguese, Manoel de Vilhena and Pinto de Fonseca, corruptly blocked each other's election. On Zondadari's death in 1722 Manoel de Vilhena, a cousin of the King of Portugal, hastily convened the council and secured his own election within twenty-four hours while Pinto de Fonseca was abroad.[10] Pinto was elected later and died in 1773 aged ninety-one. Ximenes de Texada then outbribed his rivals, made fair promises and abused the French candidate Saint-Simon; his election was unanimous.[11]

The Order was responsible for defence and foreign affairs, and it maintained a navy, an arsenal and a work-force of several thousand

9. Thornton, 46-47; Hoppen, 156, 158, accepting Bosredon de Ransijat's apparently exaggerated figure of 600 Knights, 400 of them French, in 1798.

10. A. Mallia, *Zondadari and his Times: 1720-1722* (BA thesis: University of Malta. 1976), 10-11, 126.

11. P. Fava, *Francesco Saverio Ximenes de Texada: Problems facing the Order of St. John during his Grandmastership (1773-1775)* (BA thesis: University of Malta, 1970), 14-18, 251-259. Not enough is known about how Magisterial elections were decided.

slaves. In the eighteenth century the great empires of Spain and Turkey were in decline and the newer powers of Britain and Russia were intervening in a Mediterranean world in which the balance of political and economic forces had greatly changed.[12] Maltese affairs were affected by plagues, famines and political changes in Sicily, especially when these provoked grain shortages and high prices in Malta. Commercially and politically Malta was predominantly a French colony indispensable to France's Levantine commerce, and the bulk of the merchant shipping entering the port of Valletta was French.[13] France was glad to use Malta as an entrepot and to have the Knights control piracy, but it became more and more difficult to maintain the Order's own licensed *corso* in the face of Franco-Turkish alliances and ententes. Faced with such problems, the Knights were tempted by risky schemes in Corsica, the West Indies and in Ethiopia, but had the good sense to resist most of them. Other projects did not succeed: in 1776 De Rohan, desperately in debt, acquired the commanderies of the hospitaller Order of St. Anthony which, in the short term at least, proved costly;[14] he negotiated with the Russians; and in 1794 he unsuccessfully sought both British and American alliances.[15] Yet De Rohan and his efficient finance minister Bosredon de Ransijat planned so well that by 1788 "the finances of the Order had reached a high degree of prosperity under the economical government of De Rohan, who succeeded in procuring a large available fund to the Treasury, after the outlay of very considerable sums to promote the future income of the Order."[16] Before 1792 decline and decay were not so evident in Malta itself.

The year 1790 saw the publication of a pamphlet entitled *A quoi bon l'Ordre de Malte?* The ignominious way in which the Knights lost Malta in 1798 seemed to prove the soundness of judgement of those who had pointed to the Order's lack of purpose, its internal dissensions and its growing unpopularity with the population. However, similar judgements had been advanced in every previous century and the "decline" of the Knights was never so unmitigated a process of decay as it may have appeared.[17] In a sense the whole history of the crusade

12. Excellent brief survey in J. Mathiex, "The Mediterranean", *New Cambridge Modern History*, vi (Cambridge, 1970).
13. Hoppen, 157-163, and J. Godechot, "La France et Malte au XVIII siècle," *Revue Historique,* ccvi (1951); Godechot, however, utilizes only the quarantine registers as his source.
14. Thornton, 22.
15. A. Vella, *Malta and the Czars: 1697-1802* (Malta, 1972); P. Cassar, *Early Relations between Malta and the United States of America* (Malta, 1976), 5-9; R. Vella Bonavita, "Britain and Malta: 1787-1798," *Hyphen*, i (1977).
16. The judgement of Thornton, 24-25.
17. The notion of "decline" which dominates much of the literature should be interpreted with reservations; it should not be transferred to the social, economic and cultural development of the Maltese themselves.

from the First Crusade onwards had shown a continuous pattern of decline, yet on Malta itself the finances had been reformed by the Chapter-General of 1776, after which the *corso* was also revived; the population had continued to grow and trade to prosper; while the island seemed reasonably safe and well protected. The insoluble problems lay outside the island, and in the Order's constitutional inability either to change its own nature and constitution or to adapt itself to changes abroad. The philosophies of the time and the doctrines of the French Revolution certainly had some effect on the Maltese, as indeed among the Knights themselves, but in the end it was the confiscation of the Order's French estates in 1792 which removed nearly half its incomes and marked a final, decisive and, it proved, irrevocable disaster.[18] The Knights still defended Malta and acted as a Christian deterrent in the Central Mediterranean; precisely because they had a good navy and strong forts, they were never attacked. It was partly true that the Order was an anachronism which had lost much of its crusading *raison d'être* in an age when the holy war had tacitly been forgotten, and it seemed to exist merely because it existed; it was an integral part of the Ancien Régime and collapsed with it. The bumbling and demoralized response of the last Grand Master on Malta Von Hompesch, who was unable to lead French Knights against a French army in 1798, reflected a situation in which the Order could no longer continue to rule in Malta.

* * * *

The indigenous population of Malta and Gozo seems to have risen from 49,500 in 1680 to 91,273 in 1788, almost doubling in 100 years; in addition several thousand foreigners, including the Knights and their followers, slaves and merchants, lived in Malta.

	Malta	Gozo	Total
1680	43,800	5,700	49,500[19]
1693	—	—	ca.60,000[20]
1725	62,807	7,003	69,810[21]
ca.1772	68,800	—	—[22]
1788	79,180	12,093	91,273[23]
1807	80,225	12,829	93,054[24]

18. Thornton, 25-28, provides financial details.
19. B. Blouet, *The Changing Landscape of Malta during the Rule of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem: 1530-1798* (Ph.D. thesis: University of Hull, 1964), 137.
20. F. Gemelli Careri, *Giro del Mondo*, i (2nd ed: Venice, 1719), 24.
21. Mallia, 109.
22. G. Ciantar, *Malta Illustrata*, i (Malta, 1772), 254-321, as calculated in H. Bowen-Jones *et al.*, *Malta: Background for Development* (Durham, 1961), 135.
23. Mallia, 109.
24. *Almanacco delle Isole di Malta e Gozo per l'anno MDCCCVII* (Malta, 1807),

The 1680 figure had been depressed by the death of possibly as many as 8,500 people in the plague of 1676,[25] but the rate of increase and the expectancy of life were high. The population of Żurrieq rose from 2270 in 1741 to 3544 in 1788; at Paola and Tarxien the growth was from 696 in 1699 to 939 in 1760, after which there was a decline.[26] At Gudja some 60 percent of those who died between 1770 and 1815 were under five years old, but about 18 percent of those born lived to over 60.[27] The population of Gozo rose especially fast, which may have reflected the prosperity of agriculture, while on Malta it was the towns which continued to grow; in 1725 the combined populations of Valletta, Vittoriosa, Senglea, Bormula, Mdina and Rabat stood at 31,654 almost exactly the equivalent of the rural population of 31,735.[28] This continuous demographic expansion was doubtless due to comparatively reasonable living standards, which discouraged emigration, and to excellent health and quarantine services, which prevented major occurrences of plague between 1676 and 1813.[29] Paradoxically enough, the success of the Order's medical expertise created an extraordinary increase in the number of people to be fed and employed. At a critical moment of accelerated population growth, which was well above Mediterranean averages, Grand Master Zondadari referred obliquely to the plague as the only possible solution to this dramatic economic problem.[30]

The Maltese people were governed during the eighteenth century with considerable success. Even though the population was too small to

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8. The table given above certainly requires refinement. The 1741 total of 110,000 mentioned in Bowen-Jones *et al.*, 135, is surely exaggerated, as must be the 114,000 for 1798 given in L. de Boisgelin, *Ancient and Modern Malta,* i (London, 1805), 107, and of 130,000 for 1785 given in a Venetian manuscript cited in V. Mallia-Milanes, "Towards an Economic History of Eighteenth Century Malta: ......," *Hyphen,* ii (1978), 4; this last work contains important bibliographical references. [F.E. de Saint-Priest],*Malte par un voyageur francois,* part 2 (s.l., 1791), 41, gave a total of around 90,000. Blouet (1981), 75, reports that the *status animarum* for 1784 gave 87,749 souls and that for 1797 gave 96,534, implying a total population of nearly 100,000. A. Anderson, *A Journal of the Forces ......* (London, 1802), 156, gave a total for ca. 1801 of over 90,000, of which 16,000 were on Gozo. There had, in fact, been much famine and sickness during resistance to the French in 1799 and 1800: P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta* (London, 1964), 519-527.

25. Blouet (1964), 132.
26. M. Zammit, *Żurrieq: 1750-1801* (BA thesis: University of Malta, 1976), 7-8; K. Sant — M. Vassallo, "Tarxien in the XVIII Century: a Statistical Portrait", *Melita Historica*, vii no. 4 (1979), 365.
27. P. Farrugia – F. Boffa, *Parish of Gudja: 1770-1800* (BA thesis: University of Malta, 1973), 128-135; Blouet (1981), 81, gives figures for other villages.
28. Mallia, 109.
29. Cassar (1964), 175 *et passim.*
30. Cited in Mallia, 107.

provide a secure market for local industries, the Order fed and defended a large and growing population for which it maintained a sufficient standard of life on two small and rocky islands. Foodstuffs had to be imported and paid for; money was pumped into the island; employment was provided; Sicilian grain was acquired free of duty; agriculture was encouraged; and profits were made on commerce, on the port services, on the *corso* and in the cotton industry. Population was the fundamental factor in the economic equation and cotton was the key to prosperity. Statistically, the financial significance of investment in fortifications or of prizes in the *corso* was relatively small, but marginal profit or loss could be vital. For example, any kind of extraordinary military or naval preparations at once caused financial problems. These can be difficult to elucidate because of the considerable confusion between the Knight's Treasury, the Grand Master's personal purse, the various trusts or *fondazioni,* and other financial institutions on the island; even at the time any attempt to draw up a national "budget" must have been extremely approximative. Only at the end of the century under Bosredon de Ransijat was the attempt made.

The annual income of the Order's Treasury stood at 1,921,642 scudi in 1762, at 1,073,920 in 1767 and at 832,049 in 1771, but it had been restored to well over 1,300,000 by 1790. The *responsiones* theoretically due from the European priories were raised to 500,000 scudi a year in 1776, and in addition there were fluctuating sums for the death duties and passage monies of the Knights, taxes raised in Malta, the sale of European properties, profits from the manipulation of the Maltese currency, and so forth; almost half these incomes derived from the French priories.[31] Grants and subsidies came from the papacy and from foreign powers. Some Knights were themselves very rich, and individual brethren brought to Malta money which was expended on houses, servants, food, clothes and various luxuries. Early in the century the Grand Master's own incomes, the *Ricetta Magistrale,* were estimated at 100,000 scudi a year, of which 30 percent came from the customs dues, the *dogana;*[32] a visitor to Malta gave the total, exaggeratedly perhaps, as up to 300,000 scudi in 1775.[33] By 1792/6 the *Ricetta Magistrale* amounted to 234,897 scudi a year, of which 33,573 came from outside Malta and 201,324 were derived from the islands, including 86,536 scudi out of landed incomes, 78,131 from the customs and 4,279 as one tenth of prizes taken in the *corso.* As European sources of income were in-

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31. Hoppen, 143-144, 158; only a limited proportion of the Order's total European surplus incomes could be remitted to Malta.
32. Mallia-Milanes (1978), 10-11. A manuscript in the possession of Roger Vella Bonavita gives the income from the Magistral *secrezia* for the year 1773/4 as 52,834 scudi and expenses as 16,207 scudi.
33. [M.J.] de Borch, *Lettres sur la Sicile et sur l'île de Malthe,* i (Turin, 1782), 182.

terrupted or threatened, money was increasingly invested in Malta itself, especially through the great *fondazioni* set up by Grand Masters and others to bring in a permanent income. The Treasury's average annual income between 1778 and 1788 was 1,315,299 scudi, all of which came from outside Malta, except for 34,302 scudi from the *fondazioni* and 16,617 scudi from the redemption of slaves; to this figure should be added 48,875 scudi from those *fondazioni* whose incomes did not pass through the Treasury's accounts, which gives a grand total of 1,364,174 scudi. Of this sum a yearly average of 467,876 scudi, that is about a third, was spent on galleys and ships; 195,339 on land forces and forts; 99,653 on hospitals; 38,264 on the slave prisons, for the slaves were not inexpensive; 34,546 on public works; 17,309 on alms; and 29,910 on the Conventual churches. Thornton estimated that around 1778 the Order was putting 825,253 scudi a year into the Maltese economy in the way of foreign money spent through the Treasury, plus perhaps nearly 1,000,000 scudi as the expenditure of individual Knights and in particular of wealthy Grand Masters.[34]

The government had some choice of policies. Grand Masters Zondadari and Ximenes imposed large-scale economies, thereby risking discontent and even revolt. Vilhena purchased political peace by financing employment through public works and buildings. Pinto kept the price of bread down but ran the Order into heavy debts. On Vilhena's death in 1736 the Treasury was in debt by 278,646 scudi, a sum which had increased by a further 179,003 scudi at Despuig's death in 1741.[35] By 1776 the Order's debts stood at 1,183,456 scudi which incurred a large payment as interest, and there was an annual deficit of 120,098 scudi; these figures had been even higher in the years before 1773. Pinto's rule saw all manner of frauds and scandals in the affairs of the *Massa Frumentaria*, a fund in which the populace could invest at 3 percent and which had a monopoly on grain imports for which it was responsible. On Pinto's death in 1773 the commune or *Università* of Valletta, which controlled the *Massa*, was bankrupt and owed the Order's Treasury 600,000 scudi. Yet Pinto himself had taken 293,000 scudi from the *Massa*, 100,000 of them to complete the Auberge of Castile, while other loans from the *Massa*, for some of which there was not even a receipt, totalled at least 300,000 scudi.[36] Between 1709 and 1723 an average of some 345,000 scudi a year was being paid out for foodstuffs from abroad, even though the grain imported from Sicily was exempt from export dues in

34. Estimates published by Thornton, 4, 27-31, 38-49; the contributions of individual Knights are really incalculable, and Thornton's estimate is simply a guess. Thornton actually put the Order's total contribution at 1,850,000 scudi where Ramsijat had estimated only 1,640,000.

35. Fava (1970), 27.

36. P. Fava, "A Reign of Austerity: Economic Difficulties during the Rule of Grand Master Ximenes (1773-1775)," *Storja* 78 (Malta, 1978).

Sicily; if the *Università* had its monies commandeered by the Knights or if it was not allowed to recoup such sums through realistic bread prices or by subsidies from the Treasury, some sort of trouble was likely.[37] On the other hand, at the end of the century local taxation, imposed both by the Order and by the *Università*, was bringing in well over 235,000 scudi a year.[38]

The coin or credit which went to pay for foodstuffs, for timber, armaments, manufactured goods, luxuries and other supplies had to be found somehow. The annual sums imported by the Order may have increased marginally but they were in any case insufficient, especially with a continually increasing population. Manipulating the fiduciary copper currency may have enriched the Order at the expense of the populace but it did not create wealth; nor did spending money on armed forces and a bureaucracy, on a fleet and on fortifications and buildings, even if those activities provided employment by encouraging the dockyard and the construction industry. It was more sensible to reduce such expenses. Thus the total expenditures on the upkeep of four ships of the line was cut from 359,131 scudi in the years 1719/21 to 262,663 in 1721/23,[39] and the cost of work on the fortifications was reduced from 36,000 scudi in 1765 to an average of 12,765 between 1778 and 1788.[40] Wealth was generated by encouraging commerce, by offering excellent dockyard and quarantine facilities, by building warehouses and reducing tariffs on trade, and by fostering the use of the Grand Harbour as a centre for the transhipment and storing of merchandise. In 1721/3 the merchant fleet was probably employing some 3000 men and the *corso* about 700 aboard ship.[41] For much of the century the *corso* was in serious decline, but after 1776 it enjoyed a comparative revival. The Grand Master received 10 percent of the auctioned prizes, and a number of captives were enslaved or sold. Between 1792 and 1798 Malta's naval strength was about 25 fighting ships. In 1788 the Order's fleet still employed around 1900 men, and an average of 529 were at sea in the *corso* between 1792 and 1797; these were mainly Maltese. They won average annual prizes of 65,629 scudi between 1787 and 1797 with an estimated peak of 117,000 scudi in 1796; these are minimal figures derived from the auctions of prizes, and effective income may have been as much as double this, but there were also investments, expenses and losses.[42] This was an important and glamorous marginal source of wealth,

37. Mallia, 97 *et passim.*
38. Thornton, 35.
39. Mallia, 69-75.
40. Hoppen, 153.
41. Mallia, 106.
42. P. Earle, *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary* (London, 1970), should be revised in the light of P. Caruana Curran, *The Last Years of the Maltese Corso: a Study of Privateering in Malta during the years 1787-1798* (BA thesis: Uni-

but it could not by itself have sustained the Maltese economy.

The astonishing rise in population naturally resulted in determined governmental efforts to expand food production, above all during the seventeenth century. Marginal and rocky lands were brought under cultivation; fields and terraces hewed from the rock; earth stolen; marshes drained; irrigation regulated; grazing encouraged; silk introduced; and poultry raised. There were very few trees on the islands, and vines and olives were comparatively rare. The population tended to concentrate in the larger villages, veritable mini-agrotowns. Mid-term and long-term leases in emphyteusis assured the farmer some security of tenure while demanding such improvements as the breaking of rocks, the building of walls, the planting of trees and the compulsory rotation of crops. All advances had constantly to be maintained and defended against storms, erosion and decay. Many projects foundered and others were scarcely rewarding; for example a property at Għajn Tuffieħa which had been rented for 4 years in 1657 at 400 scudi a year fetched only 160 scudi a year on a 29-year lease in 1769. Gozitan agriculture flourished in particular, with exports to Malta and a population which rose even faster than that of the Maltese.[43]

The deficiency in Malta's balance of payments was largely made good through one single product: cotton. There were other exports, some ashes of kalimagnum and a few oranges for example,[44] but it was cotton, raw, spun and occasionally woven, which occupied the population. Between 1776 and 1797 exports, which paid 3⅓ percent duty, stood at a yearly average value of 1,711,800 scudi, and subsequently were seldom valued at less; the highest annual figure of 2,816,610 scudi came in 1787/8. In other words, cotton was bringing into the island more money than was the Order. Not all the cotton exported had been grown in the islands since some was imported raw for spinning and re-exported. The government took care to maintain high standards of production for the cotton which was exported, often by Maltese shippers, to Marseilles and above all to Barcelona where the customs dues were lowered in its favour. A comparatively small area of land planted with cotton could support a family and the crop fitted excellently into the island's agricultural economy. To some extent it displaced grain, leaving the production of barley and *mischiato* grains on the more marginal lands. Cotton was, however, rotated with other crops; furthermore the seed was used to fatten cattle imported from Sicily which provided meat and milk, and the stalks were burned as firewood. The raw cotton was spun at home as a cottage industry by the women and children, and the crop

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versity of Malta, 1973), 41-47, 137, 201 *et passim;* see also G. Wettinger, *Some Aspects of Slavery in Malta: 1530-1800* (Ph. D. thesis: University of London, 1971), which unfortunately remains unpublished.

43. Blouet (1964), 70-119 *et passim.*
44. Mallia-Milanes (1978), 3.

supported a range of middlemen engaged in weaving it, emballing and weighing it, seeing it through customs, shipping it, and finally in selling it abroad. Cotton provided an ideal way of utilizing the limited agricultural area available, giving a living to the farmers and their families, and to the retailers and merchants. Investments in fields and cisterns, rising rents and land values testified to the cash value of cotton as a crop. Cotton brought in taxes to the Grand Master and a sum in foreign earnings which, presumably, went far to pay the rising costs of the food and wine imported to feed a continually growing population; to an increasing extent the Maltese were supporting themselves.[45]

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The standard of living of the Maltese people is difficult to gauge. There were certainly complaints and grumbles, and there were serious crises when plague or famine in Sicily or mismanagement by the government in Malta led to food shortages and high prices. In 1715 the Bishop stated that the Maltese were heavily weighed down by taxation, and according to an obviously exaggerated complaint of 1709, "the majority of the Maltese are poverty-stricken and have to live by begging. Such families have to be content with barley-bread, at most. One may see women and even tender children, as well as men, half-naked in the rigorous cold of the winter."[46] There are indeed other examples of observations on country people surviving on a frugal diet, walking barefoot, prostituting their daughters and so on.[47] Doubtless, as elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the peasants lived close to the bone and were hard-hit at moments of crisis when the poor had to eat barley and even carobs.[48] Yet the population continued to rise at a remarkable rate and there is little sign of any systematic emigration; in fact the island also contained numerous foreigners among the Knights, their troops and followers, galley-convicts and slaves, and independent foreign merchants. Valletta was a cosmopolitan metropolis, an administrative and cultural centre,

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45. Important materials, including the export statistics, in J. Debono, *Aspects of the Cotton Trade in Malta: 1750-1800* (BA thesis: University of Malta, 1976). Other details in Blouet (1964), 54-58, 78, 265-270; Cavaliero, 85-86; V. Mallia-Milanes, "Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Trade Relations in the XVIIIth Century", *Studi Veneziani*, xvi (1974), 505-508; see also A. Curmi, *Malta as seen by Foreigners during the Period of the Order and the Early Years of British Rule: 1530-1815* (BA thesis: University of Malta, 1973), 218-222; A. Vella, "The Cotton Textile Industry in Malta," *Melita Historica*, iv no. 3 (1966), 210-214; and P. Voltes, "Il Algodón de Malta y la Industria Textil Catalana", in *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: University of Malta*, iv no. 4 (1977), 201-205. Potato cultivation had recently been introduced in 1801: Blouet (1964), 80 n. 2.
46. Cited in Sant, 210, 211 n. 2.
47. Eg. Curmi, 126-128, 198-199, 204-205, 214; Fava (1970), 191-192.
48. P. Muscat, *Aspects of Municipal Government in Malta: 1720-1780* (BA thesis: University of Malta, 1975), 44 n. 2.

and the Three Cities its industrial suburbs. There was a notable sense of security. The countryside was less affluent, cut off from the capital and less directly dependent on the Knights; it was the townspeople who received employment from the Order. The government provided for justice and education, defence, health and welfare. There were aqueducts and hospitals, a theatre, a library, a university and so forth. The quality of urban life reached a high degree of sophistication on a European scale and Malta enjoyed continental contacts which British rule was later to inhibit. A surplus of wealth in town and village was demonstrated in private palaces and houses, in the quality and quantity of their furnishings, their gold, silver and artisan products, in florid parish churches opulently decorated, and in a wealth of rural chapels.[49] For many people material life was rather well provided for, judging by the standards of the eighteenth-century Mediterranean world.

The lack of political liberty and participation in government was another matter. Unrest was not incompatible with a certain prosperity. The Order's rule became increasingly absolute, despotic and overcentralized, while the residual rights of the ancient *università* were diminished under Pinto and Ximenes, and in 1777 De Rohan formally abolished the *consiglio popolare*. Some contemporary observers harped, exaggeratedly no doubt, on the theme of sexual exploitation of Maltese women by the Knights and the resentment it provoked.[50] The common people, largely inarticulate, may not often have resented their foreign governors, but there were groups such as the lawyers, doctors and professors which did. The nobles, many of whose titles were very recent creations, mostly had amicable relations with the Knights. The nobility quite often occupied public or ecclesiastical office. However, it had little power and lamented its exclusion from the Order, a policy which the Knights maintained for many centuries, being sensibly reluctant to create an element within the Order which would have ties of kinship or interest with those who held land or office on the island.[51] The church provided more serious opposition. The Bishop and the Inquisitor were never Maltese, but they opposed the Grand Master in an endless series of jurisdictional squabbles which had politically unsettling effects.

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49. Q. Hughes, *The Building of Malta: 1530-1795* (2nd ed: London, 1967); V. Denaro, *The Houses of Valletta* (Malta, 1967); *idem*, *The Goldsmiths of Malta and their Marks* (Florence, 1972).
50. The literary evidence appears to be contradicted by very low statistics for deaths of illegitimate infants: A. Micallef — J. Vella Bondin, *A Social Study of the Death Records of the Parish of St. Dominic – Porto Salvo: 1790-1815* (BA thesis: University of Malta, 1973), 21-27.
51. Cf. J. Montalto, *The Nobles of Malta: 1530-1800* (Malta, 1979), which contains a great deal of information, drawn from private archives, on a wide variety of topics. Cavaliero, 156, provides no evidence for the assertion that the nobles offered to help crush the 1775 rising.

Though some of the clergy were active in the professions, for example as teachers and professors, the church with its priests, friars, nuns and lesser clergy constituted economically a largely unproductive class, while it controlled a considerable portion of the island's wealth and property. The Bishop's income stood at 14,588 scudi in 1757.[52] There were 1262 *sacerdoti* in 1725;[53] some 6000 "patentees" in 1775;[54] and 1156 *sacerdoti* and 567 *chierici*, of whom 195 were married, in 1777.[55] The Jesuits were expelled in 1768 and other matters were scarcely satisfactory: the Bishop held no synod between 1703 and 1800; the clergy claimed exemptions from militia service and from certain taxes; and the Bishop's and the Inquisitor's "patentees", who were beyond the jurisdiction of the Order, were often involved in criminal activities for which they could not be punished effectively.

There were various classes of popular grievance, often expressed by the clergy. One prototype of these was Canon Pietro Ristri's *discorso* of 1646. Major complaints among the many he voiced were the Order's manipulation of the copper currency; illegal and unfair taxes on the people; the abolition of the privileges granted, or supposedly granted, to the Maltese before 1530; the wealth allegedly hoarded by the Knights and their immoralities; expenditures on fortifications which, it was held, were directed against the people rather than against the Turks; the Order's reduction of charity and its extravagances; and its oppression of the clergy by insisting that they provide military service.[56] Most of this was exaggerated, untrue or unfair, and it looked backwards to an imaginary medieval Utopia rather than forwards to a social revolution, but there were real problems. In 1775, with debts standing high, with poor harvests in Sicily and grain unobtainable or very expensive, with the Bishop forced into exile and with provocations from certain Knights, a small, discontented, poorly organized group from the lower clergy launched a revolt. There was genuine suffering and hardship on the island, and the leaders apparently expected a general insurrection but, despite their initial success in taking Fort St. Elmo, no one rose to support them.[57] Presumably this was not because there were no grievances but because the grievances were not sufficiently serious and were, indeed, too clerical in character. The eighteenth century in Malta had

52. A. Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, ii (Malta, 1968), 7; some lesser incomes are given in V. Borg, *The Seminary of Malta and the Ecclesiastical Benefices of the Maltese Islands* (Malta, 1965), 18-32.
53. Mallia, 109.
54. Cavaliero, 129.
55. Fava (1970), 274-276.
56. Details in Sant, 179-181, 193-196; cf. Hoppen, 148-150.
57. F. Laferla, *Una Giustizia Storica: Don Gaetano Mannarino nella luce dei Documenti* (Rome, 1926); P. Callus, *The Rising of the Priests: Its Implications and Repercussions on Ecclesiastical Immunity* (Malta, 1961): additional materials and documents in Fava (1970), 178-233, 263-298.

been a peaceful one, the revolutionaries had no leadership or prestige, and there was no evident alternative to government by the Order. The Knights were foreigners but Malta was their base and it was in their interest to administer and defend it rather than merely to loot it. Many of the more articulate Maltese were presumably tired of the Knights, and by the end of the century they knew of a revolutionary world in which men claimed rights and freedoms. They hoped the French might bring these, and when they did not they turned against them and sought such advantages from Britain.

Undoubtedly there was an element of resentment against the Knights, for proto-national sentiments had gradually developed among the Maltese. There were threats of revolution and at one point the slogan *Poveri Maltesi, in che miserie vi ha portato questo Gran Maestro* was daubed on the walls of Ximenes' palace.[58] Even in the first half of the seventeenth century Maltese clerics such as Filippo Borg, Girolamo Manduca and Gian Francesco Abela were developing a historiographical tradition which, explicitly or implicitly, criticized the Knights and sought to establish the identity of the Maltese people.[59] Those who were born in Malta and spoke Maltese were distinguished from most Africans by their intense Christian religiosity and from Europeans by their Semitic tongue. The eighteenth century saw the effective beginnings of a Maltese literature with Agius de Soldanis and others studying Maltese history, language and folklore; in 1752 the catechism was published in a Maltese translation. In fact eighteenth-century Malta enjoyed an active and vigorous cosmopolitan development of cultural activity in which various Maltese collaborated in academic activities with the Knights. Neither the nobility nor the upper clergy gave the Maltese a political lead; that had always been the function of the lower clergy, the natural leaders of the people. The government of the Knights was benevolently despotic and in some ways efficient. There were grievances and complaints but life was seldom intolerable, and revolution on a small, isolated island had no obvious hope of success without foreign assistance. Prosperity itself encouraged the emergence of a bourgeoisie which fomented attitudes of discontent in which there was much ambiguity.[60]

58. Fava (1978), 56.
59. G. Wettinger, "Early Maltese Popular Attitudes to the Government of the Order of St. John," *Melita Historica*, vi no. 3 (1974); A. Luttrell, "Girolamo Manduca and Gian Francesco Abela: Tradition and Invention in Maltese Historiography", *ibid.* vii no. 2 (1977).
60. At the end of the century the works of the *philosophes* were available in Malta but probably only a few scholars read them; Montalto, 293-302, 339-348, discusses French culture and Freemasonary. Mikiel Anton Vassalli, an intellectual who became "enlightened" abroad, was concerned for education and the Maltese language. He did not originally advocate the expulsion of the Knights; he wanted political rights for the people, the acceptance of the

The Order lost its hold on Malta because it was unable to alter its own fundamental character in order to meet the new demands of a changing world; the crusade was over, the island could not be industrialized, the Mediterranean had become a backward lake, Malta was too dependent on France, and the Ancien Régime in Western Europe had largely collapsed. The Knights left Malta with a vastly overgrown population but with a fortified base which would attract a new ruler in the future. For the Maltese the eighteenth century was not one of decline but rather a period of relative prosperity and of growing, if as yet not fully conscious, political awareness and frustration. To the inhabitants it inevitably seemed as if the Knights were exploiting them, as in many ways they were, but their paternal rule was not entirely unenlightened. The Knights brought wealth to Malta, an increase in immigration and population, a more urban, cosmopolitan quality of life and, above all, a prosperous and comfortable middling and professional class which was in close touch with the world of the Knights and the culture of France and Italy. The contrasting quality of existence on Gozo, which remained backward, provincial and highly insular suggests what Malta might have been like without nearly three centuries of rule by the Knights who played a vital role in the development of the Maltese islands.

Maltese in the Order, and commercial relations with Muslim countries designed to make Malta a flourishing entrepot: A Cremona, *Vassalli and his Times* (trans: Malta, 1940), 23-33.

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THE FIRST DOCUMENTED CASE OF DRUG ADDICTION IN MALTA – SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE*

PAUL CASSAR

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) is one of the arresting figures in the English literary field of the first quarter of the 19th century. Today he is remembered mainly for his critical writings on William Shakespeare and for his evocative poem *The Ancient Mariner* though he also made a name, in his time, as a journalist and as a philosopher.

As a human being he was weak-willed, over-sensitive to physical discomfort and to the psychological stresses of life, incapable of taking decisions and of sustained mental activity and unable to adjust to an unhappy domestic situation stemming from a frustrating marriage. He was particularly prone to recurrent phases of despondency and depression and dependent upon his friends, among whom were William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Charles and Mary Lamb, for his material and psychological support.

At one period of his life he tried to escape from his chronic physical ailments and material circumstances by coming to Malta; in fact when he arrived in our island at the dawn of the 19th century, he was distressed by his tempestuous married life, harassed by debts and in the grip of opium addiction. It is from this aspect of addiction — and more particularly for the fact that he provides us with the first documented case of drug dependency in Malta — that I propose to deal with Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

He had been taking opiates since at least 1791[1] by way of treatment against various complaints which included "rheumatism", "gout", "asthma" and skin affections; indeed he was only nineteen and still a student at Cambridge when he was first introduced to opium for medical reasons. Later on in life he also resorted to the drug to relieve the anxieties occasioned by his estrangement from his wife so that opium became for him, to use his own words, "a sort of guardian genius". He found relief in the initial pleasurable state of mind induced by opium[2]

*Text of a Post Graduate Medical Lecture held at the Medical School, St. Luke's Hospital, on 20 March 1980.

1. Chambers, E.K., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford 1938), pp. 17,52,62,106.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

but he also became aware of its unpleasant aftermath in the form of feelings of exhaustion and indolence, stomach upsets, abdominal colic, disturbed sleep and distressful dreams which made him dread going to bed at night. Some of this "anguish" and "agony" found expression in his *Pains of Sleep* composed in 1803.[3]

By 1801 opium had taken such a hold on him that he was having some 80 to 100 drops a day in the form of Kendal Black Drops to relieve the pains of his swollen knees.[4]

In addition to opium Coleridge sometimes also took alcohol in the form of brandy. He also refers to the self-administration of aether, hyoscyamine (henbane) pills and nepenthe, a preparation similar to laudanum but milder in action.[5] In February 1803 he was experimenting with Indian hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) which in those days reached Great Britain from Barbary. He also inhaled nitrous oxide or laughing gas, first explored by Humphrey Davy in 1799, which Coleridge claimed provoked in him "the most entrancing visions".[6]

It is to be noted that, except for nitrous oxide, all the other substances used by Coleridge formed part of the therapeutic armamentarium of the medical profession and of the conventional stock of drugs of the pharmacist of the time. *Spiritus Aetheris* and *Extractum Hyoscyami Viride* were used for the relief of pain or as sedatives and narcotics, *Extractum Cannabis Indicae* or the tincture — made from the resin of the flowering tops of the female plant *Cannabis sativa* grown in India — were prescribed in tetanus, hydrophobia and insommia.[7]

Towards the close of 1803, seeing that the treatment that he was having for "gout" had had no beneficial effect, Coleridge decided to take up residence in a warm climate. He chose Malta at the suggestiin of Sir John Stoddart, His Majesty's Advocate at the Admiralty Court.[8] The undesirable effects of opium had became quite evident at this period; in fact his friends had remarked that he had become very depressed and very excitable and that there was a "want of regular work and application". He had become a man of strong dislikes, tending to be offensive to those who disagreed with him, unreliable in maintaining promises and in persevering in projects which he had in mind; and also cheating and tricking his doctors to obtain the drug.[9] Such was the

3. *Ibid.*, p. 174, Raine, K., *Coleridge, Poems and Prose* (Penguin Books, 1957), p. 99. Coburn, K. *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. 2, (London 1962), Note 2666.
4. Chambers, p. 138.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 162,168,174.
6. Bettmann, O.L., *A Pictorial History of Medicine* (Springfield, 1972), p. 253.
7. Squire, P., *Companion to the British Pharmacopoeia* (London, 1882), pp. 28,85,178.
8. Chambers, p. 177. Coburn, Note 2099.
9. Guest Gornall, R., "Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Doctors", *Medical History*, 1973, 17, 338.

psychological state of Coleridge when, at the age of thirty-one, he landed in Malta on 18 May 1804 trusting to find tranquillity, a climate congenial to his ailments and a gainful occupation.[10] He also hoped that he would be able to do without opium and to avoid its deleterious results of which he had warnings during his sea passage in convoy to Malta when the captain of his ship had to hoist distress signals to the Commodore for a surgeon to go on board to attend to one of Coleridge's abdominal crisis.[11]

Stay at Malta

In Malta he managed, initially, to stick to his resolution to do without the drug in spite of disturbed sleep at night but by 28 May, having become feverish, he took thirty drops of laudanum i.e. ten drops more than the dose to which he was accustomed in England.[12]

On 4 July he was employed by Sir Alexander Ball, His Britannic Majesty's Civil Commissioner for the Affairs of Malta, as undersecretary and later as Acting Secretary) to government. Owing to this official post Coleridge lived, at various periods, at The Palace in Valletta or at The Treasury nearby or at Sant Anton Palace, Attard, after having stayed with the Stoddarts from 18 May to 6 July,[13] at the Auberge d'Allemagne in Valletta on the site now occupied by the Anglican Cathedral of St. Paul.

Coleridge found his official work uncongenial for he was thrown a good deal upon his own resources, so much so that to ease the anxieties connected with his duties he resorted to opium "in large quantities".[14] He went on vacation to Sicily from 10 August to 8 November 1804. Here, during one of his excursions, he stumbled upon "numerous poppy fields for the growth of opium" and he took this opportunity to take away two or three grains of the drug by incising the poppy capsules. He also discovered that Indian hemp was cultivated in that island but he does not seem to have consumed intoxicants while in Sicily so that his health improved at this juncture.[15] On his return to Malta, however, he again succumbed to his addiction to opium and to whisky and gin on 23 December 1804. He felt driven to it to allay his mental agitation and the accompanying bouts of gastric discomfort and the emergence of terrifying dreams. In fact a dose of opium at bedtime induced a sen-

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10. Sultana, D., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Malta and Italy* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 137,142.
11. Guest Gornal, p. 331. Sultana, p. 135.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 146,150.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 161,227. Chambers, p. 185. Coburn, Note 2505.
14. Laferla, A.V., "Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Public Secretary of Malta", *The Daily Malta Chronicle*, April 4, 1931, p. 9.
15. Sultana, pp. 193,225,198,212,233.

sation of relaxation and tranquil sleep but when the effect wore off he was gripped by acute feelings of guilt and tried to find strength in prayer, in religious speculations and in renewing his resolution to fight the habit.[16]

By mid-February 1805 he became depressed and self-reproachful for his opium cravings and intemperance. His morale reached a low ebb by the beginning of April under increasing doses of opium and towards the end of the month his depression worsened by heavy drinking. It was at this time that, for the first time, he contemplated to commit suicide as a release from his misery.[17] It may be remarked that his brother Francis had killed himself in 1799 in a fit of depression.[18]

Coleridge was finally relieved of his post on 6 September 1805 when the new secretary Mr. Edmund Francis Chapman arrived in the island and took up his duties.[19] By this time Coleridge had been having opium nightly.[20]

Return to England

After a stay of sixteen months Coleridge left Malta on 23 September 1805[21] to return to Great Britain via Sicily and Italy. While in Italy he continued to suffer from depression with recurrent suicidal tendencies, hypochondriasis and despondency over his opium habit that by now had become inveterate. He reached England from Leghorn on 17 August 1806 after a sea voyage of fifty-five days which he spent in "physical pain and moral prostration" so that his friends were shocked at the sight of his wretched physical and mental state. He was a disgruntled man without any plans for the future and still aggravated by debts.[22]

In England he remained dependent on opium. In 1808 he made an effort to break the habit but this attempt was as unsuccessful as two other previous ones in 1804 — the first when he was on board ship during his passage to Malta and the second after meeting Sir Alexander Ball at San Anton Palace on 21 May.[23]

In 1808 he sought treatment from a medical man and for a time he succeeded in reducing the intake of the drug but he again slipped into his habit. By mid-1814 his nervous condition was so bad that he could not take up a glass of water without spilling it and a man had to

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 249,250,254,261,284,287,353.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 293,296,320,324,327. Coburn, Notes 2712,2866.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Laferla, p. 9.
20. Sultana, p. 361.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 371.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 398,404,409,399. Chambers, p. 192.
23. Sultana, pp. 135,146,400. Chambers, p. 197.

be engaged to follow him about the streets to prevent him from buying laudanum from chemists.[24] Finally he placed himself under the strict medical supervision of Dr. James Gillman at Highgate in April 1816. Opium was reduced to medicinal doses but at times Coleridge managed to obtain the drug surreptitiously from a chemist in that town. Under the regime of Dr. Gillman, Coleridge was able to engage in literary work during the last eighteen years of his life although, in the words of Thomas De Quincey, opium "killed Coleridge as a poet" and caused him to leave his philosophical speculations unfinished.[25] Coleridge died from congestive heart failure on 25 July 1834 after forty-three years of slavery to opium.[26]

Actions of Opium

Crude opium is the dried juice obtained by incising the unripe seed capsule of the white poppy plant *Papaver somniferum* which grew originally in Asia Minor. From there the use of opium reached Greece and then Rome about the 5th century B.C. The Arab physicians of the 10th century administered it for medicinal purposes and by the 16th century European doctors were prescribing it in the form of an alcoholic extract known as Tincture of Opium or laudanum for relieving pain and inducing sleep.[27]

In England there was a considerable vogue for it in the 18th century. It was eaten, smoked or drunk in the form of an infusion or mixed with alcohol. India was the great source of supply for Great Britain so much so that the trade in the drug assumed an enormous economic importance to both countries by the end of the century.[28]

During the following thirty years, British merchants extended the opium trade from India to China but because of the harmful effects of the drug on health and on the exchequer, the Chinese government prohibited the importation of opium. The merchants resorted to smuggling and when the Chinese tried to stop this by force, Great Britain sent a military expedition which gave rise to the so-called Opium War of 1839 and China was forced to make trade concessions to European powers and to open Hong Kong to British commerce in 1842.[29]

Several literary celebrities in Great Britain were addicts to opium. Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) claimed to have experienced a state

24. Caine, H., *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1887), p. 19.
25. De Quincey, T., *Works*, Vol. XI (Edinburgh, 1863), p. 107.
26. Crambers, pp. 197,216,237,253,289,308,330. Guest Gornall, pp. 331,339.
27. Jevons, F.R., "Was Plotinus Influenced by Opium ", *Medical History*, 1965, 9,374.
    Burn, H., *Drugs, Medicines and Man* (London, 1963), p. 110.
28. Leigh, D., "Medicine, the City and China", *Medical History*, 1974, 18,58.
29. Weech, W.N. (Ed.), *History of the World* (London, n.d. 1944?), pp. 390,773.

of ecstacy from opium and ascribed to its influence his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821). He had started taking the tincture at the age of 17 for "neuralgia" from toothache until by time it became as necessary to him as "the air he breathes".[30] Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) suffered from renal colic and his wife was a chronic asthmatic who predeceased him in 1826. Between 1823 and 1825 laudanum and opium pills were supplied to them by an Edinburgh chemist in such large amounts — equivalent to six grams of morphine a day — as to suggest addiction in either of them or both. This was some six years before he came to Malta for three weeks in 1831 after suffering from an apoplectic stroke.[31] Scott's friend, George Crabbe (1754-1832), poet, medical practitioner, priest and author of the poem *Parish Register* (1807), began to have opium for "digestive weakness" but became "much addicted" to it in later years. Their contemporary, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-61) could not do without her "indispensable morphine" and felt uncomfortable when the dose was "weaker than usual".[32] The poet Francis Thompson (1859-1907), author of the *Hound of Heaven*, took opium between 1880 and 1907.[33] The American novelist and poet, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49), the pioneer of the modern detective story, besides being an alcoholic was also an opium addict.[34]

Dangers of Opium Administration

There is no doubt that opiates — thanks to the alkaloid morphine they contain — are effective, when used medicinally, in allaying apprehension and dulling pain in medical and surgical emergencies. However, they produce untoward results of a grave nature when administered over prolonged periods. The drug causes a tendency to introversion but there is no support for Coleridge's allegation that it excites the poetic imagination and his explanation of how *Kubla Khan*, had been written on waking from a deep sleep following the ingestion of an anodyne of opium in 1798. The dangers of uncontrolled opium administration are:

a. The establishment of tolerance, i.e. the need, following the regular use of the drug, to take even larger doses to obtain the same

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30. Stores, G., "Morphine was not made to be withheld," *The Manchester Medical Gazette*, 1968, 47,14.
Lewin, L., *Phantastica* (Milano, 1928), p. 52. De Quincey, T., *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (Edinburgh, 1862), pp. 4,5.
31. Mac Nalty, A.S., *Sir Walter Scott, The Wounded Falcon* (London, 1969), pp. 92,170.
32. Miller, B. *Robert Browning* (London, 1952), p. 193. *The Encylopaedia Britannica*, 11th Edition (Cambridge, 1910), p. 359. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XII (London, 1887), p. 429.
33. Thompson, F., *Works*, Vol. 2, (London, 1913), p. 3. Jevons, p. 374.
34. Hammerton, J. (Ed.), *Practical Knowledge for All*, Vol. I (London), p. 215.

relief as previously so much so that from twenty to two hundred times the ordinary therapeutic dose may have to be taken. De Quincey seems to have consumed amounts of Tincture of Opium equivalent to 4.7 grams of morphine daily (about 60 grains).[35] Coleridge had started with a small dose of laudanum equivalent to one-and--a-half grains (90 milligrams) of opium daily but rose to two hundred grains (13 grams) a day in times of stress.[36]

b. Addiction or dependence, i.e. a craving for the drug which, if not satisfied, causes both mental and physical suffering. Dependence had developed in Coleridge by the time he was twenty eight.[37] It seems that anybody can become addicted to opium after three or so weeks of regular use but the personality make-up of the subject plays a major role in its development, unstable characters are more likely to become addicted.[38]

c. Withdrawal manifestations, i.e. if the drug supply is discontinued abruptly the individual becomes restless, starts vomiting and complains of violent pains in his abdomen and leg muscles. Diarrhoea and insomnia may also occur.[39]

There are indications that while in Malta, Coleridge did have warnings of such an impending crisis which he describes as a feeling of "oppression of my breathing and convulsive snatching in my stomach and limbs". These symptoms were relieved by taking the drug.[40]

State Control of Opium Consumption

Before 1800 opium was a popular remedy in the Fens of England for the treatment of malarial fever and to keep children quiet at night especially during the teething period. It was commonly given in the form of poppy-head tea, the plants being grown in the Fen area itself for local consumption and also for the London market for the production of Syrup of White Poppies.[41] Besides this local source of opium, Great Britain imported about one hundred thousand pounds by weight of the drug yearly by the 1850s, "enough to give every single inhabitant of the country a dozen fatal doses". Its use was so widespread that it has been said that a bottle of laudanum (a solution of opium in alcohol) was the main item among the medicaments contained in the domestic medicine box or chest.[42]

35. *Burn*, p. 107.
36. Guest Gornall, p. 331.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 330.
38. Jevons, p. 374. Burn, pp. 103-7.
39. Jevons, p. 374. Burn, pp. 103-7.
40. Caine, p. 94.
41. Berridge, V., "Opium in the Fens in Nineteenth Century England," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 1979, 34,293.
42. Sherwood Taylor, F., *The Century of Science*, (London, 1952), p. 206.

In Coleridge's day there were no legal or other restraints on the sale of opium in Great Britain. Legislation to control the use of narcotics was not passed until 1868 when restrictions in the sale of these drugs by unqualified vendors came into force by the Pharmacy Act. In fact Coleridge acquired his supplies of opium from the vintner's shop apart from the apothecary. He took it in various forms — as the crude drug (initially half-a-grain or 30 milligrams daily), as pills, as laudanum or as a preparation called Kendal Black Drops.[43]

In contrast to Great Britain, the consumption of opium in Malta had been regulated by legislation since at least the third decade of the seventeenth century. In those days there was a substantial population of Moslem slaves in the island and their use of opium, with consequent harm to their health and utility in the labour market, had assumed sufficient gravity as to induce the government of the Order of St. John in 1613 to legislate against its use by slaves. The latter were prohibited from obtaining, buying, keeping or selling it while pharmacists were debarred from selling it to slaves under penalty of a fine and of corporal punishment. In spite of these provisions, however, the use of opium by slaves had not been adequately curbed a century later and the legal code of Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena of 1742 laid down the penalty of death for those keeping or obtaining or selling the drug while pharmacists were prohibited from dispensing it without a medical prescription signed by a physician. These enactments were confirmed by the code of Grand Master Emanuel de Rohan published in 1784 which was still in force at the time of Coleridge's stay in Malta.[44]

Coleridge may have known of these legal restrictions on the consumption of the drug in the island for he had enquired about the sale of drugs in Sicily and Malta. Indeed before leaving England for Malta he had stocked himself with an ounce of crude opium (28 grammes) and nine ounces of laudanum (270 millilitres).[45] In Malta he drunk his opium infused in the flavouring juice of quinces. Did the stock of the drug which he brought from England last him for the period that he spent in Malta from 18 May 1804 to 22 September 1805? If not, did he acquire it through legitimate medical prescriptions? Or did he get it clandestinely from Sicily and North Africa through the British naval officers and masters of the mercantile marine with whom he came into daily contact through his official position at the Governor's Palace at Valletta?[46] Or perhaps from the American merchantmen that traded in

43. Berridge, p. 300. Chambers, pp. 131,138,162,168.
44. Cassar, P., "A Medical Service for Slaves", *Medical History*, 1968, 12,274. Cassar, P., *Medical History of Malta* (London, 1965), p. 500.
45. Chambers, p. 177.
46. Sultana, p. 262.

opium in the Mediterranean and touched at Malta on their way from Smyrne to the United States?[47]

With regard to Coleridge's self-administration of opium, it must be borne in mind that he was not without medical knowledge on the use of drugs. Indeed in his adolescence he attended the London Hospital for a brief apprenticeship with a surgeon. He thus had the opportunity to read English, Latin and Greek books on medicine, as he was familiar with the latter two languages[48] including the Edinburgh New Dispensatory which was the most up-to-date British authority on pharmacy.[49] Apart from the knowledge thus gained, he had learned from other drug addicts as early as 1791 of the 'disagreeable effects" of opium.[50] By the time he left Malta he had obtained sufficient insight from his own experiences to realise how harmful opium-taking was and how necessary it was to control its use; so much so that on his return to England he declared it a "sacred duty" on his part to publish his case, if he recovered from his addiction, with the aim of promoting the enactment of legislative measures to check the widespread consumption of the drug in Great Britain. He never fulfilled this intention because he never recovered from his dependence on the drug. In fact one cannot think of a better epitaph for him than the words uttered by his own brother James in 1814:- "What a humbling lesson to all men is Samuel Coleridge."[51]

Epilogue

It is a matter of great satisfaction that addiction to opium and its derivatives, and other hard drugs such as heroin, never took root in Malta and it is, therefore, not a problem with us; but one regrets to record that it is not so in other parts of the world. In fact it has been estimated by the World Health Organisation that the yearly medical needs of the whole world can be met by a total of 1350 tons of opium but that as much as 1200 tons find their way to the illicit market to contribute to the drug "plague" throughout the world.[52]

Is there anything that we medical men can do, as individuals, to prevent the iatrogenic development of addiction to opiates? There is much that we can do if we remember the following points:-

a. Certain types of personalities are more prone than others to develop addiction such as the hypochondriacs, chronic invalids and psy-

47. Cassar, P., *Early Relations between Malta and the USA* (Malta, 1976), p. 92.
48. Caine, p. 19.
49. Coburn, Note 2609. Guest Gornall, p. 328.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 329.
51. Chambers, pp. 216,267. Sultana, p. 213.
52. *World Health*, August-September 1972, p. 39. *Newsweek*, 3 September 1979, p. 23.

chopaths. Opiates should not be administered to such persons.

b. We should endeavour to prescribe non-addictive drugs for long term use in prolonged painful conditions instead of opiates.

c. Do not have opiates yourself when in pain — unless they are absolutely needed in an acute condition — and then only for the shortest time.

d. Discourage the taking of opium among members of the medical and allied professions as it is well known that, because of the relative ease of procuring opiates, many opium and morphine addicts are doctors, pharmacists, dentists and nurses.

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A CONCISE GLOSSARY OF CRITICAL TERMS

LOUIS J. SCERRI

Additional Syllable — See METRE.

Alexandrine — See METRE.

Allegory — A homogeneous narrative where the agents, and usually the settings, stand for moral qualities, general concepts or other abstract ideas. An allegory can be enjoyed both at the literal (story) level and at the moral (allegorical) level. Allegorical narratives include such diverse works as Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Orwell's *Animal Farm.* In *Le Roman de la Rose* the poet describes his falling in love in terms of entering a walled garden and picking a flower.

Alliteration — The repetition of the same consonant *sound*, especially at the beginning of words or of stressed syllables. Anglo-Saxon verse depended on alliteration and the repeated initial consonants marked the stressed syllables.

In a somer seson whan soft was the sonne,
I shope me in shroudes as I a shepe were ......

Ambiguity — In modern critical usage, a positive term referring to a word or phrase, consciously used to elicit a multiplicity of meanings. Ambiguity tends to be seen as the enriching quality which distinguishes poetry from other forms of discourse.

Ambivalence — The state of having more than one emotional attitude towards the same subject. We fear, condemn, admire, laugh at and laugh with the Pardoner all at the same time. An awareness of the possible ambivalent feelings should make the reader respond more completely to the literary work.

Anapaest — See METRE.

Anti-Climax — See BATHOS.

Antithesis — The balanced presentation of two ideas in sharp contrast to each other. To err is human, to forgive divine (Pope).

Apostrophe — A breaking off in the main narrative while some extraneous person or abstraction is directly addressed. The address to Geoffrey de Vinsauf in *The Nun's Priests's Tale* is an apostrophe.

Archetype — A situation or a plot pattern or a character which recurs frequently in literature or folklore and which sets up profound echoes and reverberations in the mind. Archetypes are inherited in the human mind from common ancestral experiences such as birth, death, love and struggle. These experiences are expressed in dreams and myths

as well as literature. Archetypal images contribute to the hallucinatory effect of Browning's 'Childe Roland' and to the Pardoner's *exemplum*, for example.

Atmosphere — The prevailing mood in a literary work represented by the setting, time and the conditions of the characters. The opening scene of *Macbeth* sets an atmosphere of danger and evil and the foreboding influence of the supernatural which runs through the whole play. A similar effect is achieved by the raging pestilence that is described at the beginning of the Pardoner's *exemplum*.

Assonance — 1. The repetition of a vowel *sound* in the same line or adjacent lines.

L*i*fe l*i*ke a dome of many-coloured glass,
St*ai*ns the wh*i*te r*a*diance of eternity;

2. A form of half-rhyme, marked by the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds, as in fate/take. Together with consonance (q.v.), assonance is an important element in the poetry of Wilfred Owen.

Augustan — A term used to describe a period when eminent literary works were being written by any particular nation. In English, the term covers the period 1702-1798; from the accession of Queen Anne to the publication of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*. In general, Augustan writers preferred reason, excellence and finish to emotion, originality and spontaneity.

Ballad — 1. *Ballads of tradition* are usually short, dramatic and stylised anonymous narratives that use quatrains of alternate four and three stresses rhyming abcb as their basic stanza. Their particular ritualistic atmosphere (q.v.) is the result of their refrains, repetitions, swift narrative transitions ans a strong sense of ironic inevitability. 'Sir Patrick Spens' is one such ballad.

2. The *literary ballad* is a narrative written in imitation of the form (q.v.) and spirit of the folk-ballad such as Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'.

Bathos (or ANTI-CLIMAX) — a sudden and ludicrous descent from high and serious ideas to trivial ones.

Here thou, great ANNA! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take — and sometimes tea. (Pope)

Blank Verse — Unrhymed iambic pentameters (See METRE).

Dramatic blank verse is the usual medium of English verse drama. Heroic blank verse is the usual medium of the English epic (q.v.). Until the twentieth century, blank verse was the main medium for unrhymed English verse.

Caesura — See METRE.

Caroline — The period of the reign of Charles I (1625-49).

Cliché — A phrase that has lost part of its original power to surprise and please through indiscriminate over-use. A thought or idea

can similarly be rendered trite.

Climax — 1. The arrangement of a sequence of ideas or expressions in ascending order of importance or emphasis. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested (Bacon).

2. The part of a poem or play with the greatest emotional impact.

Colloquial — Everyday vocabulary and diction. Poets such as Dryden, Wordsworth and T.S. Eliot, over-reacting to the conscious poetic diction of earlier poets, recommended the use of colloquial diction in poetry.

Commonwealth — The period of Parliamentary rule under Cromwell (1649-60). This period is not particularly rich in literature.

Conceit — A striking parallel between two dissimilar things or situations. The poetry of Donne and the other metaphysical poets (q.v.) is marked by the use of conceits.

Connotation — The qualities, attributes and characteristics implied or suggested by a word, *in addition to* its accepted, primary meaning. (See also DENOTATION).

Consonance — 1. The correspondence of the same consonant sound in the same line or adjacent lines.

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw. (Pope)

2. A form of half-rhyme, marked by the repetition of a similar pattern of consonant sounds as in blood/bleed. (See also ASSONANCE).

Convention — In literature, the agreement embodied in accepted usages, standards, etc. Most literary genres, stanza forms and types of diction (qq.v.) have their particular conventions. The idea of genres itself is based upon conventional expectations.

Couplet — Two consecutive lines of verse which rhyme and usually have the same metre.

Dactyl — See METRE.

Denotation — The literal and factual meaning of a word. (See also CONNOTATION).

Diction — The choice of words to create a particular effect or tone (q.v.). It may be simple, homely, learned, pedantic, archaic, colloquial etc. (See also POETIC DICTION).

Didactic — Intended to teach or to present some moral, religious or political doctrine in a persuasive manner.

Dramatic Monologue — A poetic narrative spoken by a persona (q.v.) and revealing his thoughts, motives, desires, beliefs etc. It occurs usually at a salient moment of his life, or its recollection. Tennyson and Browning are the greatest exponents of this form in English.

Edwardian — The period of the reign of Edward VII (1901-10).

Elegy — In English verse elegy has come to mean any serious meditative poem particularly, but not exclusively, if it concerns itself with death. It often includes religious and moral reflections in addition to personal grief. Milton's 'Lycidas', Shelley's 'Adonais' and Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' were all inspired by the loss of a particular person, unlike Gray's 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard'. While the English elegy has not got any special metre, it often makes use of pastoral conventions (q.v.).

Elision — See METRE.

Elizabethan — The period of the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603). It marks the richest period of poetry and drama in English.

End-Stopping — See METRE.

Enjambement — See METRE.

Epic (or **Heroic**) **Poem** — A long, narrative poem on a serious subject written in an elevated style. Upon the actions of its hero often depends the fate of a race or a nation. The Epic is best represented in English by Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

Euphemism — The substitution of a less distasteful word or phrase for a more truthful but shocking one. Lady Macbeth tells her husband that Duncan 'must be provided for'.

Fable — A short, didactic narrative in which animals and birds talk and act like human beings, like *The Nun's Priest's Tale.*

Form — Type of verse (sonnet, lyric, free verse etc.) most suitable to what the poet has to communicate; the shape of ideas and emotions in a poem.

Free Verse — A modern poetical form with no regular line length, rhyme or stanza pattern. The form or shape of the poem is created by the nature of its content. In the twentieth century it has become the most common metre for unrhymed verse.

Genre — Typical form or style of poets in a particular period. Epic, tragedy, elegy, pastoral, comedy, satire and lyric were the classical genres. The term can today be applied more loosely to other literary forms as the novel, the essay, the autobiography etc.

Georgian — A term usually reserved for the poets who were writing at the time of the accession of George V, and who were included in Edward Marsh's anthologies. Georgian poetry concerned itself with the sights and emotions of the countryside and the lyrical, nostalgic word patterns that can be formed from it. They included W.H. Davies and Rupert Brooke. As a movement it has fallen into critical discredit.

Half-Rhyme — See PARARHYME.

Heroic Couplet — Rhymed iambic pentameters. The metre of *The Canterbury Tales* and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock.*

Hypallage (or **Transferred Epithet**) — The transference of an adjective from the noun it should qualify to another to which it does not properly refer. Even in common speech it appears in such phrases as 'a restless night' and 'the condemned cell'.

Hyperbole — A deliberate exaggeration for the sake of effect. Lady Macbeth remarks that not all the perfumes of Arabia will sweeten her little hand.

Idyll — An idealized story of happy innocence, in a pastoral form, often in verse.

Innuendo — The way of suggesting instead of openly stating one's meaning. e.g. Honesty is the best policy, but advertising also pays.

Irony — A complex mode of discourse that conveys meanings different from, and usually opposite to, the professed or obvious ones. It falls into two major categories: the verbal and the situational. When Mark Antony refers to Brutus as 'a honourable man' he is making use of verbal irony. Situational irony is often found in Shakespeare's great tragedies where the characters take actions that lead to unexpected conclusions.

Jacobean — The period of the reign of James I (1603-25).

Iamb — See METRE.

Imagery — On a basic level, imagery can be applied to the similes and metaphors that provide mental images to the reader. It can be used in a wider sense to include all objects and qualities which impress the senses. One can therefore refer to images which are tactile, visual, aural, etc.

Imagery can also be taken to include the non-verbal images that are to be found in dramatic representations, like the props and the stage effects that are connected with blood in *Macbeth.* In discussing imagery, the critic should distinguish between those images that are merely used as ornaments and those that are used *organically*. In the latter case imagery is adapted to the structure and theme (qq.v.) of the play or poem and is entirely relevant to the context. In Shakespeare's mature plays, images are closely related to the situation, they fit the character using them and they are integrated with the theme, atmosphere and the exigencies of the action.

Lyric — From a song intended to be accompanied by a lyre, the lyric has come to mean a short poem directly expressing the poet's own thoughts and feelings. The ballad, ode, elegy and sonnet are often considered particular forms of lyrics.

Metaphor — A direct comparison stated or implied between two basically unrelated objects. e.g. The sea that bares her bosom to the moon (Wordsworth). Together with the simile (q.v.) metaphor is the writer's chief means of achieving concreteness and vitality of diction.

Metaphor is basic to the idea of language where words and ex-

pressions are metaphors whose original meaning has been dulled by constant use.

Metaphysical — The name given by Dryden in 1693 to a 'school' of poets writing in the first half of the seventeenth century because of their preference for intellectual imagery and conceits (q.v.). Donne, Herbert and Marvell are the most notable of the Metaphysical poets. Today this poetry enjoys high critical favour.

Metonymy — The substitution of the name of an attribute of a thing for the name of the thing itself. e.g. 'the crown' for 'the king'. As a figure of speech, metonymy is similar but distinct from synecdoche (q.v.).

Metre — The regular recurring pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. The unit of stress pattern is called a FOOT.

The most important disyllabic feet are:
the IAMB (an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed) be*fore*
the TROCHEE (a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed) *stiff*en

The most important trisyllabic feet are.
the ANAPAEST (two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed) as you *wish*
the DACTYL (a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed) *ar*chery

Lines of poetry are measured by the number of feet they contain.
A line with one foot is called a *monometer*.
A line with two feet is called a *dimeter*.
A line with three feet is called a *trimeter*.
A line with four feet is called a *tetrameter*.
A line with five feet is called a *pentameter*.
A line with six feet is called a *hexameter*.
A line with seven feet is called a *heptameter*.
A line with eight feet is called a *octameter*.
A line of six iambs (iambic hexameter) is called an ALEXANDRINE.

The dominant recurring pattern of feet determines the nature of the line. The most common lines in English Poetry are:
the Iambic line
I *strove*/ with *none*/ for *none*/ was *worth*/my *strife*.
the Trochaic line
Home art/ *gone* and/*ta'en* thy/*wages*.
the Anapaestic line
With a *hey*/and a *ho*/and a *hey*/no*nino*.
the Dactylic line
Half a league,/*half* a league,/*half* a league/*on*wards.

When the sense stops at the end of each line this is known as END-STOPPING.

> 'O where hae you been, Lord Randal, my son?
> And where hae you been, my handsome young man?'

In order to avoid a repetitive monotonous regularity, the poet

uses a number of devices. These include:
the CAESURA — A pause in the line.

And Death shall be no more; Death thou shalt die.

the ENJAMBEMENT — the sense carries over to the following line. This is also known as *a run-on line.*

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so;

SUBSTITUTION The use of a foot different from the regular pattern. e.g. The substitution of the initial trochee in the iambic pentameter:

Stiffen / the *sin*/ews, *sum*/mon *up*/ the *blood.*

ELISION — The suppression of an unstressed syllable to make the line conform to the metrical pattern.

*Mov*ing/ of *th'earth*/ brings *harms*/ and *fears.*

ADDITIONAL SYLLABLE — The addition of an extra stressed or unstressed syllable to the line. The former instance is known as a *Masculine ending.*

Tiger,/*tiger,*/ *burning*/ *bright.*

The latter instance is known as a *Feminine ending.*

By *brooks,*/ too *broad,*/ for *leap*/ing,

Mock Heroic — A genre that burlesques the epic (q.v.) style and manner. The *deliberate* mismatching of trivial matter and heroic manner is meant to ridicule the subject, not the epic form. Notable English mock epics include *The Nun's Priest Tale,* Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* and Pope's *Dunciad* and *The Rape of the Lock.*

Mood — The predominant emotional effect or feeling of a literary work; the impression left on the reader after a careful reading of the work.

Myth — One in a system of narratives (mythology) offering an explanation of religious phenomena. Myths are no longer believed in as true explanations of the phenomena they describe. A religion that is no longer generally believed in gives rise to myths, as in Egypt and Greece.

In contemporary critical usage, myth can refer to an invented set of symbols used by a writer, as in Melville's *Moby Dick.*

Narrative Verse — Verse which tells a story. It can include such diverse genres as epics, fables, mock epics, ballads, (qq.v.) etc. In most cases the story itself is only a pretext for the author to present a particular vision of life for the reader's evaluation.

Ode — A long lyric, often addressed to a person or to an abstraction, elevated in style and having an elaborate stanzaic structure. The two classical forms of the ode were the *Pindaric,* a very formal ode divided into three parts, and the *Horatian* which was less formal and consisted of a number of stanzas of complex structure. The latter form is best represented in English by Keats' odes. The Romantic poets employed the ode form for deep emotional meditation upon a natural scene (as in 'Ode to Autumn'), a human emotion ('Melancholy') or some

serious philosphical theme such as the immortality of the soul.

The third form is the *Irregular* Ode where each stanza has its own peculiar pattern of line lengths, number of lines, rhyme scheme and rhythm. Wordsworth's 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality' is the best known example of the Irregular Ode in English.

Onomatopoeia — The use of words to imitate or echo the sounds they suggest. e.g. Tennyson's 'murmur of innumerable bees'.

Oxymoron — The combination of two usually contradictory words in one expression. For example this line by Tennyson contains two oxymorons:

'And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true'.

Paradox — A truth presented under the guise of a contradictory statement as in Wordsworth's 'the child is father of the man'. A paradoxical statement appeals to whoever is prepared to discuss, think and reflect about truth. It discourages the ignorant and the superficial.

Paradox can also be a major feature of the structure (q.v.) of a literary work. Donne's sonnet 'Death be not proud' is a most celebrated example of paradoxical structure. Shakespeare's mature plays exploit the possibilities of verbal and structural paradox. The 'fair and foul' motif (q.v.) in *Macbeth* is one such example.

A literary work rich in paradox is valued as the ultimate reflection of human experiences since paradox is considered so intrinsic and important to human nature.

Pararhyme (or **Half-Rhyme**) — A form of incomplete rhyme (q.v.). (See also ASSONANCE and CONSONANCE).

Parody — a work that closely mimicks a serious composition in theme, phrase and rhythm.

Pastoral — An elaborate conventional literary form where the poet writes nostalgically of an idyllic countryside, where the weather is always fine and where the shepherds do no work but write poems. Originally of classical origin, this form was developed in England in plays and poems in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Elegies (q.v.) often have a pastoral background.

Pathetic Fallacy — A description of an inanimate object as though it had human sentiments and capacities. e.g. The Cruel Sea.

Persona — A projection of the poet into another distinct person. Chaucer the pilgrim from whose point of view we observe the goings-on in the Canterbury pilgrimage is an altogether different character from Chaucer the poet.

Poetic Diction — The language used in a poem to create its particular effects. The Augustans preferred 'words refined from the grossness of domestic use'. Wordsworth insisted that poetry should employ 'the real language of man in a state of vivid sensation'. Both are perhaps extremist views, and especially if followed by insensitive writers

can lead to unwelcome bathetic effects.

Most critics today use the term 'poetic diction' in a negative sense to refer to the mechanical language of many minor eighteenth century versifiers which led them to an unnatural and artificial phraesology.

Quatrain — A four line stanza with various possible rhyme schemes. This is the most common stanza in English.

Refrain — The repetition of a phrase, a line or a number of lines at the same point in each stanza. Refrains contribute to the hallucinatory quality of such genres as ballads, villanelles and Elizabethan love poems. Notable use of the refrain is made in Dylan Thomas 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night'.

Rhyme — Identity of sound between two words. It can be *single* rhyme as in sill/will, *double rhyme* as in duty/beauty or *triple rhyme* as in tenderly/slenderly. *Internal rhyme* consists of rhyming words in the middle and end of a particular line:

But now they are *silent*, not gamesome and *gallant*.

Rhyme increases the musicality of verse and serves to impart a feeling of completeness to stanzaic structures. (See also PARARHYME).

Romantic — In English literature the period from 1798, the date of the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads,* to 1837, the accession of Queen Victoria.

In general the Romantics believed in the intrinsic and innate goodness of man and therefore in the validity of his feelings. They valued Nature as a moral and aesthetic teacher and desired to free society from the restraining influences of the Church and the State.

Sarcasm — A form of humour where wounding, cutting remarks are made in order to inflict pain, whether the criticism is justified or not.

Satire — A form of humour which, by enlarging upon the faults of the self-satisfied, intends to amend their morals and manners. It can be aimed at an individual (Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*), a social class (Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*) or a nation or mankind itself (Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*).

Sentimentality — An excess of feeling where emotions are indulged in for their own sake and in a way that is out of all proportion to their very cause.

Simile — A comparison between two basically dissimilar things for purposes of explanation, allusion or ornament, usually introduced by words such as like, as, or such, e.g. I sit down lifeless like a stone.

Sonnet — A lyric in fourteen iambic pentameters of medieval Italian origin. Perfected by Petrarch (1304-74), the form was introduced into English in the sixteenth century. The two main patterns of the sonnet in English are:

The Petrarchan sonnet which is divided into an octave rhyming

abbaabba and a sestet that rhymes cdecde or cdedce. In the Miltonic variation there is not the traditional break in sense (*volta*) between the octave and the sestet.

The Shakespearean sonnet consists of three quatrains and a couplet. It rhymes ababcdcdefefgg.

Wordsworth, Keats and G.M. Hopkins wrote remarkable sonnets.

The beauty of the form lies in the rigid conventional pattern it imposes on the poet, whose ability lies in reconciling with it a freedom of expression, variety of rhythm, mood, tone and richness of imagery.

Sprung Rhythm — A form of rhythm, invented by G.M. Hopkins, where the line of verse is measured by the number of stressed syllables without taking the number of unstressed syllables into account.

Stress — The emphasis laid on a syllable or a word. The relation between weak and strong stresses determines the metre of a line of English verse.

Structure — The organization of the ideas and emotions in a poem that contribute to its coherent and satisfying form (q.v.).

Style — The characteristic method of writing of a poet or a school of poets. It refers to the choice of genre, diction, tone, imagery, metre, syntax etc.

Subject — The immediate plot or story line; what actually takes place as opposed to theme (q.v.).

Syllabics — A verse form where the *number* of syllables in each line determines its length. Syllabics does not distinguish between strong and weak syllables.

Symbol — A richly suggestive image or metaphor that succeeds in setting up deep reverberations in the conscious and subconscious mind. Symbols often have an arbitrary relationship with what they represent (e.g. the eagle and heroism) and therefore they appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect. In some cases symbols can be the personal creation of a writer. Both Blake and Yeats make use of such symbols.

Synecdoche — A figure of speech in which a part of an object or idea stands for the whole or the whole for the part. One can say 'a hundred sail' for 'a hundred ships' or 'England' when one means the eleven players of the national team.

Tension — The attunement of various distinct meanings or implications in a set of images or one structural complex. The essential 'meaning' of a poem emerges out of the careful consideration of the particular tensions.

Theme — The central idea of a work, which is capable of wider application than the subject (q.v.). *Macbeth* can be said to be about ambition and its tragic repercussions.

Tone — The dominant feeling or attitude behind a poem; the expression of the poet's attitude, and relationship with his subject and his audience. Occassionally it is used to refer to the specific moral outlook of the poem.

Trochee — See METRE.

Verse — 1. A synonym for poetry. e.g. *The Faber Book of Modern Verse.*

2. A synonym for mechanical, uninspired, superficial and unimaginative metrical writings as opposed to that of poetic merit. e.g. Nursery Rhymes are verse rather than poetry.

3. A synonym for all metrical writing as opposed to prose. e.g. Shakespeare's plays are mostly written in verse.

4. A synonym for a stanza (q.v.).

The meaning of the word is determined by the particular context.

Victorian — The period of the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901); as a term often used to refer to certain attitudes, beliefs or styles.

Wit — Cleverness, ability with words, facility of seeing similarity in dissimilar objects.

In Chaucer, wit is used as a synonym for wisdom. To the seventeenth century, it meant a comparison which 'compels interest by its far-fetched or outrageous quality'. By wit, the Augustans understood 'thoughts and words elegantly adapted to the subject'.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO ACCOUNTANCY

JOHN FERNANDEZ

Accountancy, owing to continuous developments in these last decades, has moved and is still moving away from its traditional basis of routine work such as record-keeping, preparation of final accounts, budgeting etc., towards a role which emphasises its social importance. From the first description of double-entry book-keeping published in 1494 by Luca Pacioli, an Italian friar, accountancy has developed as a result of the growth of large-scale corporate enterprises, regulations by parliaments affecting accountants and auditors, inclusion in the accountants' work of economic and mathematical ideas, scientific management, imposition of taxes on income and legal regulations obliging companies to keep proper books of account and in certain cases to publish such accounts.

Such a development in accounting can also be seen in the broadening of definitions used. As an example one can quote a definition used in the middle of this century dealing with the purposes of accountancy: 'The purpose of identifying, measuring and communicating economic information to permit informed judgement and decisions by the users of the information'.

Compare this with the following which today seems to be more appropriate: 'Accounting is concerned with the quantification of economic events in money terms in order to collect, record, evaluate and communicate the results of past events and to aid in decision-making'.

Accounting is emerging as a social science. An individual businessman may benefit from a proper set of accounts and from the availability of other accounting information which helps him to evaluate circumstances and arrive at proper and appropriate decisions. The whole of society should however benefit from accounting since its individual members use the information, given and prepared by qualified accountants, to solve their business problems.

The same history of accounting proves the evolutionary pattern of social developments which reflect changes in socio-economic conditions and the changing purposes to which accounting is applied.

One can distinguish four phases which relate accounting to its social role.

1. *Stewardship accounting*, which reflects the origin of the purpose of accounting, namely to provide a safeguard to the owner of wealth from theft, fraud etc.

2. *Financial accounting*, the need for which was felt as a result of larger units of production after the Industrial Revolution. The emergence of the Limited Liability Company made it obligatory for companies to disclose financial information to shareholders. The information required was in the form of the Trading and Profit & Loss accounts and balance sheet.

3. *Management accounting*, which has developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution. It is obvious that management needs the right information, presented in the right manner, prepared by qualified and trained people in order to be able to arrive at the right decisions. Although management accounting is not new, we have witnessed a rising interest in the subject in the last decades. Accountants had previously concerned themselves with obtaining figures of a historical nature. Today their attention is directed more particularly towards the extraction of information from records and preparation of statements which enable management to function properly and with the utmost efficiency. Therefore, management accounting centres on the importance of using information to arrive at decisions which effect the future.

4. *Social responsibility accounting*, which is a novelty in the accounting field. Social responsibility accounting widens the scope of accounting in that it takes into account the economic and the social effects of business decisions.

FUNDAMENTAL ACCOUNTING ASSUMPTIONS

Certain fundamental accounting assumptions underlie the preparation of financial statements. If they are not followed in the preparing of final accounts, a disclosure by way of a note is necessary. The term 'financial statements' covers balance sheets, income statements or profit and loss accounts, notes and other statements and explanatory material which are part of the financial statements.

The management of any commercial, industrial or business enterprise may prepare financial statements for its own use in ways which are best suited to its own needs. But when financial statements are issued to other persons, such as shareholders, creditors and the public in general, they should conform to international accounting standards.

The following are fundamental accounting assumptions as recognized by the Accounting Standards Committee:

a) *Going Concern*. The enterprise is normally viewed as a going concern, that is as continuing in operation for the forseeable future. It is assumed that the enterprise has neither the intention nor the necessity of liquidation or of curtailing materially the scale of its operations.

b) *Consistency*. It is assumed that accounting policies remain consistent from one period to another.

c) *Accrual*. Revenues and costs are accrued, that is recognized

as they are earned or incurred (and not as money is received or paid) and recorded in the financial statements of the periods to which they relate.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Accounting policies encompass the principles, bases, conventions, rules and procedures adopted by managements in preparing and presenting financial statements. There are many different accounting policies in use even in relation to the same subject. Judgement is required in selecting and applying those, which, in the circumstances of the enterprise, are best suited to present properly its financial position and the result of its operations.

Three considerations should govern the selection and application by management of the appropiate accounting policies and preparation of financial statements:

c) *Prudence*. Uncertainties inevitably surround many transactions. This should be recognized by exercising prudence when preparing financial statements. Prudence, however, does not justify the creation of secret or hidden reserves.

b) *Substance over Form*. Transactions and other events should be accounted for and presented in accordance with their substance and financial reality and not merely with their legal form.

c) *Materiality*. Financial statements should disclose all items which are material enough to affect the evaluation or decisions.

What an accountant has to keep in mind is that financial statements should be clear and understandable. Financial statements are based upon the accounting policies which vary from enterprise to enterprise. Therefore, disclosure of the significant accounting policies on which the financial statements are based is necessary so that they are properly understood.

INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTING STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The objectives of the international accounting standards committee are to formulate and publish in the public interest basic standards to be observed in the presentation of audited accounts and financial statements and to promote their worldwide acceptance and observance.

This committee is made up of accountancy bodies of different countries who undertake to adhere in all respects to the object of IASC and to supply the same disciplinary procedures.

CHANGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRICES AND IN THE GENERAL LEVEL OF PRICES

One of the major problems facing the accountant today is changes in prices mainly because of inflation. Prices do not remain constant.

They change as a result of various economic and social forces. Now most financial statements are prepared on a 'historical basis' without having any regard either to changes in the general level of prices or to changes in specific price except to the extent that they are reflected in the accounts realised by sale of goods or in the net realisable value of inventories which have fallen below historical cost.

The need to remedy for this has focused attention on

a) specific price changes

b) changes in the general level of prices.

SPECIFIC PRICE CHANGES

The specific prices of goods or other assets held by an enterprise may change while such assets are held by the enterprise in question. These prices might change whether or not there is a significant change in the general level of prices.

Some questions which face the accountant when dealing with such a problem are:

a) whether the assets held at the balance sheet date should be presented on a historical cost basis or at current cost, and how should the changes in prices be reflected in the financial statements?

b) for assets consumed or sold during the accounting period, how should changes in prices of these assets while they are held be dealt with in the financial statements?

CHANGES IN THE GENERAL LEVEL OF PRICES

Financial statements have (and are always presented in) units of money. During inflation or deflation, the value of a unit of money changes. In other words, its general purchasing power decreases under inflationary conditions or increases under deflationary ones. The instability in the general purchasing power of money has led to questions as to whether financial statements should continue to be prepared without regard to changes in the general purchasing power of money.

There has not yet been an international consensus on a single method which could reflect the impact of changing prices on financial statements. Throughout the world many different proposals have been made and currently financial statements are being prepared on the basis suggested in some proposals. Certainly the development and application of the proposed methods will lead to a considerable improvement in the information supplied by accountants through financial statements.

THE ACCOUNTANT'S PERSONALITY

Sometimes people are tempted to think of an accountant as an orderly, methodical, cautious and pedantic man. There is an element

of truth in all this, but an accountant has to have the same sort of personality which businessmen and managers have or should have. All accountants, like everyone else, are individuals, and, therefore, one may find a large variety of personality types.

Many accountants are thinking, sensing and judging types. 'Thinking' means that accountants like dealing in a thoughtful and analytic way rather than in an emotional, subjective or impressionistic manner. 'Sensing' means that they prefer facts, figures and all other relevant data rather than speculation and imagination. 'Judging' means that after having collected all the necessary data and after having examined it in a cautious and prudent manner, they arrive at a conclusion.

Recent research has shown that, although there are great individual differences in the preferences and personalities of accountants, they are slightly more likely than average to be introverts, that is, calm, controlled, peaceable, thoughtful and more likely to be hard-headed and practical.

It is therefore clear that an accountant should be a responsible person. His task, especially in present times, is a difficult one and he is to make judgements continuously. That is why accountancy is a profession. An accountant should adhere to the principles of integrity, objectivity and confidentiality.

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN MALTESE POETRY

FRANS SAMMUT

Io mi son un che, quando
amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo
ch'ei ditta dentro, vo significando.
(Dante to Bonagiunta Orbicciani)

The title "New Directions in Maltese Poetry" leaves little room for satisfaction. A more accurate one, perhaps, would be: "New Thematics, Verse-Forms and Styles adopted by artists who use the Maltese Language as a verbal medium". I do not believe there is such a thing as *Maltese* poetry any more than there is English, Russian or Italian, though "language" is regularly exploited in the technical draft of written poetry. There is, in fact, only Poetry, one, universal and transcending the barriers of race and language. Poets are themselves the "mediums" that "plug us into" (or "tune us in" to) this aspect of the Universal Truth. Only because poets, as different from painters, sculptors, musicians, dancers, and other artists, use words as their means of self-expression does the element of language(s) become an issue.

This rationale could, on the other hand, deviate us from our present objective. We may, however, pause on one of the burning questions it raises: Should poetry be submitted to the scholastic curriculum? Written poetry is primarily intended a) to be, b) to be enjoyed, c) to enrich our mortal existence inasmuch as poets help us, semi-articulate humans, to discern within us latent feelings and emotions of which we are only remotely conscious and which could very well be our link with the Universal Truth. "Poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom" as Robert Frost observes. But because, we feel, since childhood, a need to dissect in order to comprehend (and by comprehending, hopefully to love and appreciate) pedagogical institutions have found it useful to study — in the most clinical fashion — the form and the matter in order to discover in their "metaphysical" intersection the truth of the "spirit". Within this context, the terms employed in the title may be somewhat tolerated as "technical" and their conciseness with its intolerable pitfalls, justified.

This article also runs the gauntlet between the desire to comment on poems written by Maltese authors since the mid-sixties and the need for a sociological reading of the fundamental changes which have re-shaped Maltese society in these last decades and which, despite all "linear" programming both in political and literary manifestos, have led

to divergent positions. A summary look at the preceding decades and at the schools of thought prevailing in them is also useful. Insofar as verses are a reflexion of the society which produces them, this exercise is by necessity "allotropical".

In other national literatures the anthropological factor needs much less elaboration. the sociological background is abundantly known through the regular reports and statistics provided by social scientists.[1] It may, or may not, be paradoxical that the peripheral sidestream demands a closer examination of its banks than the mainstream for a better evaluation. This task is made evident in all serious introductions to Maltese verse.

THE SOCIO-LINGUISTIC FACTOR

The chief source of the sheer complexity related to the radical change in the world of Maltese letters which occurred in the last few decades was the "paradigm shift", a term we shall borrow from modern sociologists, brought about by the substitution of Italian by English in the bilingual syndrome that perennially bedevilled the Maltese.

For many decades after the British took over the Islands, the English language was, in spite of official efforts, merely tolerated like a tough sorner; Italian remained on long lease in the highest institutions with Maltese at times a peaceful, though inferior, cohabitant, at others a restive competitor.

In the 19th century, Maltese-language literature co-existed peacefully with Italian-language literature. It either played the role of a dialect literature (such as Milanese or Romanesque[2] vis-à-vis Italian) in the shadow of the towering Itallian literature. Alternately it fulfilled the role of the literature of a dialect struggling to become a language in its own right in order to increase the intrinsically related chances of a people aspiring to become a nation belonging with, rather than belonging to, the neighbouring Italian nation within the Latin cultural sphere.

So long as Dun Karm (1871-1961) wrote his verses in Italian, he was implicitly acknowledging Malta as an appendix to the Italian nation

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1. Gunnar Hägglund (Fil.lic.Stockholm), in *Sociological Sketches Malta 1972* (Sums Ltd., Union Press, 1972), says: "The undetermined attitude to sociology in Malta so far has its historical explanation. The British had all the social experts at hand, when they liked, while the Maltese upper-class studied theology, law and medicine. A few years age only a handful of students chose social science at the University, while, to give an example, in Stockholm University close to two thousand students were enrolled in the Department of Sociology alone".
2. *Vide* Carlo Porta (1775-1821), *Meneghin biroeau di ex-monegh* and *Lament del Marchionn di gamb avert,* and Giuseppe Giacchino Belli (1791-1863), *La povera moje, Er civico de corata* for Milanese and Romanesque literature respectively.

which had only recently transformed Italy from a "geographical expression" into a more respectable unity. When in 1912 Dun Karm switched to writing in Maltese he was deliberately announcing to the literary community, and the population in general, that he considered Maltese his *native* tongue, not merely a dialect but a national *language*.

For this he was swiftly and severly punished by the powerful pro-Italian[3] clique in the Valletta Curia who in 1921 accused him of a heinous misdemeanour[4] and persuaded the Apostolic Visitor, Cardinal La Fontaine to dismiss him from his teaching post at the Seminary. The trauma this canard caused in Dun Karm the man (he informs us in his writings that he felt very near to the grave) did not adversely affect the mental orientation of Dun Karm the poet.

Dun Karm continued writing Maltese-language literature as an "exoteric version" of Italian literature. This version was accessible to the populace which found Italian literature proper an "esoteric" code intelligible only to the restricted classes of the *professionisti*, a great number of whom saw in their intelligence of it a "gnostic" badge to their membership in the Italian *patria* and a recognizable bond with their "brothers across the sea". This bond was subsequently exploited for political ends by Fascists both in Italy and in Malta.

Indeed a perfect syncromesh was provided by the semantic and lexical proximity of Maltese to Italian and by the verse-forms borrowed from the Italian tradition.[5] Even Semitic Maltese words have moved semantically away from Arabic towards Italian and have become like Semitic bottles containing Romance wine. In a sense Dun Karm was merely translating himself. Admittedly, in some cases this was a remarkable achievement but what with his tremendous mastery of both languages

3. "Pro-Italian" here means in favour of Italian as Malta's official language with the inherent invitation to the Maltese to join the resurgent Italian motherland. Advocates of this group today protest that they took this position in order to combat the influence of English and its implementation as Official Language, since the Maltese could never really and fully master it, thus remaining inferior to their English overlords. However, assuming this was true, why did they not rally the Maltese by admitting Maltese as the *other* Official language, thus really combatting the "foisting" of English on a Semitic-Romance-language speaking Latin people? Today we feel thankful this was not the case, since English has become an international language, while Italian is more or less confined to Italy.
4. No such trauma was experienced by poet W.H. Auden when his private life was exposed, probably because, in his case, the discovery had merely exposed the truth.
5. Dun Karm is wrongly entered in *The Penguin Companion to Literature* under the sub-title *Oriental*, Vol IV, p. 297. This error is due mainly to the fact that Dun Karm was publicised in the Anglo-Saxon world by A.J. Arberry, a celebrated Arabist. It is also due to the paucity of knowledge about the nature of Maltese Literature abroad. Evidently the Council of Europe's sole publication (Laurent Ropa's *Suite Poetique Maltaise*, 1970) is far from sufficient.

and the fact that Dun Karm proceeded in the romantic fashion whereby the "poetic jargon" only slightly deviated from the normal *langue,* the shift took place with as few jolts as in the case of Nineteenth Century poets like Ġan-Anton Vassallo[6] and Dwardu Cachia.

MALTESE ROMANTICSM

Thus started the Maltese Neo-Romantic (or "Second" Romantic) period. Dun Karm sang the Ideal Malta, praised the beauty of her landscape, the comeliness of her lasses, the bounty of its orchards (reminiscences of Ġ.A. Vassallo), the glory and magnificence of her past, particularly underlining her heroic role in the defence of Christendom from the Ottoman Empire, the greatness of her heroes (placing in one breath such divergent figures as Dun Mikiel Xerri and Mikiel Anton Vassalli on similar pedestals), inviting her children to appreciate and honour her as an old motherland deserving of nationhood. A whole entourage of fledgling poets, such as Ġorġ Pisani, Ġużè Chetcuti, Anton Buttigieg, Karmenu Vassallo (despite his idiosyncratic thematic), George Zammit, Ġużè Delia, Frans Camilleri and others congregated around Dun Karm, dutifully repeating their master's voice. Rużar Briffa, a highly individualistic lyrical poet was perhaps the only exception.

The reasons why Dun Karm, though fully aware of modern Italian literature,[7] continued writing in the Romantic fashion were various.

6. Ġan-Anton Vassallo (1817-1868) occupied the Chair of Italian in the University of Malta. He was imbued with the spirit of the Italian *esuli* in Malta, and was a Romantic who thought poetry should be an expression of and very close to the genuine feelings and tongue of the people. In the light of this, his epic *Il-Ġifen Tork* is nowadays considered as an allegory of Colonial Nineteenth Century Malta. From this he went on to be an "all-Maltese" (as opposed to Maltese-Italian) patriot. His *Tifħira lil Malta* served as the semi-official national hymn until it was substituted by Dun Karm's *Innu Malti.* Vassallo can be collocated within the Italian Romantic phenomenon which in its culminating decades (1815-c.1840) combined elements of a double origin. Some elements were characteristic of the philosophical, religious and political reaction to Illuminism and the French Revolution, and embraced the revaluation of mediaeval values and a *strong patriotic-national sentiment* as opposed to the cosmopolitanism of the previous century. Other elements reflected the spirit of "the century of light" and advocated a form on "popular literature".
7. This is evinced in Dun Karm's surviving *tesine*, wherein occurs, *inter alia,* an explication of Pirandellian thought. Dun Karm was however more intent on explaining Ugo Foscolo, whose "I Sepolcri" he so beautifully translated. In his preface to *L-Oqbra* (1936) he first explains the Romantic motives in the *carme* which could be emulated in the Maltese context and ends by saying explicitly: *"barra mir-raġunijiet li semmejt hawfuq, kien hemm din ukoll, li nħaddem u nuri dawn is-setgħat mostura tal-lsien malti bil-qlib ta' poeżija li sabuha iebsa wkoll poeti ta' ġnus oħra ... ta' ilsna mrawma sewwa u mogħnija b'letteratura mill-aqwa".*

Mainly however he was conscious, perhaps painfully, of the time and space gap between Malta and contemporary Europe.

In any event, Dun Karm ushered in this "Neo-Romanticism" at a time when the tendency in Italy to severe all links with tradition, thus heralding the movement for greater freedom of expression and originality, was being strongly felt. The desire for novelty among the innovative poets can be perceived in these stanzas by Domenico Gnoli:

> Giace anemica la Musa
> sul giaciglio de' vecchi metri:
> e noi, giovani, apriamo i vetri,
> rinnoviamo l'aria chiusa!
>
> ....
>
> O padri, voi foste voi,
> Sia benedetta la vostra
> memoria. A noi figli or la nostra
> vita: noi vogliamo esser noi!

The revolt against tradition in Italy, as elsewhere, considered all traditional verse-structure as *passè* and gave birth to the *vers libre*[8] which attempted to be more intense in thought and feeling, gradually losing all links with syntax and logic and eventually arriving at the controversial *poesia ermetica*[9] of Giuseppe Ungaretti.

This revolt was not only distant from, but alien to the Maltese context. The crisis anteceding the First World War and the ravages the conflict itself brought to Europe were slightly felt, if at all, in Malta. The real crisis in Malta was still that of national identity as reflected in the protracted Language Question. The ground was still fertile for the Romantic poet. Indeed his role of patriot and nationalist was still very real and necessary.

What World War I did to Europe, World War II, which caught our Islands unawares, did to Malta, leaving many problems still unsolved, chief among them the Language-Identity dilemma. The Language Question had been officially settled in 1934, but its side-effects and implications lingered on, affecting all classes of Maltese society in their outlook on life and in their everyday activities. The problem, however, was glossed over by harsh realities and pressing circumstances. The question whether Malta must be considered as a Trieste of the South

8. The name and the theory of the vers libre were justified by French poet Gustave Kahn (1859-1936) in his preface to *Palais nomades* (1887). In Italy *vers libre* was theorized and practised by Domenico Gnoli (1836-1915) followed by Gabriele D'Annunzio, Enrico Thovez, Sergio Corazzini, Aldo Palazzeschi, Vittorio Lochi.

9. Giuseppe Ungaretti, Eugenio Montale, Salvatore Quasimodo were the first "hermetic" poets. The *poesia ermetica* aims at being pure, evocative, "quintessential", and therfore resorts to an extreme analogism. From its scarse accessibility to the public its "hermetic" name was derived.

as in the conception of the Irredentists[10] was violently wiped out by the first Italian bombardment. The great majority of the population went over to Britain's side and clamoured for a reprisal in the form of an air attack on Rome; all links with Italian culture were looked upon with contempt. Perhaps in the quest of matching the absurdity of war inflicted upon them by their former "brothers", the Maltese hurled back the absurdity that even Dante was not, after all, the *sommo poeta* he was hitherto held to be!

Appraising adequately the social upheaval brought about by the War would take up the entire pages of this publication. Suffice it to say that among the ruins of this battered country were sown the seeds of a very different generation, waking from old, time-honoured illusions and traditions and which prepared the way to a new Nation. The links with the past had become so tenuous that only the strictest of die-hards could hope for a reversal of social trends among the up-and-coming generation. Yet the rupture could not be so sudden or its effects as immediately visible as the re-construction of new buildings in place of the ruins.

In his novel *V*, which Anthony Burgess[11] describes as "a remarkable epic fantasy", Thomas Pynchon gave this fictitious appraisal of Maltese verse written during World War II:

> In the poetry which came out of Malta's second Great Siege ... certain images recurred, major among them Valletta of the Knights ... It was certainly wish-fulfilment ... a vision of La Vallette patrolling the streets during blackout ... a sonnet about a dogfight (Spitfire v ME-109) taking a knights' duel for the sustained image. Retreat into a time when personal combat was more equal, when warfare could at least be gilded with an illusion of honour. But, beyond this, could it not be a true absence of time? ... When the bombs fell, or at work, when it's as if time were suspended. As if we all laboured and sheltered in a timeless Purgatory.
>
> "The other great image is of something I can only call slow apocalypse ... back to the real world the bombs were leaving us ... Free verse: why not? Poetry had to be as hasty and rough as eating, sleep or sex. Jury-rigged and not as graceful as it might have been. But it did the job: put the truth on record. "Truth" I mean in the sense of attainable accuracy. No metaphysics. Poetry is not communication with angels or with the "subconsious". It is communication with the guts, genitals and five portals of sense. Nothing more.

Ġużè Chetcuti's volume *Melita Invicta* (1945), containing verses written in war-time is alone sufficient to support the veracity of the first element of the alleged dialectic. The second "image" did not exist

10. Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938), foremost among the exponents of *L'Irredentismo,* had called Malta: *"una ferita da guarire".*
11. Anthony Burgess, *The Novel Now,* London, 1974.

in historical reality. If Robert Rauschenberg's remark ("I consider myself successful only when I do something that resembles the lack of order I sense") is valid, that image should have existed. In the chaos wrought by the War, if there was something everybody sensed was "the lack of order". Or so it seems to us now, though perhaps it seemed otherwise to Maltese poets then in their prime. The Neo-Romantic movement had not yet lost its momentum.

The first image referred to by Pynchon still prevailed, and the fact that its presence excluded that of the second image proves at the same time that it was still valid and relevant. Pynchon was anticipating the birth of the "new" poetry in Maltese by about 20 years.[12] The reason for this time-lag is, to my mind, that the poets who were later to reflect "the lack of order they sensed" were in their impressionable years either during the war or in its aftermath when Malta was visibly struggling to emerge from the debris.

THE ADVENT OF MODERNISM

When this next crop of writers came on the scene, the revolving stage had long been put into motion, and the scenery was quite new. The movers were: a) the mobility of the population[13] in the wake of the *blitz* which broke down the segregation between the *puliti* ("city-dwellers") and the *għafsin* or *raħlin* (village or country-town dwellers); b) the total disenchantment with the Italian language delivered by Mussolini's *Savoia-Marchettis* and his more awesome allies; c) the resultant attraction to everything British, particularly the language; d) the related emphasis on emulating the Anglo-Saxon educational system with a heightened diffusion and knowledge of English; e) the related wider knowledge of English and American literature made available at the main bookshops and consequently a greater acquaintance with European fiction in translation; f) the tremendous improvement in cable radio brought about by the introduction of the sound-recording system, followed by the advent of the local reception of Italian television in the mid-fifties.

12. *Vide* Victor Fenech, "Milied ta' tfuliti" in *Antenni* (Union Press, 1968). The dedication of the poem, *b'tifkira ta' ommi li wennsitni fil-jiem tat-taqbid*, is already indicative. Note the obvious memory-image of the war in the first line: *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*! Why should a Maltese poet sing the stillness and holiness of the Night in German? It is obviously more than the wish to repeat the hymn in its original verses.

13. Prior to World War II it was not uncommon for dwellers of outlying villages never "to go down" to Valletta and the cities of the Southern area in a whole lifetime, which might also go quite far to explain the existence of different "dialects" cropping up every two short miles of the densely populated territory — a phenomenon which is now drying out fast. On the other hand, the dispersion of the city refugees helped the diffusion of culture and the levelling of class differences.

The children of the holocaustic late thirties and early forties, born in a) and b) and bred in c), came of age with d), e) and f). Having on top of all this experienced the chaotic religio-political conflict of the early sixties, they were ripe enough to straddle the psychological storm that had been unleashed on the erstwhile dormant Maltese ethos and confront the ensuing paradigm shift with enough intellectual strength. Moreover they eventually made it their language and their guideline for a new outlook (*Weltanschauung*) on life in their native island.

The result of the irreversible break-away from tradition was a spate of volumes and anthologies of prose and poetry which took the less informed unawares and resuscitated public interest in Maltese literature. Perhaps inevitably it brought a head-on collision with the older elements among the pre-war men of letters, who had either been stunned or even, in some cases, stunted by the havoc wrought in the moral and civil spheres and above all, in the erstwhile unchallenged sets of values and Catholic way of life, both on the popular and on the more refined levels of religion.

Already in 1948 Prof. Ġużè Aquilina had lamented that in Maltese poetry written till that date in *Il-Muża Maltija*:[14] only the Italian influence was felt and that all Maltese poets were traditionalists. Aquilina went on to say:

> The technical experiments carried out by G.M. Hopkins, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot and other modern poets have at least served to uncover new rhythmic powers in the English language and imagery taken from contemporary life. And this is what I wish to see in the Maltese language because I believe that the poetic powers of our language have not yet been completely uncovered.
>
> There still are in the Maltese tongue hidden voices,
> There still are sighs unheard,
> There still are winds undisturbed,
> There still are pearls uncultured,
> There still are quarries uncut,
> There still are gold, silver and other metals unpurified.

In his paper "Maltese Poetry 1960-1970",[15] Prof. P. Serracino-Inglott answered: "We can say that the desire expressed by Prof. Aquilina 22 years ago is now being fulfilled." In this I somehow hear noises of polite reproach for Aquilina's less than warm reception of the new poets.[16]

The late sixties and very early seventies were a battleground for the two "schools"; the ripples of the riots of 1968 on the continent added to the turmoil inside the "intellectual" crucible.

14. Aquilina, Ġ. (ed.) *Il-Muża Maltija* (Malta, 1948), pp. xxi-xxiii.
15. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, Vol. V, No. 1, (1972).
16. The only modern poet who received a welcome introduction from Prof. Aquilina was Achille Mizzi (*vide L-Għar tal-Enimmi*).

One direct clash came about in December 1968. Dr. Oliver Friggieri, Mr. Albert Marshall and the present author were entrusted by the *Moviment Qawmien Letterarju* to select literary material for the first Arts Festival to be held at the Manoel Theatre. The prose and poetry pieces, selected with the object of presenting a historical perspective of Maltese literature from Peter Caxaro down to our days, were forwarded to the State Censor and certified for public presentation. The Manoel Theatre Management Committee, on what seemed to be the insistence of Dr. V.M. Pellegrini, seems to have placed itself above the censor.[17] The incident is amply described in Dr. Daniel Massa's "Contemporary Maltese Literature — An Interim Report":

"The Establishment tried to censor five items because members of the group had dealt with (a) sex outside marriage (Lino Spiteri),[18] (b) humbug and patriotism (Victor Fenech and Mario Azzopardi), (c) hypocrisy of the establishment (J.J. Camilleri), (d) religious doubt (Daniel Massa). The Establishment not surprisingly thought that in form and matter the *Kwartett-Antenni* group showed manifest contempt of accepted mores, and one member of the Manoel Theatre Management Committee described them as 'rebellious, unscrupulous, Law-shattering boobies'.

"Be it as it may," the Report continues, "this well-knit group registered the disenchantment that there was in the air, in the lengthy controversy that followed recording that institutions of the past must be experienced as abandoned if Malta were ever to renounce a philosophy of mediocrity that clung to the mythical security of the past. The writers were 'no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation'. Yet this lack of security and/or homogeneity as well as the alleged decay in religious faith and performance may itself have been an impulse in the birth of our new literature."[19]

For the record, the Manoel Theatre was picketed by Police Officers while plainclothes policemen checked on the behaviour of the literati inside.

It is important to remember that the new Movement came into being shortly after the Independence of 1964. Whatever may be said about that Event, Maltese writers felt that the attainment of Political Independence naturally put an end to all Romantic aspirations that had aimed at it.

They also believed that now Malta "had come of age" she must be examined "clinically" and without "romantic" emotion: from this evolved a love/hate relationship which in its "maturity" was to match the "ripeness" of the Nation herself.

The official end of colonialism meant that Malta could join the

17. See also *il-polz,* March 1969, No. 9, editorial.
18. Lino Spiteri's contribution was *"Anatomija"*.
19. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts,* Vol. VI, No. 4, (1977), p. 264.

"cosmopolitan club" even if on a debutant ticket. Hence the literary experiments in search of new forms. It was the struggle to get free from the colonial mentality which had induced the Maltese into thinking themselves inferior beings living in a tardy enclave. The poets rejected that position and sought to be free to choose contemporary models. Due to the paradigm shift indicated above they sought these models from the Anglo-American mainstream. After all a similar exercise had been done also by Cesare Pavese *et al* through their translations of American literature. Pavese's American "experience" helped him introduce new blood into modern Italian literature. To the Maltese poets, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and others meant the freedom to criticize the Establishment and beat new tracks. In colonial times the impossibility of this was exemplified, on a banal level, by the fact that even Zola was censured, let alone the more "modern" writers.

In "Maltese Poetry 1960-1970", Prof. Serracino-Inglott asserts that "The breakdown of isolationism has led not only to the new realization of the distinctive character of a nation moulded by the cross-fertilization of many cultures of which its 'mixed' language is the clear reflexion but also to the breakdown of the old social order. With this, *Malta entered the general crisis of Western civilization* of which the Mediterranean was the cradle and is becoming once more a crucible. The 'open' forms of modern poetry are the expression of this situation in which the established, rigidly regulated patterns of existence are being disorganized and distintegrated, in an anxious search, both fearful and hopeful, of new or renewed ways of life".[20]

The foregoing is perhaps the most succinct explication of the new Maltese poetry that emerged in publications like *Kwartett* (1966), *L-Għar tal-Enimmi* (1967), *Dħaħen fl-Imħuħ* (1967), *Antenni* (1968), *Analiżi 70* (1970), *Mas-Sejħa tat-Tnabar* (1971), *Dwal fil-Persjani* (1972) and the rest.

Looking back in sobriety (as opposed to the "anger" prevailing at the time) one discernable error committed by some polemicists was to upbraid Dun Karm for being tardy in relation to his continental and Anglo-Saxon contemporaries. In the heat of the argument it was overlooked that Dun Karm was being true to his own times which were — in the Maltese context — themselves retrograde owing to Malta's status as a Crown Colony with very dim hopes of ever achieving autonomy. But again, Dun Karm was essentially taken as a symbol, a banner bearer.

It was his seemingly indestructible following which was the real target — those who could not understand what T.E. Hulme had said about the end of the Romantic movement: "The first reason lies in the nature of any convention or tradition in art. A particular convention

20. Serracino-Inglott, P. *op.cit.*

or attitude in art has a strict analogy to the phenomena of organic life. It grows old and decays. It has a definite period of life and must die. All the possible tunes get played on it and then it is exhausted... A literature of wonder must have an end as inevitably as a strange land loses its strangeness when one lives in it."[21]

The language of paradox[22] was indigestible to the older generations and the "randomness"[23] in the new poems shocked all those who were unfamiliar with the art of T.S. Eliot and the precepts of Ezra Pound.[24]

Mr. Joseph Vella in "Il-Poeżija Maltija: dak li jinbidel u dak li jibqa' "[25] mentions the Taoist philosophy and the two forces of *yin* and *yang* but stops short of applying them explicitly to the Maltese poetry situation. One is perhaps permitted to take off from there and make good use of these splendid Chinese terms.

The *yin* is the feminine element, yielding and soft, concerned with the colour and texture of life its style is careful and exquisite, the *yang* is the masculine element, forceful and harsh, its style less scrupulous, coarse and aggressive.

The reading public accustomed to the *yin* poets of the Dun Karm school was shocked by the *yang* young poets of the *Moviment Qawmien Letterarju* of the late sixties.

One can now safely say, however, that while the public has become less squeamish if not immune to shock, the *yang* people themselves are not so young today and possibly an element of *yin* is creeping in their more recent works to temper their "aggressiveness" without diminishing the dynamics.

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21. *Speculations* (1924). The quotation is from "Romanticism and Classicism", written in 1913 or 1914.
22. Few of us are prepared to accept the statement that the language of poetry is the language of paradox". Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the structure of poetry*, (1947).
23. "The paradoxical pursuit of randomness in the arts — a consequence of doctrinaire anti-formalism — is now carried on with every resource of ingenuity by very intelligent men. To early modernists the subjection of personality and the attack on false orders were one and the same process; the logicians of neo-modernism have not only accepted the position but developed it into an attack on order, perhaps not successfully, but with energy". Frank Kermode, *Continuities*, (1966).
24. Ezra Pound's *Literary Essays* is a great help to the understanding of modern literary taste.
25. *Hyphen*. Vol. III No. 1, p. 16.

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