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Godfrey Wettinger

A Question of the Alphabet
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BURIALS IN MALTESE CHURCHES: 1419-1530s

Godfrey Wettinger

The report made in 1575 by Pietro Dusina, the Apostolic Visitor to the Maltese Diocese charged with the task of rooting out a number of abuses and defects, might suggest that the private ownership of graves in the Maltese churches, so common a phenomenon until burial in churches stopped in the course of the last century, had not started before the year 1575. In fact, Dusina reported several times that the dead were buried in earth instead of in proper graves.¹ Even for the cathedral at Mdina he had to leave instructions for this “impiety” to stop.² However, ample evidence survives in other sources to show that some graves existed much before 1575 and were also owned privately and used as family graves despite the custom of burial in common earth.

As early as 30 November 1419 the nobleman Antonius de Vagnolo and his wife Ismiralda bought a family grave in the cathedral of Mdina:³

quoddam locum situm et positum in eadem ecclesia sive spatium intus videlicet Tribunal sinistrum ex parte septentrionali sub hiis pactis et condicione subiciat quod dicti Jugales possint valeant et debeant absque aliqua condicione hedificare Altarem ibi ad eorum opus et sepulturam eorum facere pro se et suis et ibi etiam sepeliri Juxta domini nostri Jesu Christi mandatum et dispositionem et hoc facto et hedificato gradam ibi in pune... (*sic*) possint inde hedificato dicto altare cum dicta sepultura includere quemcumque voluerint ad eos expectantem intus dictam gradam

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- 1 Archiepiscopal Archives, Floriana, AA Visitaciones Pastorales, ‘Visitatio Apostolica Duzina, 1575’, copy ‘C’ (cf. A.T. Luttrell, in *Hal Millieri: a Maltese Casale, its Churches and Paintings*, (Malta 1976) pp. 138-139): f. 28^v: ‘Non habent tumbas sed mortui humo revoluta sepeliuntur. Ideo Dominus mandavit quod fiant usque ad quattuor tumbae concameratae.’ (Naxxar); f. 41^v: ‘Fiant tumbae pro sepulturis mortuorum nec amplius mortui sepeliantur humo revoluta.’ (Birkirkara); f. 72 ‘Habet lampadam unicam tantum, non habet tumbas. Ideo dominus mandavit fieri lampadarium et tumbas concameratas ut in aliis’ (Qormi); f. 74: ‘A latere dextero est cimiterium muro clausum, in quo antiquitus mortui sepeliebantur, nunc in ecclesia sepeliuntur humo revoluta sine tumbis. In qua etiam conservatur catalectum. Quod dominus mandavit amoveri, et fieri saltem duas tumbas concameratas, quibus mortuis sepeliuntur.’ (Zurrieq); f.132: ‘Item quod fiant tumbae concameratae ad sepeliendum mortuos qui amplius non sepeliantur humo revoluta.’ (Greek church of St. Nicholas at Birgu); f. 136^v: ‘Sepeliunt mortuos humo revoluta et R. fr. magr. Damianus Taliana tanquam vicarius provincialis dictum locum pro ecclesia benedixit ut in ea celebrari et mortui sepeliri possint. Dominus mandavit in ecclesia nova cum fuerit constructa fieri tumbas concameratas quibus mortui sepeliantur.’ (Santa Maria de Portu Salvo, Valletta).
 - 2 *Ibid.*, f. 7^{r-v}: ‘In ecclesia Cathedrali predicta omnino fiant usque ad tres tumbae concameratae pro sepeliendis mortuis nec posthac amplius sepeliantur humo revoluta qui nos et impietatem praesert et ecclesiam deformat.’
 - 3 Cath. Mus., Mdina, Curia Episcopalis Melitensis, Acta Originalia, Memoriale... Sanctori Vella... et Nobilis Philippi Vagnolo..., 1563, fols. 55-66; extract is on fol. 65^{r-v}; copy is much older than 1565.

They retained the right to nominate a priest to take charge of the altar and they made an endowment of two *tenimenta terrarum* in the district of Zeytuni called Rachal Bayada (Hal Bajda).

On 17 May 1431 Don Michele de Fabro, a canon of the cathedral, directed in his will that he was to be buried in the church of St. Mark at Rabat, Malta, which he himself had caused to be built in the place where the corpse of Dominus Salvus de Calabranchio was laid "*ubi corpus Donni Salvi de Calabranchio est defunctum*"; he left an important legacy to the church but did not specify the manner of construction of the grave.⁴ Other pre-1530 testamentary provisions for burial are similarly vague but there is, however, no doubt that particular graves were frequently intended and understood. Thus round about 1431 the Sicilian official Andrea de Ravello had his first wife buried in the grave "of" an altar in the cathedral situated on the right side of the main altar, an altar of which he was the "benefactor".⁵ After Ravello's departure from Malta, the altar and its grave were held by Nicolaus de Sarlo who organized the Church services there, especially the saying of mass on Thursdays and Saturdays and the celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady in September. Both of de Sarlo's wives and their children were buried in this grave and eventually he himself was also laid to rest "in the grave of the said altar". Court witnesses in 1491 could not tell how he had acquired his rights over the altar and its grave. His son Antonio then claimed that he had been asked by Johannes de Guyvara to surrender his rights to the altar and grave, rights which he had acquired by inheritance from his late father, on the grounds that, as a resident of Licata in Sicily, he did not need or could not exercise them. Possibly a similar transaction had taken place between Andrea de Ravellu and Nicolau de Sarlo some sixty years before.

Johannes de Nava, Castellan and one of the leading inhabitants of Malta, left instructions in his will of 1487 that he was to be dressed in the habit of St. Francis and buried in the burial place or *sepultura* belonging to the late Petrus de Busco where the latter had been buried; a marble *sepultura* was to be made for him within a year by his heir to be marked by a sword, gold-plated daggers and spurs together with a silk banner containing his coat-of-arms.⁶ It is clear that at least the upper classes had properly designed graves owned by themselves or their families.

However, evidence survives to show that by the opening years of the sixteenth century, at least, members of the lower classes also aspired to and sometimes obtained family graves of their own. Thus on 9 November 1500 Johannes Vella, the parish priest of Zebbug, with the approval of the precentor of the cathedral and the vicar of the bishop, granted to Marcus Chantar for himself and his heirs in perpetuity⁷

quandam sepulturam sive monumentum perpetuum situm et positum intus dictam parochialem ecclesiam sancti philippi in quo sepulta est socera prefati Marci.

For this concession Marcus Chantar paid a sum of money for the repair of the

4 National Library of Malta, Libr. Ms. 635, fols. 224^v-227, especially fol. 225.

5 Cath. Mus., Mdina, Curia Episcopalis Melitensis, Acta Originalia, vol. 21A (1541), fols. 20-25.

6 NLM, Libr. Ms. 635, f.64.

7 Notarial Archives, Valletta, Register of deeds of Not. C. Canchur, R 140/1, f. 56^v.

walls and structure of the whole church:

Pro quaquidem sepultura sive monumento perpetuo dictus domnus Johannes confessus est habuisse et recepisse a dicto Marco pro reparacione marammatum et fabrice dicte parrochialis ecclesie sancti Philippi uncias quatuor pecunie Malte.

On 5 November 1519 Antonius Davula, another parish priest of Zebbug, granted a grave to the craftsman Georgius Vassald for himself and his heirs in return for his help in the making of a crucifix for the same church.⁸ Other graves were given to Paulus Manjun and Michael Axac in return for their gift of 12 *tareni* each towards the making of the same crucifix.⁹

Zebbug was not the only parish church which granted graves to its parishioners in return for money or other assistance. Reference was made on 18 October 1502 by Raidus Hellul *alias* Bruri to an altar he had set up in the church of Birmiftuħ, placing himself and his heirs under the obligation of having a mass said at that altar on the feast day of the Assumption, when the celebrant and a number of paupers were to be suitably entertained at his expense, as well as other duties:¹⁰

Quod in die beate virginis videlicet in Assumpcione teneatur et sit obligatus facere celebrare anno quolibet in dicto altari unam missam et invitare celebrantem et aliquos pauperes ad discrecionem dicti Petri (Raidus's son). Item teneant incendere lampadem que est ante dictum altarem in vigiliis et diebus sollempnibus: sabbatis et festis preceptis necnon in omnibus festivitibus et vigiliis virginis Marie prout est expressum in contractu super monumento et obligacione dicti altaris celebrato manu egregii notari Mathei Vassaldo notari puplici in quo monumento sive sepulturo voluit ipse Nardus (i.e. Raidus) quod sepeliantur et ea utantur omnes filii sui heredesque eorum in perpetuum.

On 20 August 1502 Antonius de Nicholachi as vice-parish priest of the parish of St. Catherine of Zejtun agreed, with the concurrence of the procurators of the church of St. Mary of Casali Pascualino (Hal Bisquallin), to grant a right of burial to Antonius Randuni *alias* Rocca, in return for the donation of a field situated in the district of Tal Gwiedi to that church to help pay for its walls and structure:¹¹

et in cambium dicte clausure consignavit prefato Antonio (Randuni) presenti et a dicto dompno Antonio tamquam vice capellano ut supra recipienti pro se suisque heredibus et successoribus in perpetuum unam sepulturam perpetuam intus dictam ecclesiam sancte Marie casalis Pascualini

The field was sold on the same day by Nicolachi and the two procurators of the church to Nicolaus Cassar of the same village, who already owned land adjoining the field on its eastern side and who paid two *uncie* for it, *pro fabrica et marammatibus fiendis in dicta ecclesia*.¹²

Zurrieq itself provides three early sixteenth century examples of privately

8 NAV, deeds of Not. P. de Alaymo, Ms. 779/1, f. 42^v of first quire.

9 *Ibid.*, fol. 43^v of first quire.

10 NAV, Not. C. Canchur, R 140/1, f. 187.

11 *Ibid.*, f. 177^v et seq.

12 *Ibid.*, f. 178

owned graves. On 30 April 1506 Guaglarda, the widow of Dionisius Manjuni, with the approval of her two sons Michael and Georgius, gave to Petrus Hellul, the parish priest of Sancta Catherina de lu Zurrico, a field situated in the district of Tal-Bitti retaining for herself a small portion, just enough to sow two *mundella* of wheat. In return Hellul gave her:¹³

pro se et successoribus in perpetuum jure suo proprio etc. more et consuetudine solitis et consuets... prefate Guaglarde prefatis magistro Michaeli et Georgio dicte Guaglarde filiis eorum herēdibus et successoribus suis in perpetuum etc. presentibus ipsis Guaglarde Michaele et Georgio ac ab eodem eorum capellano pro se et suis etc. recipientibus... quendam sepulturam perpetuam intus dictam ecclesiam pārochialem ubi est sepultus quondam Laurencius Manjuni filius dicte Guaglarde...

About seven years later the same craftsman Michael Manjuni seems to have obtained another grave for himself and his descendants from the same parish priest in return for adding an extra bay to the same church:¹⁴

Die predicto (1 September 1513) testamur quod presens coram nobis etc. magister Michael Manjuni de capella sancte Catherine casalis Zurric non vi etc. sed sponte etc. promisit et se obtulit fabricare et facere unam arcatam in dicta capella et ecclesia sancte Catherine expensibus et sumptibus ipsius Michaelis videlicet in addicione dicte ecclesie quo respectu et causa venerabilis donnus Petrus Hellul tamquam capellanus et curatus in dicta ecclesia Sancte Catherine consenciens prius in nos etc. non vi etc. sed sponte etc. per se et successores in dicta capella et ecclesia dedit et concessit ac per tactum penne mei notari etc. consignavit etc. dicto magistro Michaeli heredibus et successoribus ipsius in perpetuum unam sepulturam perpetuam intus dictam ecclesiam et capellam sancte Catherine inducens dictum Michaelem in possessionem dicte sepulture ex nunc pro tunc etc. etiam concessit dicto Michaeli facere unum altarem intus dictam ecclesiam cum pacto et condicione quod dictus Michael et heredes sui ac successores in dicta sepultura teneantur servire dicto altari videlicet incendere lampadem ipsius altaris tam in omnibus sollempnitatibus quam in festivis diebus et sabbatis tocius anni et si dictus Michael vel sui defecerint in premissis vel quolibet premissorum quod capellanus dicte capelle possit et valeat de dicta sepultura facere et disponere ad ipsius capellani libitum non obstante dicta arcata facta per dictum Michaelem nec presente contractu promittentes cum juramento premissa attendere etc. Unde etc. Testes: Marcianus Camilleri tamquam procurator dicte ecclesie et consenciens, Dancius Hili, Nardus Zammit, Johannes Bugeia, Grigorius Gristi et aliis tamquam habitatoribus dicte capelle et eciam consencientibus etc.

On 12 September 1519 Don Petrus Hellul gave Matheus de Armanino of Zurrieq for himself and his successors in perpetuity a grave in the church of St. Catherine of Zurrieq where Matheus's father was known to have been buried in return for his providing building stone or *balati* to cover another bay at the new wall lately erected and added to the church:¹⁵

Die XII eiusdem (Septembris VIII Indicionis 1519) Venerabilis donnus Petrus Hellul tamquam capellanus et rector ecclesie sancte Catherine di lo Zurrico consenciens prius in nos etc. non vi etc. sed sponte etc. per se et successores suos in dicta capella et rectoria dedit donavit ac per tactum penne mei notari etc. consignavit et confirmavit Matheo de Armanino de eodem capella presenti etc. dicto venerabili capellano pro se et heredibus

¹³ *Ibid.*, R 140/3, ff. 13^v et seq.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, R 140/6, f. 2^{r-v}.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, R 40/8, f. 76^v.

suis in perpetuum stipulante recipiente etc. unam sepulturam perpetuam intus dictam capellam sancte Catherine in qua sepultura dixerunt fuisse et esse sepulchrum patrem ipsius Mathei qui Matheus pro jure dicti sepulchri perpetui ut asseruerunt videlicet dictus capellanus et Benedictus Camilleri procurator dicte capelle et ecclesie apportavit suis propriis sumptibus et expensis certi balati per copriri una andana in la dicta ecclesia et capella videlicet ala maramma nova et noviter hedificata et iuncta in dicta ecclesia et capella presente dicto Benedicto procuratore ut supra et premissa ratificante promittens dictus dompnus Petrus tamquam capellanus et rector ut supra premissa et quodlibet premissorum in dicta capella et rectoria habere et tenere rata grata inviolabilia perpetuoque duratoria etc. et juravit more sacerdotali etc. Testes: Don Nicolaus Xara et Bernardus Farruge.

At Birkirkara in 1538 a dispute broke out between Johannes Pisano, the parish priest, and one of his parishioners over the ownership of family graves.¹⁶ Pisano held that:¹⁷

de usu et antiquissima observancia dicte ecclesie parochialis di Birchircara et ab antiquissimo tempore a quo non est memoria in contrarium fuit et est observatum che quando alcuna persuna voli haviri alcuna sepultura in dicta ecclesia oy vero in lo cymiteri non altromenti si chi po conchediri et darisi dicta sepultura excepto che in reconpensa di la dicta sepultura non si dugna alcuna parti di terreno oy vero dinari oy alcuna altra cosa et di quisto modo si solino dari et conchediri sepulchri et non aliter. Ita et prout fuit visum et cognitum uti et observari ac concedi et dari sepulchri per ipsum venerandum conventum tamquam cappellanum et per alios predecessores cappellanos predictae parochie et Ita est veritas et dicant testes.

On the other hand, witnesses stated that Xenno Burg had inherited from his father a grave in the main church always held by the Burg family and another constructed forty five years previously in the adjoining church of St. Agatha.¹⁸

Dimitrius Mifsud de casale Birchircara testis juratus et interrogatus super primo capitulo dixit quod quondam Raimundus Burg pater dicti Xenni (i.e. Simonis) informantis tempore sue vivencie et usque ad eius mortem sempre et de continuo usava tenia et possedia la dicta sepultura in capitulo contenta posita intus ecclesiam parochialem parochie di Birchircara la quali sepultura ananti che fo crixuta la ecclesia predicta venia vichina de li lampa di lo Corpo de Cristo et ora per esseri crixuta la dicta ecclesia veni quasi a menzo la dicta ecclesia in la quale sepultura dicto Ramundo fuchia sepelliri li soy et specialiter Catherinam uxorem tunc quondam Simonis Xeberas filiam dicti Ramundi la quali ha circa anni quaranta chinco et successive fo sepulto lo quondam Franquino figlo di dicto quondam Ramundo et successive la figla di lo dicto Xenno informantis sensa pagari raxuni alcuna de la sepultura alo capellano, la quali sepultura intisi ipso testu che era originalimenti de li antecessuri et antiqui di lo dicto Xenno; de causa sciencie interrogatus dixit scire premissa per modum ut supra quia bene scit et novit vidit et audivit ea etc. de loco Melite et in dicto casale Birchircara da tempore ab annis quinquaginta circa citra qui testes est etatis annorum ultra sexaginta quinque.

Super ii dixit tantum prout deposuit addendo quod mortuo dicto quondam Ramundo la dicta sepultura la possedio lo dicto Xenno informantis supra la quali allumava et alluma ogni commemoracioni deli morti candili et blandunetti accussi comu si costuma como cosa sua...

Leo Michallef de casale Birchircara testis...¹⁹

¹⁶ Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, Acta Originalia, vol. 17A (1538), ff. 63-75^v. My attention was kindly drawn to these proceedings by Mr. John Andrew Schembri of Birkirkara.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 74.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 75.

Super iii dixit quod jam sunt circa anni XXXXV et ultra tempore quo erat quondam Reverendus dominus Michael de Falsono Capellanus dicte parrochie quodam die trovandosi ipso teste in dicta ecclesia parrochiali una cum dicto quondam Raimundo Burg, Bendo Michallef et Georgio Burg, qui Ramundus, Bendus et Georgius tunc temporis erant procuratores dicte ecclesie cum li quali ancora era lo dicto quondam don Micheli capellano et volendo fari murari la dicta ecclesia sancte Agathe et farila crixiri perche era pichula dissi lo dicto quondam don Micheli ali dicti procuraturi coram ipso teste che ipsi procuraturi volissiru procurari et actendiri che si facha la dicta maramma de la dicta ecclesia et facta che sarra ogni uno di ipsi procuraturi habia una sepultura in dicta ecclesia et che sia loro in perpetuum et de poy lo dicto quondam Ramundo piglao la dicta sepultura in capitulo contenta et appropriatila (?) per si et fichi sepelliri li soy et deinde fo sepulto ipso Ramundo et mortuo dicto Ramundo restao lo dicto informanti in la quali ancora fichi sepelliri li soy senza pagari cosa alcuna como cosa sua...

Another witness stated:²⁰

Multi et assay sepulturi sunno intro la ecclesia parrochiali li quali su di diversi persuni che non hanno dato terreno et hoc perche li sarranno dati per li capellani tunc esistenti senza alcuno terreno.

It would be easy but pointless to give similar references to family graves in other churches.²¹ The evidence given is enough to suggest that Dusina needs careful reinterpretation in the light of the new information. It is clear that family graves already existed in Malta a century and a half before his time and that by the beginning of the sixteenth century even mere craftsmen and other villagers aspired to and obtained family graves. Proprietors of chapels or churches no doubt had pride of place; but other benefactors and mere procurators, apparently, also managed to get hold of a grave. Incidentally, one cannot help noticing the surprising amount of church or chapel building, rebuilding or extending that was taking place throughout this time.²²

20 *Ibid.*, f. 63, evidence of Petrus Burg filius Orlandi de casali Birchircara.

21 Thus on 29 May 1534 the Dominican Friars granted a grave to Bartholomeo Vella of Luqa in the Chapel of the Rosary of their conventual church at Rabat, Malta, in return for his donation of a yearly sum of fifteen tari for a mass and other church services on every feastday of Our Lady celebrated in that chapel: M. Fsadni, *Id-Dumnikani f'ir-Rabat u f'il-Birgu sa l-1620* (Malta, 1974), p. 59.

22 See also M. Fsadni, *Il-Migja u l-Hidma ta' l-Ewwel Dumnikani f'Malta (1450-1512)* (Malta, 1965), G. Wettinger, *Il-Grajja Bikrija tal-Knisja Matriċi ta' Għawdex 1435-1551* (Malta, 1975), and *idem*, 'Artistic Patronage in Malta: 1418-1538', in *Hal Millieri: A Maltese Casale, its Churches and Paintings*, pp. 108-115 and 116-119.

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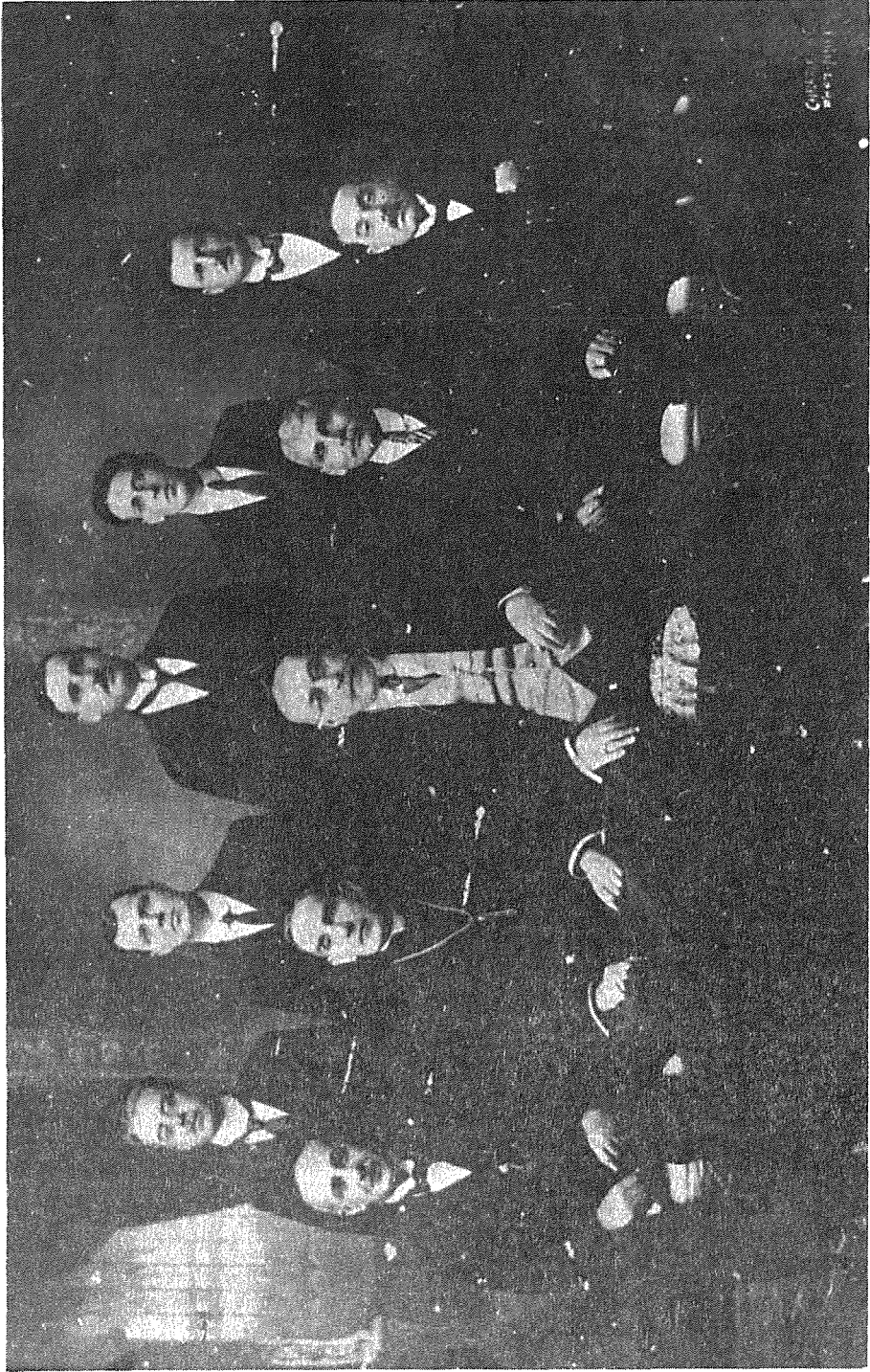
J.J. Camilleri

Sir Thomas Maitland seriously challenged the old predominance of Italian when he gave official recognition to English. He initiated the Language Question¹ which escalated primarily into a rival battle for ascendancy between the adherents of the two languages. The Language Question evolved into a hot controversial issue characterized by strong political agitation and prejudice.² Many people became involved; in the heat of the moment those interested often lost their sense of balance and the issue complicated itself needlessly.

The low social, economic and educational level of the Maltese in the past often reflected official indifference and inactivity. One of the principal shortcomings in local education was the inability to establish a language for teaching purposes. The teaching of Maltese was not seriously considered; it was regarded by many as waste of time. However, the case for Maltese was advocated by a few supporters.

The lack of an accepted Maltese alphabet and a standard orthography created serious difficulties and hindered progress. So when in 1920 *l-Ghaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti* was founded it took this matter in hand and gave it prime importance. On November 14 of that same year it appointed a Commission to study and devise the Maltese alphabet. This was one of the very first activities of the *Ghaqda*. The Commission's proposed draft of the alphabet was discussed at a general meeting held on 18 November 1921. It was approved and four days later the Secretary of the *Ghaqda*, F.S. Caruana, enclosed a specimen of the alphabet

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1. Pace P., *The Language Question, 1920-34, A critical edition of the relevant documents*, Vols. 1-4, M.A. thesis, 1975.
 2. On 12 September 1925: Giuseppe Pisani and forty-three other residents from Mellieħa complained by letter to the M.P.I. about the low standard of education attained by children in government elementary schools and also requested the introduction of Maltese reading in all elementary school classes *per una mezz'ora ad ogni secondo giorno*. Dr. A.V. Laferla, the Director of Elementary Schools, investigated and advised the Minister not to take further notice of the petition as these statements were unfounded. But on 11 October 1926 a similar letter was sent to the M.P.I. by Maria Attard and nine other Mellieħa residents. The Minister again rebutted the allegations made by parents in connection with the standard of proficiency of pupils in the Maltese language. The Minister said that children attending the government schools could read Maltese and were able to correspond with their people abroad. Replying to parents he said, "thirteen girls attending Standard Two take Maltese prayer books with them to church which they read with facility."
 - (a) Teaching of Maltese Language in Elementary Schools, File P.355/26, Giuseppe and others to M.P.I., 12.9.26.
 - (b) *ibid.*, Secretary M.P.I. to Giuseppe Pisani, 2 October 1926.
 - (c) *ibid.*, Secretary M.P.I. to Mrs. Maria Attard, 5 November 1926.This little incident, singled out from a long series of its kind, is reminiscent of past local political wranglings.



The Committee and the Commission of "L-Ghaqda tal-Kitteba tal-Malti" (1922). Standing from l. to r. Guzè Micallef, Rog. Cachia, A.M. Borg, F.S. Caruana and Guzè Micallef Goggi P.P. Sitting from l. to r. Guzè Darmanin Demajo P.L., Mons. Prof. K. Psaila, Kav. Guzè Muscat-Azzopardi B.M., P.E.P., P.L., Ganni Vassallo and Ninu Cremona.

to the Head of the Ministry, Joseph Howard³ and, requesting the co-operation of Government, he proposed that this alphabet be adopted in all Maltese publications. Caruana wrote, "The Commission's aims in devising a phonetic alphabet as advocated by the best scholars in oriental studies are simply to place the actual scripture of our vernacular on a fixed standard of its sounds which, so far, have been vaguely represented by capricious transcriptions borrowed from foreign orthoepy which is practically embarrassing and scientifically incorrect. It was expected that, if this alphabet was favourably accepted by those people who were anxious to promote the literary progress of the vernacular, the Society would make it its duty to publish the full report on the orthographical rules. These rules had already been set and compiled for the purpose of establishing a uniformity in Maltese writing among all writers and editors."

This letter was passed on to the Minister for Public Instruction, but no action was taken. In fact, in his letter of 5 December 1929,⁴ F.S. Caruana was still insisting with Government on the use of the *Għaqda's* alphabet in all official documents of a permanent nature. The problem was not settled before 1 January 1934 and ironically it had to be a Crown Government to give the Maltese alphabet and orthography official recognition. F.S. Caruana's correspondence of 5 December 1929 was referred to Ninu Cremona, who at that time was the editor of Government Maltese publications. Besides, Cremona was one of the members of the Commission devising the alphabet, a founder and a stalwart of the *Għaqda*. In spite of this, the secretary's letter did not meet Cremona's favour and approval, the theories he advocated and the advice which he gave to the Minister for Public Instruction, might have demoralized, frustrated and even alienated F.S. Caruana and the handful of Maltese enthusiasts of the time. But Ninu Cremona was beyond their suspicion, they might have not been unaware of the details of the long minute which he wrote to the Minister on 4 February 1930.⁵ I must state from the very start that I do not intend in anyway to put Cremona in a bad light nor to portray him as a turncoat who speaks one thing before his colleagues at the *Għaqda* and writes another in his capacity as a public official when confronting his Minister. It is true that the Minute is of a controversial nature and that he is at variance with his friends on the imposition of the official alphabet, but one should decide if all this was a matter of whether one should go at a certain pace or go faster.

Cremona said that since its institution on 14 November 1920, the *Għaqda's* aim was to fix a uniform orthography amongst writers in Maltese, and a Commission was set up for that purpose, but he believed that such an aim had not been achieved and the publication of *Tagħrif* had abortive results among writers, printers and editors in general. Cremona assisted by G. Vassallo was entrusted

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3. File C 26/21, F.S. Caruana, Secretary *Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti*, to the Head of Ministry, Forwarding a specimen of the Alphabet by the Union of Writers and requesting the co-operation of the Government for its adoption by the Maltese press, 22.12.21.
 4. File C 489/29, F.S. Caruana to M.P.I., requests the use of the Maltese alphabet as introduced by the Academy of the Maltese Language in all official documents of a permanent nature, 5.12.29.
 5. *ibid.*, A. Cremona, minute of 4.2.30.

with the compilation of the *Tagħrif*. He ascribed the failure of the *Għaqda's* scheme "to its hard and fast attempts to adopt a phonic alphabet." While admitting that it was the most correct one, he said that it "is generally considered as an unfamiliar innovation and, as facts have shown, is doomed to fail; notwithstanding, in the case of the *Għaqda*, the symbols chosen were the most current ones, except for two or three of them which differ from their usual character and value, i.e. the g (for the *fixed* sound of hard g), the k (for the *câf*, ca, che, chi, co, cu), and the q (for the guttural *kâf*)."

Ninu Cremona went on to say that since the publication of the *Għaqda's* organ *Il-Malti*, the claims of the society for the popular adoption of its alphabet had practically ceased. The alphabet was then only used by the subscribers of the organ and in some purely literary or philological matter published by its members; the *Għaqda* itself, in a linguistic sense, was regarded as a scientific society rather than a popular literary society.

"As to the plea raised in the enclosed correspondence, that the adoption by Government of the *Għaqda's* alphabet in all official documents of a permanent nature should determine the progress of the Maltese Language and in the meantime serve as a help both to the Government and to the students of Maltese, I am afraid that the *Għaqda's* committee has failed to forecast the adverse effects of such adoption and to realize to what a limited extent the Government, though in theory should approve of the *Għaqda's* principles, may commit itself in adopting the *Għaqda's* alphabet." Cremona was of the opinion that any attempt to induce the government to try the experiment of adopting this system, which since Vassalli's time (1790) had failed several times, would be simply exposing the government to a risk of losing what so far it had gained through its prudent policy and efforts towards the standardization of the Maltese orthography on the best practical lines, which for the time being, could be adopted. He went on to show how the orthography in any language was mainly formed by chance or by the fancies of early writers. History showed that its gradual standardization was never attained other than by a radical scholastic scheme. He was convinced that the activities of Academies, even if supported by governments, to introduce straightaway a standard alphabet had always proved unsuccessful and had done more harm than good to the language itself.

"The current Maltese alphabetical transliteration which has been used by the best writers in the different epochs, and which should rightly be considered as a standard one, is the outcome of a radical scholastic system in the early Primary Government School. Since 1840 children were first taught the Italian language through the medium of written Maltese and for that purpose, Maltese was transliterated on the alphabet of the *Società Filologica*. This transliteration has prevailed for the last 90 years and there is no likelihood of its being modified, at any rate for the time being, by the change of the three letters (and not two) suggested by the *Għaqda* in order to conform to the principle of an accurate phonic alphabet. It may perhaps be amended in progress of time by a radical scholastic system; but I repeat, any other effort will prove unsuccessful and harmful. Besides the unsuccessful efforts of Vassalli (1790-1827); Zerafa (1827); Bellanti (1829) and Panzavecchia (1845) it is worth mentioning as striking instances the following phonic alphabets which although adopted or strongly backed up by the Government had also failed: (a) The Arabo-Maltese alphabet (1838); (b) Panzavecchia's alphabet (*Grammatica Maltese* 1845); (c) Alphabet of the *Società Medica* (1841); (d) Alphabet of the *Xirca Xemja* (1882).

"Contrary to what has happened in other languages, Maltese orthography is not

morphologically the result of chance or fancièrs, except in some conventional symbols of transliteration. Maltese being a semitic language, when written, is transcribed by the generality of the best writers in accordance with the fixed rules of grammar and the value of the letter independently of the proper formation of the letters.

“So far the *Ghaqda*'s contention, regarding the convenience of the use of its alphabet by the government on the grounds of scientific importance and simplicity, does not practically hold good; and although there might have been many adherents of the system, I being foremost in the ranks in a scientific sense, who have contributed to the Maltese literature in the *Ghaqda*'s transcript, several of the scholars had to revert to the use of the current alphabet when writing for popular purposes. To prove this assertion, I may quote the following authors and scholars who advocated the use of the phonetic alphabet during different epochs and had reverted to the current one, viz. (a) Francis Vella (1831); (b) Luigi Rosato (1839); (c) The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (1845); (d) Sir George Percy Badger (1841); (e) Gio-Batta Falzon (1861); (f) Annibale Preca (1900); (g) Napoleone Tagliaferro (1901); (h) E. Magro (1906); (i) Salvo Mamo (1901) and quite recently the President of the *Ghaqda* itself, the late Chev. G. Muscat Azzopardi who published the Gospels with a common alphabet whilst the *Ghaqda* was in its full swing. The editors of newspapers such as the *Habib* and the *Lehen is-Sewwa* who formed part of the *Ghaqda*'s Commission also refrained from using the *Ghaqda*'s alphabet.

“As the Committee of the *Ghaqda* admits, the alphabet used by government in its official documents is the nearest to that of the *Ghaqda*'s, the difference being only in the three letters mentioned in para. 2 of this minute. To use the three letters of the *Ghaqda* instead of the current ones would be forcing the government to bring about a revolution in the standard transcript into such a confusion as to spoil the good plans of the government to uplift and spread the Maltese language. The present government has adopted the best and the most practical Maltese transliteration which is in conformity with the orthography used by the old government in its official documents and school books for the last 40 years, the previous one (that of the late *Xirca Xemija*) has been abolished from schools as being unpracticable. On the recommendation of a Committee of Maltese writers which was formed in 1893, the present orthography used by the government was introduced. This orthography consisted of the alphabet of the *Società Filologica* (with the exception of the consonant *u* which was subsequently substituted by the *w*) and embodies the grammatical principles at first propounded by Vassalli, by the *Xirca Xemija* and lately by G. Vassallo in the *Muġtieh* and by the *Ghaqda* itself in the *Taghrif*.

“The difference in symbols as Panzavecchia himself asserts in his *Grammatica della Lingua Maltese* (1845) does not practically imply improper orthography; and letters of one single sound, even if expressed by digraphs, are in practice considered as varying conventional characters. They are not therefore expected to stand a scientific test.

“The question of transliteration which is to be used in the translation of laws into Maltese has already and duly been discussed by the Commission entrusted with these translations on 12 September 1929 and the Commission has decided to adopt the orthography now used by the government.

“I wish to state that as one of the members of the Committee of the *Ghaqda*, I was invited to discuss this matter in a meeting which was to be held on 17 November 1929 and which for want of a quorum was put off to 24 November 1929. I refrained from attending this meeting as I thought perhaps my position as editor of the Government Maltese publications might interfere with the free opinions of the members. I, as well as Mr. G. Vassallo, expressed in writing that we did not approve in principle the action of the Committee of the *Ghaqda* in this matter.

“I would suggest that the Secretary of the *Ghaqda* be informed that the government does not consider it advisable for the present to modify the alphabet used in government publications.”

So far I have only tried to be factual, and historical facts have been made known even though perhaps through a presentation of disjointed remnants of

official correspondence. The facts now need to be interpreted in their correct setting, taking into account the socio-political ambience of Cremona's life and times. It might be argued that Cremona agreed in principle with his colleagues but he was on the side of proceeding cautiously and prudently as not to create too much opposition. One thing is certain, Cremona remained faithful to the ideal to the end.

While the problem of Maltese orthography and terminology remained unsolved, the government in the meantime issued directions concerning their use. The Minister for Public Instruction, Dr. Enrico Mizzi, complained with the Head of the Ministry that the Maltese used in Government notices and other official publications was not uniform. Furthermore he requested him to direct the officer in charge of such translations to follow government instructions. "Such directions do not only conform with the decision arrived at by the Cabinet, but are also based on the principles enunciated by the great majority of both Houses of Parliament in the resolution approved on October 31 and November 9 last; in view of which the Maltese used in such publications should also be as commonly spoken."⁶ Specimens of writings in the Maltese orthography⁷ as desired by the M.P.I. were also sent to Ninu Cremona for his perusal. He was instructed to follow at once the directives of the Head of Ministry. Cremona gave his views about these instructions. "I am inclined to presume that the lack of orthographical uniformity in the Maltese versions referred to me by the Hon. Minister for Public Instruction is evidently due to the two different systems of spelling which had to be unavoidably adopted since 23 June 1932, when orders were given to the Superintendent of the Printing Office to effect some changes in the standard Maltese orthography used in the Government Gazette."⁸ He was of opinion that the specimens of the new Maltese orthography desired by the Minister did not provide sufficient technical guidance to follow a uniform and consistent orthography, and he thus requested to be furnished with "such specific rules as might enable me to follow as precisely as possible the orthography prescribed by the Hon. Minister for Public Instruction."⁹ Dr. E. Mizzi remarked that the specimens of Maltese orthography submitted might not provide sufficient technical guidance to follow a uniform and consistent orthography to the uninitiated, but, as these were intended for professionals in the matter, it was not deemed necessary to enter into any details. He said that in this matter it was a question of carrying out decisions already taken by government.¹⁰ However, he

6. File 614/32, M.P.I., Instructions anent Maltese Orthography and Terminology, 7.12.32.

7. Specimens enclosed: List of Buildings, sites and remains existing in Malta and Gozo, which have a geological, archeological, antiquarian or artistic importance, Malta Government Printing Office, 1932; Referendun, the Lyceum, 4 November 1932; Malta Government Gazette, 5 October 1932.

8. *ibid.*, A. Cremona to Superintendent of the Government Printing Office, 20 December 1932.

9. *ibid.*

10. *ibid.*, M.P.I. to S.P.O., 27 December 1932. In 1932, Dr. E. Mizzi had also ordered the suppression of the letter *j* in such words as *pulizija*. Refer J. Aquilina, *Papers in Maltese Linguistics*, (Malta 1961) "Systems of Maltese Orthography", p. 76. The statement which Cremona submitted to the Head of the Ministry on the 28 July 1932 in defence of the use of the letter *j* is reproduced.

formulated and issued these instructions which he considered quite sufficient for the future guidance of the officer in charge of Maltese Publications.

“Anyhow, the Officer entrusted with Maltese translations is requested to adopt the following specific changes in the Maltese orthography so far adopted by him:

- (1) The letter *U* is to substitute the letter *W* everywhere
- (2) To do away with all dots so far adopted on the letters *Z*, *J*, *C*, and *G* and in the case of the latter two letters to substitute such dots:
 - (a) by an *i* in the case of words where the letters *c* and *g* are usually followed by a vowel, such as *ciar*, *giostra*, *giurdien*, etc.
 - (b) by an apostrophe in cases where such letters are followed by a consonant, such as *c'cheichen*, *g'bart*, *ig'mla* etc. wherever the said letters *c* and *g* have a soft sound.
- (3) The apostrophe is to substitute the hyphen in the case of all articles, prepositions or articulated prepositions preceding words beginning with a vowel, such as *l'arma*, *f'oqbra*, *fl'ackbar* not *l-arma*, *f-oqbra*, *fl-akbar*, etc.
- (4) The letter *Q* is to take its normal place as universally based in order not to have the incomprehensible *kwiet*, but the regular and natural *quiet*; and the letter *K* is no longer to substitute the hard *C* (*hecc* not *hekk*) but to take the place so far usurped by the *Q* (*kasba* not *qasba*). The letter *Q* should invariably be followed by a *U*.
- (5) The double consonant *sc* is to substitute the letter *x* in every Maltese word deriving from Italian, such as *coscia* (not *coxxa*), *scialata* (not *xalata*).
- (6) Maltese-Italian words should invariably be written as nearest as compatibly possible to the Italian way, so as not to have *azzjoni* instead of *azjoni* nor *fjuri* instead of *fiuri*, etc.”

In formulating the instructions the M.P.I. was motivated by these principles.

“The recognized type of our orthography, which is also common and familiar to the people in general, is that adopted in the Italian language and the more Maltese is written differently from Italian the less will it suit our spoken idiom. I do not mean by this to deny the existence of certain differences of sound in the pronunciation of our vernacular, but the so-much-talked-of danger of amphibology is nugatory if attention is paid to the meaning of the phrases. Besides, all languages abound with amphibologisms and peculiarities in pronunciation and nobody has ever thought of them as defects that need correction for common use. Excessive, not to say ridiculous, philological severity is considered pedantry and is not insisted upon in those very languages which are reputed as most perfect.”¹²

A decision about the teaching of Maltese in Elementary Schools had already been taken at a Cabinet meeting held on 1 September 1932. It was decided that Maltese should be taught as is commonly spoken and that it should be written as pronounced.¹³ The M.P.I., Dr. E. Mizzi, had also discussed the matter with Dr. A. Laferla, the Director of Elementary Schools. He told him, “In view of the fact that our dialect contains a very large number of Italian words or of Italian origin, I am anxious that the teaching of the vernacular should be such as to enable the students later on to learn with greater facility the Italian language, the more so that in accordance with Clause 1 of the Letters Patent issued on 2 May 1932 — the English and Italian languages shall be recognized as equal languages of

11. These instructions appeared in a departmental circular to all teachers on 13 January 1933 under the signature of A. Laferla, Director of Elementary Schools, para 4 translated into English.

12. File 614/32, M.P.I. to S.P.O., 27 December 1932.

13. File 130/32, M.P.I. to D.E.S., 1.9.32.

culture in Malta at the University and in the Secondary Schools.”¹⁴ In 1923, Act No. IX the so-called *Pari Passu* Law, regularized the simultaneous teaching and the use of the English and Italian languages in public institutions in these islands. In the original draft of that Act the government’s proposal that the teaching of Italian was to commence in the first elementary class was approved by the Legislative Assembly, but this provision was modified by the Senate against the will of the government in such a way that the teaching of Italian had to start in Standard III instead of Standard I. It was therefore argued that the *Pari Passu* Law did not represent the will of the people.

Leading Maltese personalities appearing before the Royal Commission of 1931 headed by Lord Askwith gave their views and opinions about the language issue. The Minutes of Evidence¹⁵ make very interesting reading. The Language Question was finally settled by the Imperial Letters Patent in 1934.

14. *ibid.*

15. Malta Royal Commission, 1931, Minutes of Evidence, Malta, 1931.

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Mario Azzopardi

I L-INKWINA TAŻ-ŻMIEN

Għall-poeta modern, l-idea ta' Alla hija ta' spiss l-idea tal-Ġukatur Divin, l-Esseri misterjuż mingħajr żmien u spazju li r-rizorsi tiegħu huma bla tariff. Il-Ġukatur Divin huwa dik l-istess Essenza li tohloq ir-ritmi kożmiċi mingħajr waqfien; huwa l-istess bidu-u-tmiem ta' pjaneti bla għadd ta' galassi li maġenbhom l-eżistenza temporali tal-bniedem mhix hliet mument assurdu.

Il-bniedem żviluppa kuxjenza li tagħraf illi ż-Żmien huwa biss dimensjoni ta' eżistenza mill-iktar misterjuża u li dan johloq l-isfond tal-metafizika, i.e. ir-relazzjoni tal-Bniedem maż-Żmien, mal-Kożmos, ma' l-Esseri Divin, ma' l-Astratt. Il-kuxjenza tal-bniedem modern saret waħda aktar "xjentifika", u dan il-fenomeni, minhabba edukazzjoni u riċerki aktar assidwi, intebhu bih ukoll il-poeti moderni Maltin. Ġiet skoperta r-rabta bejn il-poezija u x-xjenza, iżda l-moħħ kreattiv baqa' f'konflitt mal-misteru tremend tat-traxxendenza. Inbdiet tellieqa tal-moħħ maż-Żmien: l-artist modern, il-poeta kontemporanju, beda ġirja nervuza biex ifittex xi sens fl-eżistenza (relattivament qasira hafna) tiegħu fid-dinja, jew imqar fl-univers. Il-kriżi nholqot sewwasew għaliex il-possibiltajiet ta' moħħ il-poeta jinfirxu ferm aktar 'il bogħod mill-medja tal-limitazzjoni mundana tal-ghajxien tal-bniedem.

Il-poeta jaf li bejn l-eżistenza *materjali* u l-eżistenza *spiritwali* hemm qasma tremenda; hemm kontradizzjoni bejn dak li huwa *fiziku* u dak li huwa *idealizzat*; bejn dak li huwa *reali* u dak li huwa tant *misterjuż*. Għalhekk hemm harba kbira, tellieqa dinamika, enerġija tremenda fil-moħħ kreattiv biex ikun "sfidat" l-element taż-Żmien.

L-unika rassenjazzjoni għall-bniedem kreattiv hija li jista' jipprova jagħti *sens metafiziku* lid-dettalji komuni. Issa dan is-sens metafiziku lill-oġġetti jrid jinbeda kemm-il darba tinbidel il-kuxjenza tal-Jien. Il-poeta jipprova jfittex Jien li jassorbi l-misteri tar-relazzjoni bejn dak li huwa transitorju (li jgħaddi, li jinbidel, li jmut) u dak li huwa Etern. Minn xi daqqiet, il-moħħ kreattiv jaċċetta telfa, għaliex mill-għerien profondi tal-Jien ma tasal l-ebda konkluzjoni fissa dwar il-misteru ta' l-Eżistenza.

Il-poeziji f'din it-taqsimta jeħtieġ li jkunu nkwadrate fuq dan l-isfond, li jiehu dimensjoni usa' jekk il-qarrej jirrelata dawn il-poeziji mat-teoriji ta' Darwin u Einstein.¹

1. *It-Teorija tar-Relattività* (1905) ta' Einstein tirreferi għall-fatt li ċ-ċaqliq kollu fil-kożmos (minbarra l-veloċità tad-dawl) huwa strettament relattiv; f'univers ta' mutazzjoni kontinwa, l-ebda punt ma jista' jkun iffissat f'post u żmien mnejn l-avvenimenti jistgħu jitqiesu b'mod assolut. Dan jimplika li mqar il-bniedem huwa sempliċi ko-ordinu tad-dawl, jew massa enerġetika mingħajr centralità.

Fil-poezija *Fuga* ta' Oliver Friggieri, il-maħrub, l-imbażza' ma jistax jasal fis-saltna tal-paċi tar-ruħ. Il-bniedem jidhol fih innifsu u jisfa umiljat mill-biża' tal-Ġukatur Anonimu, il-Ġukatur Divin. Friggieri jqis illi, wara kollox, il-Jien l-ieħor, ("sabih u hieles") se jintradam taħt "id-dħaħen tqal li jsewdu kollox."

Ir-rassenjazzjoni ta' Victor Fenech fil-poezija *Xmara Ħamra, Bruka Xiħa* hija aktar definita; hawn jinholoq speċi ta' kwadru *still-life* minn problematika metafizika tremenda. Hemm insistenza fuq id-demm, bħallikieku l-poeta nixxa demmu kollu fl-agunija biex jipprova jifhem ir-relazzjoni bejn dak li jgħaddi u dak li huwa Etern. Il-ħut ukoll, simbolu tal-primordjalità ta' l-ilma, huwa aħmar, bħallikieku sa mill-bidu ta' l-evoluzzjoni tiegħu (mill-ilma) il-Bniedem kien diġà kundannat li jgħix perijodu limitat ħafna ta' żmien. Matul din l-agunija, in-natura tibqa' passiva.²

B'vokabularju wisq aktar esplussiv u xjentifiku, Achille Mizzi johlq speċi ta' 'Ktieb tal-Ġenesi' konċiż fil-poezija tiegħu *Dawl*. Mit-"traba ċkejna" li tissemma fl-ewwel strofa, tnissel il-bniedem fit-tieni strofa, dak l-istess bniedem li jitwield f'għadira demm biex imbagħad jintebah li jkollu jmut. B'danakollu, Mizzi xorta wahda jiċcelebra l-avvent ta' l-intelligenza superjuri tal-Bniedem, "id-dawl ta' kewkba ġdida."³ Il-Professor Serracino Inglott jinnota li l-ewwel poeziji ta' Achille Mizzi deħru miġburin taħt it-titlu *L-Għar ta' l-Enimmi*: l-Għar huwa l-Eżistenza nfisha, il-Poezija. L-għar jista' jfisser ukoll il-ġuf, metafora rikorrenti fil-kitba ta' dan il-poeta.

Metafora oħra għall-ġuf bħala l-fosdqa ta' l-innoċenza jużaha Albert Marshall fil-poezija *Papoċċi*. L-innoċenza romantika tal-fjura tal-papoċċa tintlemaħ tghum fiż-żejt, sinjal li mal-passaġġ taż-żmien l-innoċenza u l-imħabba jittebbgħu u jmutu. Is-sens tal-katastrofi jevokah ukoll Raymond Mahoney, li jistqarr li "ż-żgħożija...mhux ta' min iġħixha", sewwasew għaliex tilludik, "ittul ftit sigħat" biss. Mahoney joqtol il-ħajja tal-bieraħ u jishet il-piġħada: isib sabar biss fil-ħsieb li "għada l-Ħadd tal-mistrieħ." Il-kelma *mistrieħ* hija kelma ta' qofol, għaliex turi l-għeja ta' l-adolexxenti li diġà sewwed qalbu u qata' jiesu mid-dilemma ta' l-eżistenza limitata fil-konfront ta' l-immensità eterna.

L-ekwivalent għall-kelma *il-Ħadd* (tal-mistrieħ) f'Mahoney huwa "s-siparju" li jsemmi Charles Coleiro f'*Janus Miljard*. Janus kien l-alla ruman b'żewġt uċuħ. Fil-passaġġ taż-żmien, il-poezija tiegħu żewġ estremi: *il-pjaċir tas-sensi* u *l-kastig*. Coleiro jinqabad f'konfużjoni u jitlob l-għajnuna, filwaqt li jaf li "għada" se terġa' tibda t-taqbida. Dan huwa "kwadru ieħor tal-bniedem ittorturat fuq l-inkwina taż-żmien fil-mument tad-deċiżjoni."⁴

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2. Hija passività li tfakkarna fil-*Yin* tal-kultura Ciniża qadima mi bniġja fuq il-ħsieb ta' Lao Tzu; il-*Yin* hija forza femminili, l-art-mara misterjuża invokata wkoll fil-ħsieb Jungjan dwar l-arċitipi ewlenin. Hemm diversi motivi arċitipali fil-poezija ta' whud bħal Azzopardi, Massa, u Mizzi nnifsu.
 3. *Id-dawl* jista' jkun qiegħed jirreferi wkoll għall-avvent Kristjan. Għalkemm tista' tinħass irriverenti ma' l-ewwel daqqa t'għajn, il-poezija tal-modernisti lokali qatt mhi mbiegħda mill-essenza Kristologika.
 4. L-indeċiżjoni hija l-effett ta' sensiela ta' kumplessi u kriżijiet li nisslu għalihom infushom il-modernisti minħabba li nnegaw l-ortodossija komda tar-religjon, il-konvenzjoni patrijottika u d-dekadenza tal-valuri estetici.

B'kuntrast, *L-Ghanja tal-Hajja*, Achille Mizzi jassumi l-parti ta' profeta, distinzjoni ta' esperjenza straordinarja mnebbha b'qawwa supra-umana. Meta jikkuntempla d-dinja fil-prospettiva taż-żmien, Mizzi jikkonkludi li mill-kaos tnisslet l-ordni, mill-gheruq tnisslet il-beraħ; mill-mewt (ta' ċerti speċi) tnisslet il-ħajja. It-ton huwa wiehed ta' litanija, wiehed ta' tkompliġa, radda ta' ħsibijiet wiehed wara l-iehor iżda mingħajr ċentru. *Il-krizi tal-Jien jew il-krizi ta' l-Identità* nistgħu ngħidu li lanqas m'għandha ċentru: l-individwu, minħabba l-insistenza fuq l-inkonxju, isir frammentat u kaotiku, għalkemm xorta waħda jibqa' jfittex ċerta unità ekwibrata. *L-Ghanja tal-Hajja* tezemplarizza "il-kuxjenza akuta taż-żmien... fl-eżistenza tal-bniedem tal-lum."

It-taqsima *L-Inkwina taż-Żmien* tirrifletti tqanqil dinamiku u xbihat fermentati: minħabba f'hekk, mill-inqas żewġ poeti (Fenech u Coleiro) jesperimentaw bil-vers proġettiv f'tentattiv biex it-tensjoni psikika tagħhom jirriflettuha fuq il-karta stampata, b'arrangament ta' spazji vojta, donnhom jixxennqu biex johlqu ċerta ordni mill-ambigwi ta' l-eżistenza moderna.

II IL-JIEN TAHT IL-MARTELL

Il-kittieb Franciż Albert Camus, fir-rumanz tiegħu *Ir-Ribell* (1951) sostna li r-ribelljoni, hija waħda mill-iktar dimensjonijiet essenzjali fil-bniedem. Skond Camus, ir-ribell iwassal għal-libertà u għaldaqstant għall-att ta' l-eroj.⁵ Minbarra Camus, kienu bosta l-hassieba li kkoncentraw fuq ir-ribelljoni *interna* fil-bniedem.

Descartes (1596-1650) kien diġà qasam l-idea ta' l-esperjenza fil-bniedem fi tnejn: (a) *ir-res extensa* u (b) *ir-res cogitans*. *Ir-res extensa* hija d-dinja tal-materja, id-dinja eterna jew universali kkontrollata mill-forza tar-regoli matematici. *Ir-res cogitans* hija d-dinja gewwiena tal-bniedem, id-dinja fejn jahkmu l-kumplessi, l-impressjonijiet, is-sensibilitajiet u l-memorji. Din id-dinja gewwiena hija konfuża u, skond Descartes, "imperfetta", għaliex hija agitata hafna.

Scopenhauer (1788-1860) fisser kif *l-Innifsi* huwa kontinwament f'kunflitt mad-dinja ta' barra (*res extensa*). Il-bniedem "johlq id-dinja huwa stess, skond l-idea tiegħu, skond ma tghidlu r-rieda tiegħu."

Nietzsche (1844-1900), magħruf bhala l-apostlu tal-helsien totali, inklud il-helsien mill-idea "oppressiva" ta' Alla, sostna li l-bniedem għandu l-fakultà u l-jedd li jagħxi b'rieda kreattiva mingħajr kundizzjoni.

Aktar qrib tagħna, awturi bħal Samuel Beckett (twieled fl-1906) ipproponew li l-bniedem għandu l-jedd għall-*Innifsi Anonimu* (Anonymous Self). Fix-xoghlijiet ta' Beckett, miktubin mingħajr paragrafi u mingħajr punteggjatura, niltaqgħu ma' stat avvanzat ta' *entropija*, stat fejn taħkem il-mewt ta' l-energija. L-entropija fil-letteratura moderna hija riflessa wkoll fix-xogħol importanti ta' Thomas Pynchon, V (1963), rumanz li jħabbar l-avvent tal-poeta modern f'Malta

5. Jew l-anti-eroj, ladarba l-protagonist jehodha daqstant kontra l-forzi li għamluh dak li hu. L-anti-eroj huwa komuni fil-letteratura ta' das-seklu u f'Malta ngħata prominenza mhux biss fil-poezija iżda wkoll fir-rumanzi ta' Frans Sammut, Alfred Sant u Oliver Friggieri.

ta' wara l-Gwerra.⁶ Hija sintomu frekwenti. L-entropija skond Beckett jew Pynchon turi lill-bniedem maqtugh mir-*res extensa*, "ifittex ir-realtajiet reqdin tal-kuxjenza tieghu."

Dawn it-teoriji kollha hallew marka cara fuq il-generazzjoni tal-poeti modernisti f'Malta. Huma l-ewwel infexxew fil-polemika kontra l-forzi esterni ta' *Ordni Stabbilit* u, fil-process, bdew jinvestigaw lilhom innifishom internament. Bdew ifittxu *r-res cogitans*.⁷

F'Malta, l-instabbilita tal-poeti modernisti kienet kawzata mill-krizi ta' l-identita. Il-poeta beda jistaqsi: Jien min jien? Inholqu dubji serji minhabba l-krizi soċjali riflessa fil-politika, fir-religjon u fil-letteratura l-qadima ta' l-iskola ta' Dun Karm.

Il-polemika hadet bhala spunti t-tliet komponenti l-iktar ovvji ta' l-*establishment*: *politika, religjon u arti*. Poeti bhall Mario Azzopardi, Albert Marshall u Victor Fenech kienu l-aktar ribelli harxa f'dan il-kuntest. Azzopardi, fil-poezija *Sitwazzjoni 10 battal*, juza l-*projective verse* biex johloq ix-xbija tal-Jien fuq il-palk, marsus bejn suldat, qassis u tfajla-kantanta kummerċjali.

Il-Professor P. Serracino Inglott jinnota kuntrast enormi bejn l-ewwel u t-tieni generazzjoni ta' poeti Maltin, l-iktar f'dik li hija krizi ta' l-identita:

- *it-tradizzjonalisti* dehru li accettaw il-qaghda politika ta' Malta kolonja, accettaw il-knisja kattolika minghajr riservi ta' xejn u accettaw letteratura mmudellata fuq il-qadim.⁸

- *il-modernisti* holqu krizi ta' l-identita, l-aktar wara l-Indipendenza ta' l-1964.

It-telfien ta' certezza fil-kamp tal-modernisti holoq djalogu intern bejn l-*Innifsi Maqsum* (The Divided Self). Bdew jidhru influwenzi cari minn Freud u Jung. Il-Jien ma baqax meqjus bhala sustanza shiha, izda sar frammentat u mkisser, kif jixhed ukoll l-istil minghajr punteggjatura f'uhud mill-poeti ta' l-avangwardja. Il-moderni rriflettew dan l-istat nervuz u mitluf imqar billi kissru s-sintassi u l-grammatika apposta, kif ghamel Albert Marshall fil-poezija *Duende: imma lili/ghada se jmut*

Dan l-iskwilibriju intern ifakkarna wkoll f'dak li qal R.D. Laing dwar l-*Egoic Experience*: din l-esperjenza tixbah lil "a state of inner sleep, a kind of socially accepted madness, a womb-state to which one has to die, from which one has to be born."

Fil-fatt, ir-ritorn lejn il-guf huwa simbolu spiss fil-poezija tal-modernisti. Achille Mizzi huwa mxennaq ghall-primittiv, ghall-ilma (it-tarbija fil-guf hija protetta mill-ilma) li minnu, skond Darwin, tnissel il-bniedem. Mizzi jirreferi wkoll "ghall-vaska tal-mohh", metafora interjuri ohra tar-*res cogitans* (*Enigma Variations*).

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6. Pynchon kien ghamel zmien jahdem fl-aeronawtika ma' l-Alleati f'Malta fi zmien il-gwerra. Minbarra referenzi korsivi ghal dan l-awtur li saru minn P. Serracino Inglott, Frans Sammut u Mario Azzopardi f'xoghlijiet ta' kritika komparattiva, ir-rumanz v ta' Pynchon ghadu ma kienx ittrattat analitikament f'Malta. Il-protagonista Fawsto Majistral, poeta, janticipa l-moviment tal-modernisti f'Malta mill-inqas b'ghoxrin sena.
 7. Il-vjagg interjuri jinhas fl-apici tieghu f'*Tabernakli* (1979) ta' Mario Azzopardi.
 8. Il-mudelli prosodici kienu eskluzivament Taljani, imfasslin fuq motivi pindariċi u apostrofici mill-ottocento. Ruzar Briffa aktarx li kien l-uniku poeta liriku li nqata' mill-boton ta' madwar Dun Karm.

Il-frac tal-Jien fil-kuntest modern huwa sostnut b'ċerta insistenza minn Oliver Friggieri fil-poezija *La Jċedi*. Il-hoss tad-djalogu gewwieni huwa ċar hafna fil-mod ta' "dillierju" li bih Friggieri jiddeskrivi r-"regiment suldati mwerwra" li hemm iħabbtu gewwa fih:

*Go fija hemm regiment suldati mwerwra
resqin lejn il-fruntiera ta' l-egħdewwa,
iħabbtu bla programm fuq tnabar goffi...*

Il-kontradizzjoni li johloq il-kunflitt f'moħħ il-poeta jfissirha tajjeb Philip Sciberras, li jqanqal l-ispirtu ta' l-oppożizzjoni Jien-Huma. L-ossessjoni għall-oppost, għall-polemika soċjo-religjuża hija ċara fil-poezija *L-Opport*:

*Dak li jħobb haddieħor jien nobgħod
Dak li jobgħod haddieħor jien inhobb
u ma tiġini l-ebda għira
jekk nisfa waħdi fuq gżiriti,
Għalhekk twelidt jien.⁹*

L-istess diffikultà fil-komunikazzjoni toħroġ mill-poezija *Nistaqsi* ta' Bernard Mallia, ġizwita. Huwa importanti li l-qarrej jinnota x'baħar jaqsam hemm bejn Dun Karm il-qassis u qassis iehor poeta li qed jikteb fis-sittinijiet. F'Dun Karm mhemmx krizi, iżda Mallia l-ġizwita jokrob biex il-"jien" isir "aħna". U meta ma jirnexxilux, jitfarrak:

*Jien tlaqt lil hinn
mirkub mill-marda tagħhom li mewtitli
sa x-xewqa li nistaqsi
fehmx jew le.*

Tant hija profonda l-krizi tal-Jien fil-modernisti, li Daniel Massa (f'*Kaċċa*) saħansitra jhoss illi l-imħabba tiegħu għall-mara ta' ħajtu hija ppersegwitata mill-oħrajn. L-imħabba tiegħu ssir aggressiva (*l-animus maskil*) iżda wkoll ossessjonata bil-genn ta' xbihat ta' l-Oħrajn lesti li jiddistruġgulu l-imħabba bl-*azzarini ta' b'ħamsa*. U l-kaccaturi qegħdin jimmiraw sewwasew għal moħħu, il-lok tal-kuxjenza, jew tar-*res cogitans*. Ta' min japplika dan il-kliem ta' R.D. Laing għall-ossessjoni interna tal-modernisti:

*(The poet) may feel more insubstantial than substantial, and
unable to assume that the stuff he is made of is genuine,
good, valuable. And he may feel his Self as divorced from his
body.*

III JIEN U INT – RAĠEL U MARA

Fid-daħla tiegħu għal din it-taqsim, il-Professor P. Serracino Inglott iġhid il-

9. Ta' min jinnota li diversi ilhna letterarji mis-sittinijiet sabu posthom bhala membri parlamentari jew konsulenti fl-iskaluni għolja tal-gerarkija politika (Philip Sciberras innifsu, Albert Marshall – li llum jinsab emigrat – u oħrajn bħal Lino Spiteri, Alfred Sant u Raymond Mahoney). Anton Buttigieg, rappreżentant fit-Taqsim *Intermoż*, minbarra li kien l-uniku lehen mill-iskola romantika li baqa' attiv letterarjament, miet bhala ex-President tar-Repubblika. Poeti oħrajn bħal Azzopardi u Mizzi deħru li ma seghu jappartjenu lill-ebda blokk politiku minħabba sens qawwi ta' individwalità filwaqt li Oliver Friggieri holoq għalih innifsu l-laqam ta' "pinnur favur il-verità" li ma jridx jiċċappas bit-tribalizmu Malti.

li l-idea tradizzjonali ta' l-imhabba fil-poezija hija aktarx dejjem marbuta ma' l-idea ta' "versi miktuba fiż-żgħożija lin-namrata." Il-kritiku jsostni illi fis-seklu 20, il-poezija dwar ir-relazzjonijiet bejn is-sessi tneżżgħet miċ-ċpar romantiku u bdiet tkun ikkunsidrata fil-kumpless tal-kwadru kkumplikat tal-Jien. Fil-poezija modernista, qed isir tfittix biex il-persuna tas-sess l-iehor f'relazzjoni intima tik-kumplimenta l-ispirtu mqalleb li qed ifittex il-mistrieħ. Dan jista' jkun mistrieħ spiritwali jew artistiku, element ta' sublimazzjoni.¹⁰

F'dan is-sens, il-poeta modern jista' jitqarreb ukoll lejn l-essenza ta' kulti qodma orjentali, bħal dawk tal-*Yin* (Mara) u l-*Yang* (Raġel) bħala forzi kumplimentari fil-kożmos. Ir-relazzjoni Raġel-Mara fil-poezija moderna hafna drabi tittraxxendi (tmur 'il bogħod minn dak li huwa materjali jew fiżiku). Il-poeta jfittex il-Mara bħala l-*anima* Jungjana, u l-poetessa tfittex lir-Raġel bħala l-*animus*.

Minhabba li t-tiftix huwa persunali, il-poezija moderna, imqar dik dwar l-imhabba, mhi "popolari" xejn: bħal temi oħra, l-imhabba hija ttrattata b'mod kumpless, profund, psikologiku u spiritwali. U minhabba li t-tiftix huwa kkumplikat, hafna drabi l-poeta jkollu jistqarr l-istat ta' l-indeċizjoni tiegħu, l-istess kif jagħmel Victor Fenech fiż-żewġ poeziji *Indeċizjoni* u *Fuq is-Sur ta' l-Imdina*. Fl-ewwel poezija, l-istat ta' krizi huwa ċar – il-poeta ma jafx jekk għandux ikompli t-tfittix għall-verità waħdu jew inkella jintrabatx mal-persuna li (jaħseb li) jhobb biex tikkumplimentah bħala l-vuċi tar-ruħ. Għalkemm jinholoq mument spiritwali fil-ftuħ tat-tieni poezija:

int u jien/u l-ispirtu tal-holqien

Fenech xorta waħda jispiċċa biex jesprimi l-illużjoni ta' l-imhabba: is-siegha ta' l-imhabba donnha tgħaddi malajr wisq u tiflef it-tifsir kollu tagħha meta titqabel mar-realtà tat-tbiċċir fil-gwerra tal-Vjetnam.¹¹

Il-poeta modern jevoka wkoll lill-maħbuba meta din ma tkunx prezenti. Din il-burdata stramba s-simbolista Franciż Paul Elouard sejhilha "l-armonija ta' l-assenza." Mario Azzopardi jittieħed ta' spiss minn din il-burdata, bħallikieku jistrieħ biss meta jiftakar fil-maħbuba bħala memorja. Hafna esperjenzi huma sbieħ bħala memorji, tifikriet mingħajr l-irbit li ggib relazzjoni li trid titkompla għal żmien twil. Il-poezija *Bahrija* toqgħod f'dan il-kuntest ta' poezija amoruża li tařmonizza s-sens ta' assenza. Bi stil kwazi ritwalistiku (stil li mbagħad kellu jsib il-milja tiegħu fil-ktieb *Tabernakli* fl-1979) Azzopardi jitkellem fuq *It-Tfajla tal-Muntanja* b'ton spiritwali. Skond P. Serracino Ingloft, din il-poezija "toffri figura ta' paċi kożmika", u ssir simbolu li jinqafel f'"gebla", metafora li tfigger il-petrifikazzjoni tal-ħajja, iffissata għal dejjem f'mument biex ma tiċcaqlaqx aktar.

10. Dan id-disinn arċitipali tal-Mara huwa qadim; il-Griegi kienu diġà raw lill-Mara-Alla mhux bħala personalizzata, iżda bħala forza fin-Natura, jew spirtu aġitattiv jopera fid-dinja.
11. Il-modernisti ppreokkupaw ruħhom bl-aħbar internazzjonali kontempranja, aspett li kompli universalizza t-tema tagħhom. Mal-krizijiet interjuri tagħhom, il-modernisti ziedu wkoll kumplessi ta' kuxjenza dinjija, bil-konsegwenza li l-poeta poliřiċizzat beda jikkuntrasta mal-poeta privat. Din id-dikotomija holqot kontroversja bejn il-poeti nnifishom, polemika li dehret fil-miftuħ fil-bidu ta' l-1977 meta Azzopardi, Massa u O. Friggieri daħlu f'argument bejniethom dwar "l-eroj pożittiv" u "l-eroj problematiku" (Ara *il-Mument*, Frar, 1977)

Is-sens ta' dubju u incertezza dwar komunikazzjoni intima johrog ukoll fil-poezija *Jekk Fhimtek Sewwa* ta' Joe Friggieri. Din hi poezija li titkellem dwar tmiem ta' relazzjoni li l-poeta għadu ma jafx sewwasew għaliex ser tintemm, u għaldaqstant jassumi ton passiv, kwazi plačidu u absurd.¹² Friggieri donnu jir-rassenja ruħu għall-idea skomda tal-kundanna fil-habs tal-Jien, mingħajr hadd ma jista' jsabbru fid-deżolament tiegħu, lanqas Mara.

Il-waqt essenzjali u mistiku ta' l-imħabba jerga' jinħass fil-poezija *L-Aħħar Borra* ta' Daniel Massa, iżda d-dubju jerga' jitfa' dell oskur fuq ir-relazzjoni bejnu u bejn dik li jhobb. Wiehed jinnota li Massa juża l-kelma "jekk..." mhux inqas minn tliet darbiet f'poezija ta' sittax-il vers qasir. L-istennija mistika (għall-*anima*) hija twila u l-poeta lest jistenna "seklu ta' mwiet", fi klima kiesha ta' borra.

Doreen Micallef, l-unika poetessa f'din l-antologija, hija rappreżentata f'din it-taqsimha b'zewg poeziji. Dedika donnha qed tissuggerixxi li Micallef tkun it-tielet pont bejn it-Trijanglu Alla-Missier-l-Iben-Il-Mara (flok l-ispiritu ta' bejniethom):

*ma ridtx tagħtini ruħek
u ttiha 'l Alla tiegħek*

...
*tieħu gost tinkini tarani ngħir għalih.*¹³

Dan jikkonferma kemm il-poezija modernista hija disprament konxju mill-htiega ta' qawwiet spiritwali biex iwittu l-kriżi tal-kuxjenza u l-kriżi ta' l-identità. F'*Elegija* (it-titlu stess jissuggerixxi l-mewt ta' l-imħabba), Doreen Micallef tqabel lill-persuna maħbuba ma' "bieb imsakkar minn gewwa", bieb li hi qiegħda tipprowa tiftah għalxejn. Effett ieħor tan-nuqqas ta' komunikazzjoni kompleta bejn il-hlejjaq, imqar jekk dawn ikunu raġel u mara li "ddedikaw" lilhom infushom għal xulxin.

Fil-poezija moderna dwar "l-imħabba" hemm sens misterjuż u elużiv: il-persuna l-maħbuba ta' spiss tisfuma, iddub u tghib fiżikament. Iżda t-tifikira tibqa' hemm, memorja li hija biss iċ-certifikat ta' relazzjoni li twieldet biex tmūt. Huwa għalhekk li hafna drabi, ngħidu aħna, il-Mara fil-poezija moderna hija daqshekk misterjuża u passiva, effett ieħor ta' l-inflwenza tal-filosofija tal-Yin orientali. Dr. O. Friggieri, meta tkellem dwar il-mistika tal-Mara f'poeta bħal Mario Azzopardi kien qal hekk:

Hi femminilità li għandha mill-mara vera daqskemm għandha mis-sens tal-preneza tal-mara fir-ruħ, imsarrfa fis-sens ta' l-arti (poetika). Hija s-simbolu ta' l-arċitip kollettiv...mara psikoloġika, simbolu tat-twelid u l-mewt, iċ-ċirku ta' l-etern, il-kontinwu, il-mara hajja-mejta.

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12. It-ton absurdista hakem ukoll lil għadd ta' poeti moderni li wżaw it-teatru bhala mezz ta' espressjoni. J. Friggieri, Marshall u Azzopardi impenjaw ruħhom għal hafna snin b'teatru sperimentali li spiss tnebbah mill-grottesk jew mill-assurd.
 13. Micallef, l-unika poetessa rappreżentata f'din l-antologija, stqarret li din il-poezija kitbitha lil persuna li habbet, iżda r-relazzjoni tharbtet għaliex ir-raġel aċċetta l-vokazzjoni tas-sacerdożju. Minbarra x-xogħol ta' Micallef f'din l-antologija setgħu għustament iddahllu poeziji ta' Rena Balzan u Lillian Sciberras, zewg awtriċi ta' awtentiċità u impenn letterarju serju.

IV IL-ĦAJJA: BIDU U TMIEM

Il-mewt hija waħda mit-temi li l-aktar li jippreokkupaw lill-bniedem, u mhux haġa kbira illi din il-verità (anzi, l-ikbar verità tal-ħajja temporali) tossessjona daqstant lill-modernisti. Mhix it-tema tal-mewt bħala tali li hija “għdida” fil-poeżija, iżda pjuttost it-ton u r-ridimensjoni tal-mewt li huma r-riżultat ta’ moħħ aktar inkwizittiv, aktar dubbjuż u aktar xettiku.

Il-kulturi u r-religjonijiet kollha tad-dinja dejjem saħqu fuq ir-inkarnazzjoni tal-bniedem wara l-mewt fiżika tiegħu: każ ċar ta’ kif il-bniedem qatt ma sata’ jammetti stat nikilista, li jtemmlu kwalunkwe tama ta’ “ezistenza.” Ix-xewqa li l-bniedem ighix għall-eternità għaldaqstant iddaħħlet imqar fil-kattoliċizmu, fonti li l-poeti tas-sittin xorbu minnu bis-shiħ minhabba tfulithom.¹⁴ Il-poeżija romantika, meta ttrattat il-mewt, ittrattatha bl-emozzjoni, iżda l-modernisti jħarsu lejn il-*problematika* tal-mewt b’mod aktar filosofiku. U dan għaliex l-idea tal-ġenna u l-infern m’għadhomx aċċettati faċilment. Minflok, reġa’ daħal fin-nofs l-Ego aktar-ikkumplikat ta’ l-artist tal-lum. Il-Professor Ser-racino Inglott jikkwota lil Amos N. Wilder dwar il-mod kif il-Jien jew l-Innifsi modern qed isib diffikultà kbira kif ighaddi mill-kunċett temporali għall-kunċett ta’ l-eternità:

When we envisage the overcoming of death, it is not, first of all, in terms of an afterlife. This dimension must be taken up into one or another version of transcendence or meaning in this life.

F’dan is-sens, il-mistoqsijiet dwar il-mewt jintrabtu mal-mistoqsija aktar fundamentali: Jien min jien? Jew mistoqsijiet oħra bħal: Għaliex inbati? Għaliex jeħtieġ li mmut? U jekk naf li l-mewt hija l-akbar verità temporali, għaliex twelidit? Kif ser nirrikonċilja ruħi maċ-ċertezza ta’ mewti?

Filwaqt li l-idea konvenzjonali tad-dannazzjoni (l-infern) twarrbet mill-modernisti, il-poeżija l-ġdida tersaq aktar biex taċċetta dak li kien kiteb Jean Paul Sartre fid-dramm tiegħu *Huis Clos (M’hemmx Ħrug): L-infern huwa l-oħrajn (L’enfer est les autres)*.¹⁵ Il-mewt bħallikieku ssir abitudni. F’waħda mill-poeżiji bikrin tiegħu, Mario Azzopardi kiteb:

Jien mitt elf mewta.

Jung qies il-mewt bħala arċitip fundamentali li, fiha nnifisha, hija essenza ta’ “ħajja oħra sigrieta.” Dejjem skond Jung, l-inkonxju qiegħed ifittex kontinwament li jgħaqqad il-misteru tal-mewt mal-ħajja individwali ta’ kull bniedem, biex

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14. Għalkemm diversi poeti moderni qatgħu l-konnessjoni “prattikanti” tagħhom minn mar-religjon Kattolika, paradossalment baqgħu johlqu koreografija ritwalistika fil-versi tagħhom. L-influenza Kristjana baqgħet punt ta’ riferiment frekwenti. Hija haġa certa, fi kwalunkwe każ, li għall-poeta Malti modern joqgħod tajjeb il-kliem li Roger Shattuck kien sqarr dwar Guillaume Apollinaire: “Whatever his attitude toward the Christian God, faith in a deity was never entirely absent from his consciousness.”
 15. Dan ix-xogħol mhux tas-soltu ta’ Sartre (li fi traduzzjonijiet bl-Ingliż nġhata l-isem *No Exit*) jesponi d-dannazzjoni ta’ t’ieta min-nies li għadhom kemm mietu u jiltaqgħu f’salott fl-infern. Bil-mod il-mod jibdedw jippersegwitaw lil xulxin mentalment, jinfexxu fil-vjolenza u jintebhu li ma setgħux “imutu”, lanqas biex jehilsu mill-persekuzzjoni ta’ xulxin. *Huis Clos* kien inħadem fit-Teatru Nazzjonali Manoel fl-1973 b’Mario Azzopardi bħala reġista.

il-hajja ssir aktar kompleta. Forsi minn hawn ġejja “x-xewqa inkonxja tal-mewt”, tas-suwicidju inkonxju, tar-ritorn lejn il-primordjali.¹⁶ F’dan is-sens Jungjan, il-kuxjenza tal-mewt tista’ tagħmel lill-bniedem aktar ħaj: meta l-bniedem jagħraf il-limitazzjonijiet li timponilu l-mewt, ħajtu timtela b’energija ġdida. Serracino Inglott jinnota din l-energija fil-poezija *Għid tal-Mejtin* ta’ Daniel Massa, li jitqabbel mal-poeta Ġermaniż Rilke:

(Death means) coming through the other side of Nature, not an occult escape from Nature.

Fi kliem ieħor, il-mewt hija aċċettata bħala dimensjoni imposta mill-hajja.

L-istess sens ta’ rassenjazzjoni u, fl-istess waqt apprensioni dwar il-mewt jurih Joe Friggieri f’*Meta Nitfu d-Dawl*: hawnhekk m’għandniex it-terror Bibliku tal-mewt, iżda mewt “eżistenzjalista”, esperjenza ta’ konsum kwazi romanticizata bil-preżenza tal-maħbuba. Il-komforti fil-mument tal-mewt mhumieq il-komforti tradizzjonali tal-vjatku, is-sagrament kattoliku amministrat lill-agonizzant, iżda komforti bħall-estasi ta’ l-imħabba li jistgħu jitilfu lill-poeta minn sensih u jnessuh l-assurdità ta’ l-att finali tal-hajja. Jew aħjar, iħaffulu l-esperjenza ta’ l-agunija.

F’Mario Azzopardi (*Biex tifhem il-vjolini*) l-esperjenza tal-mewt (ogġettiva) hija neċessarja biex il-poeta jista’ jeżalta mqar is-sbuħija tan-niket (*L’Esthetique du Mal*):

*min ma jirtabx...
...għar-romol li bkew fuq l-irħama għal seba’ mitt sebh
mingħajr xemx
ma jifhimx il-vjolini.*

Fil-poezija tal-modernisti dwar il-mewt, għalkemm jinhass tiftix għal ċerta estetika minn esperjenza daqshekk qalila u finali, ma tonqosx l-eżitazzjoni, u hawnhekk wieħed irid jiftakar fit-trattament tal-mewt f’poeta bħal Charles Baudelaire, li ħalla marka ta’ influwenza fuq il-modernisti lokali. Fix-xogħol tiegħu *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), sewwasew fit-taqsimha dwar il-Mewt, Baudelaire, filwaqt li qies il-mewt bħala estasi, ra fiha wkoll holma delużiva (qarrieqa) dwar il-mistrieħ fil-bniedem: *le sommeil promis n’est pas sûr* (ir-raqda mwiegħda mhi-jieq ċerta).

Hamsa mill-poeziji f’din it-taqsimha jittrattaw it-twelid b’manjiera differenti. Il-kuntrast bejn il-herqa ċelebrattiva ta’ poeta-qassis nisrani bħal Dun Lawrenz Cachia u l-ansjetà ta’ Mario Azzopardi, maħkum minn biża’ Freudjan fit-twelid ta’ ibnu, jinhass ċar. Doži oħrajn ta’ ambigwià u misteru jinhassu f’*Karba* ta’

16. Jekk wieħed jaċċetta l-premessa tan-nevrozi inerenti fl-artist, forsi nistgħu napplikaw din it-teorija esposta mil-psikanalista A. Carver fil-ktieb tiegħu *Significance of the Idea of Death in the Neurotic Mind*:

“By the neurotic, death is not envisaged as a normal event with social, moral and legal implications, but as a quiescent resolution of affective excitement, the tendency to it is an effort of the organism to restore the quiescent equilibrium, realized once (it is supposed), at the beginning of life, within the mother’s womb.” Maud Bodkin, f’*Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* elabora aktar: “Like the neurotic, the poet is a reader, dreaming of the river that breaks at last into the ocean, sees in this image his own life and death, not at all in their social and legal implications, but in accordance with a deep organic need for release from conflict and tension.”

Victor Fenech. Izda hawn il-kuncett tat-“twelid” huwa metaforiku għaliex huwa intellettwalizzat biex janalizza *mhux it-twelid ta' tarbija*, izda t-“twelid” ta' karba stramba hieġa minn karozza lussuża pparkjata f'San Pawl il-Baħar. Daqskemm tista' tkun karba ta' mewt, tista' tkun karba ta' estasi sesswali jew bikja ta' ferħ (prova oħra tal-viżjoni kkumplikata tal-poetika l-għdida). Imbagħad il-karba tmut fix-xejn.

Fl-ahħarnett irridu nsemmu ż-żewġ poeziji li jittrattaw it-tarbija fil-guf: *Foetus* ta' Achille Mizzi u *Abort* ta' Daniel Massa.¹⁷ Mizzi, bil-lessiku passjonat tipiku tiegħu, jittratta t-twelid intellettwalment, billi jorbot il-kuncett tal-hlas mat-teorija ta' Charles Darwin dwar l-evoluzzjoni: “il-bniedem huwa.” Imqar l-epoka teknoloġika moderna hija evokata fil-vers li jgħabbel lit-tarbija ma' “l-astronawta tad-dlam mutu.” Terga', “il-moħħ” jissema mhux inqas minn tliet darbiet, indikazzjoni cara illi ċ-ċelebrazzjoni tat-twelid f'Mizzi mhix emotiva jew sentimental, izda bijo-mentali.

Massa jagħmel ritwal sugġettiv biex jikkastiga l-att ta' l-abort bhala delitt kontra l-innoċenza. Li kieku mhux għall-kelma specifika li tiddekrivi l-karozza (Volvo) użata għall-abort, din il-poezija tista' tkun interpretata fuq livell nazzjonalistiku: “ix-xebba nklinata nofs nuda” tista' tkun Malta, inkapaċi li twelled generazzjoni ħielsa mill-passjoni politika, mill-ipokresija u mill-bigotrija religjuża. Dan huwa biss sugġeriment interpretattiv li juri kemm jistgħu jsiru assoċjazzjonijiet minn poezija ta' lum.

V INTERMEZZ

Aktar milli hadet il-forma ta' “stedina lil-qarrej (biex) jingħaqad mal-poeti jilagħbu”, din it-Taqsima tal-ktieb setgħet investigat bis-serjetà l-funzjoni tal-“komicità s-sewda”, jew ir-relazzjoni bejn il-letteratura serja u l-umorizmu modern, aktarx karatterizzat minn tensjonijiet moħbija li jridu jinfexxu x'imkien. L-għażla nnifisha tal-poeziji f'din it-taqsim tal-ktieb, apparti li tindika xogħlijiet li mhuma “komici” fl-ebda sens tal-kelma (x'hemm “umoristiku” fir-riflessjonijiet tal-franġiskan Marjanu Vella jew fil-frustrament ta' Ġoġ Borg f'*Għalik u Għalija?*), tagħti importanza lil xogħlijiet oħra li aktar jixirqilhom jidhlu fil-kategorija tat-tqabbil folkloristiku. Lanqas l-epitaffi, l-epigrammi u l-limerikki f'*Intermezz* ma jintużaw mal-kuncett tal-poezija modernista f'Malta.

Jekk hemm umoriżmu fil-poezija Maltija tas-sittin, dan aktarx li huwa ta' natura ambivalenti u paradossali; huwa umoriżmu sarkastiku, assurdistu jew grottesk, b'xi hadd bhall Albert Marshall il-perċimes f'dan is-sens. Fi kliem iehor, imqar “il-komiku” (jekk huwa ta' min janallizzah fil-poezija l-għdida) huwa wieħed li jtnissel minn *križi* psikoloġika.

17. Daniel Massa, flimkien ma' Victor Fenech, Mario Azzopardi, J.J. Camilleri u Lino Spiteri kien iċċensurat (u mizinterpretat) minhabba “dubji religjużi.” Fl-1968, il-hames awturi kellhom xogħolhom imwaqqaf milli jinqara fit-Teatru Nazzjonali bl-intervent tal-pulizija. Il-Kumitat tat-Tmexxija tat-Teatru ddeskriviehom bhala “rebellious, unscrupulous, law-shattering boobies.”

Garcia Lorca (1898-1936) darba qal illi jekk l-udjenza li tmur tara d-drammi tiegħu ma tkunx taf “għandhiex tidhaq jew għandhiex tinfaqa’ tibki”, huwa jhossu li jkun lahaq il-qofol tas-suċċess tiegħu. Jean Anouilh (twieled fl-1910) sahaq illi t-traġiku-komiku huwa wieħed mill-ingredjenti predominanti fil-letteratura kontemporanja. Dan seħħ partikularment fit-teatriko-poetiċi ta’ awturi bħal Chekhov, Pirandello, Anouilh, Brecht u Beckett,¹⁸ pilastru internazzjonali ta’ l-idjoma l-ġdida u li, mhux b’kumbinazzjoni, ix-xogħlijiet tagħhom inħadmu f’Malta minn poeti-regiṡti bħal Azzopardi, J. Friggieri u Marshall. Fl-esej tiegħu *L’Umorismo* (1908) Pirandello nsista li “il comico è appunto un avvertimento del contrario.”

Aktar milli fit-taqsimu *Intermezz*, “il-komiku” poetiku modern għandu jitfit-tex fil-versi ta’ karikatura deformattiva l-iktar f’Azzopardi, Fenech u Marshall. Huwa f’dawn il-poeti li tinstab it-tifsira essenzjali ta’ l-umorizmu bħala kodiċi ta’ dominanza nervuża biex jintgħelbu l-biża’ u n-niket.

Il-kritiku Freudjan *Ernst Kris*, fit-tezi tiegħu dwar *Il-Jien u l-Komicità* (1967), għamel din ir-riflessjoni:

Kieku wieħed kellu jeżamina d-daħqa fuq rallentatur, wieħed ikun jista’ jara li t-tbissima hija preċeduta minn ansjożità sottili. Il-komiku għandu l-espressjoni tas-sudisfazzjon tal-Jien li għandu l-ħila jikkontrolla proċessi u kontenuti li kienu jew li setgħu kienu perikolużi għall-ekwilibrju psikiku jew f’dawk li huma rapporti inter-personali.

Dejjem skond twemmin Freudjan, fil-bniedem hemm ammonti kbar ta’ enerġija trattenuta (minħabba l-inibizzjonijiet li timponi s-soċjetà, il-knisja, il-familja); dan il-kontroll huwa wieħed “artifiċjali” għan-natura nfisha tal-bniedem u għaldaqstant ta’ spiss isib żvog fid-daħq. Thomas Hobbes, wieħed mill-fundaturi tal-psikoloġija moderna, kien diġà antiċipa (lejn nofs is-seklu sbatax) lil Freud fl-analizi dwar il-Jien u l-ħtieġa tal-“komicità”. Nikkwotaw dan il-passaġġ qasir minn Hobbes:

L-emozzjoni tad-daħq mhi xejn ħlief żvog improvviżat li jinnissel fina nfuṡna mill-ħsieb ta’ ċerta superjorità, biex jikkonfronta l-inferjorità ta’ haddiehor u l-inferjorità preċedenti tagħna stess.

M’hemmx dubju illi l-karikatura u d-deformazzjoni assurda f’uħud mill-poeti tas-sittin hija mnisla sewwasew minn dan is-sens ta’ *inferjorità* li huma jaraw fil-poplu Malti u għaldaqstant (għaliex huma Maltin ukoll) fihom infuṡhom. *Intermezz*, b’xorti ħażina, mhix sezzjoni li tintinterpreta dan li qegħdin ngħidu hawnhekk.

VI JIEN U ART TWELIDI

Din it-taqsimu ta’ antoloġija hija importanti f’diversi sensi: minbarra li l-kriżi soċjo-politiko-religjuża Maltija tas-snin sittin tinsab enkapsulata f’uħud mill-

18. Awturi oħrajn li aktarx hallew marka fuq l-idjoma karikaturista fil-poezija lokali tas-sittin jinkludu lil Eliot, Tennessee Williams, Jonesco, Genet u Pinter.

poeżji li ġejjin, jidher ukoll illi bejniethom stess, il-poeti ltaqgħu ma' ċerti divergenzi dwar kif se jharsu lejn l-imghoddi u kif ser jittrattaw il-prezent. Mhix haġa tal-ghageb, għalhekk, li din it-taqsimha turi mhux inqas minn tliet attitudnijiet differenti dwar il-grajja Maltija: Charles Vella (*Settembru*) jintrabat b'konservattivizmu li ma jidhirx jinqata' mill-poeżija ċelebrattiva ta' l-imghoddi; J.J. Camilleri jieħu l-qagħda aktar moderata tar-revizjonista li jixtieq iħares lejn iż-żewġ naħat tal-munita (*Lit-Tork*), filwaqt li Mario Azzopardi, li ta' min ifakkar li kien meqjus bhala l-*enfant terrible* tal-poeżija moderna f'Malta, fetaħ il-kanuni kollha tiegħu kontra l-ortodossija u l-Istabiliment (*assedju-stil 1967*).

Hemm qagħdiet oħra li minnhom iħarsu l-poeti meta jittrattaw 'l art twelidhom, bħal meta Oliver Friggieri jħares imbikkem lejn l-imghoddi biex jeżalta x-xewqa għal ġejjieni aħjar, aktar pożittiv (*Malta Żagħżuġha*), jew bħal meta Daniel Massa jipprova jfittex għall-egħruq primordjali ta' niesu fil-baħar, l-element i-iktar ovvju li jikkondizzjona lill-poeżiji tiegħu tas-sittin (*Delimara*).¹⁹

Mhemmx dubju li, generalment, it-ton ta' din it-taqsimha huwa wiehed differenti mill-mod pindariku li bih kien jinqeda xi Dun Karm biex jibni l-mit ta' l-Omm-Patrija. Il-bixra tal-modern tibqà' waħda ambivalenti, ekwivoka. Hemm insistenza fuq il-ħelsien *intellettuali* ta' Malta, xewqa li tnisslet mill-fatt storiku ta' l-Indipendenza (imqar jekk kontroversjali) tal-1964 li akkwista b'negozjati ma' l-Ingilterra l-Partit Nazzjonalista. Kienet l-istess Indipendenza tal-1964 li xprunat il-kuxjenza kritika tal-poeti tas-sittin u ressqithom lejn il-moviment tan-*New Lines* jew ta' l-*Angry Young Men* fl-Ingilterratas-snin ħamsin. Iċ-ċensura uffiċċjali kontra l-poeti l-goġda kienet qed thalli effett negattiv ukoll, l-aktar meta, f'Diċembru ta' l-1968, il-ħabel issikka tant madwar għonq l-awturi l-goġda li d-Direzzjoni tat-Teatru Manoel sejhet lill-pulizija biex ma jinqrawx ħames xogħlijiet ta' Mario Azzopardi, Victor Fenech, J.J. Camilleri, Lino Spiteri u Daniel Massa. Fl-1977 Daniel Massa nnifsu irreġistra l-incident:

*The Establishment not surprisingly thought that in form and matter the (modernist) group showed manifest contempt of accepted mores, and one member of the Manoel Management Committee described them as "rebellious, unscrupulous, Law-shattering boobies."*²⁰

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19. P. Serracino Inglott jinnota d-diwi tal-baħar fid-dramm *Riders To The Sea* ta' J.M. Synge (1871-1909) bhala korrispondenti mal-poeżija *Delimara*. Il-baħar f'*Riders To The Sea*, ta' min josserva, huwa mqalleb u vjolenti, filwaqt li f'Massa dejjem għandu trankwillità ta' seher. B'danakollu, kemm f'Synge u f'Massa dejjem hemm il-metafora ossessiva ta' l-ilma primordjali li jġibed lill-bniedem bħal belliegħa. Ta' min iġhid ukoll li *Riders To The Sea* nebbhet ukoll lil Mario Azzopardi biex jahdem traduzzjoni poetika tagħha għall-Malti. Il-verżjoni bil-Malti nhadmet tliet darbiet: fuq it-televiżjoni lokali (1975, direttur Albert Marshall); fit-Teatru ta' l-Università l-Qadima, il-Belt (1979, ko-direzzjoni ta' Salvu Pirota u Azzopardi nnifsu) u fl-Akkademja tad-Drama, il-Belt (1981, direttur Mario Ascione).
20. Cf. *Contemporary Maltese Literature – An Interim Report f'Contributions to Mediterranean Studies*, University of Malta, 1977. Ara wkoll Frans Sammut, *New Directions in Maltese Poetry*, Hyphen, 1982, Vol. III, 2.

Fis-sittin, il-modernisti tista' tgħid li lkoll kienu jiffurmaw parti mix-xellug dissidenti u, aktar iva milli le, kellhom ukoll aspirazzjonijiet "soċjalisti", għalkemm dawn l-aspirazzjonijiet qatt ma kienu trażmessi f'xi għamla ta' manifest uffiċjali. Infatti, il-politika "tal-partiti" f'it li xejn kienet tidhol fl-argumenti tal-Grupp tal-Cafè Premier fil-Belt, li kien jiltaqa' kull nhar ta' Sibt filgħodu biex, skond Daniel Massa, "jiċhad ix-xlerożi ta' l-istituzzjonijiet li kienu qegħdin jixjiehu."²¹ Mill-inqas tlieta mill-inizjaturi ta' l-offensiva *anti-Establishment* fis-sittin illum jirrapprezentaw liż-żewġ partiti fil-Parlament: Philip Sciberras u Lino Spiteri mal-Partit Soċjalista u Joe A. Grima mal-Partit Nazzjonalista. Sciberras innifsu kien wiehed mill-poeti tal-Moviment tas-Sittin li esprima ruħu dwar il-ħtieġa li l-poeti l-ġodda lokali "jkissru l-egħluq tal-ħitan"²² tal-fantasija u jitnebbhu minn dak li kienu qegħdin jagħmlu gruppi radikali Ewropej bħall-*Gruppo 63* fl-Italja; il-*Gruppe 47* fil-Ġermanja u l-*Group 42* fl-Ingilterra.

Incidentalment, il-*Group 42* kien nebbah lill-modernisti lokali biex jibdeu jesperimentaw ukoll b'teatru radikali, ta' sikwit marbut mat-Teatru ta' l-Assurd, mat-teatru "soċjalista" ta' Wesker jew man-novelli ta' Franz Kafka. Il-Professor Serracino Inglott jinnota li l-poezija *Burokrazija* ta' Victor Fenech "ma tistax ma tfakkrekx f'Kafka" (aktarx li r-riferenza implikata hija dik li torbot *Burokrazija* ma' *Metamorfosi* fejn Kafka joħloq anti-eroj li jsir insett ippersegwitat mill-Istituzzjoni).

Illum, fl-1983, ix-xetticiżmu li kienu wrew il-poeti tas-sittin dwar "l-Indipendenza tal-Ħsieb", jew il-biża' li l-utopija idealizzata tagħhom tiġġarr-raf, aktarx jinħass spjegat tajjeb ħafna f'dawn iż-żewġ passagġi li ġejjin minn Oliver Friggieri, l-intellettwali li ddelinea wkoll il-metodu l-ġdid tal-kritika strutturali moderna:

*Hemm Malta suwiċida li jaraha kulhadd, u jibqa' għaddej: Malta li qiegħda taqa' taħt il-gaffa ta' l-ispekulazzjoni, gżira li qiegħda ssir djar kbar u vile biss. Malta li ħawdet il-qerda ta' l-identtià tagħha mal-progress. U hemm Malta suwiċida oħra li tmut b'mod trasparenti jew kważi bil-moħbi: Malta li saret ġungla ta' piki u mibegħda organizzata.*²³

F'Malta hemm passjoni ossessiva għall-firda, għad-distinzzjoni, u dan għaliex il-politika (f'Malta) ngħixuha bħala reliġjon. Tista "tidneb" kontra l-Partit, tista' taħdem bil-"merti" kollha favur il-Partit...f'Malta ma teżistix politika;

21. op. cit.

22. Cf. *La Gioventù Intellettuale nel Nostro Paese* f'Lo Zibaldone, Circolo Dante Alighieri, Frar, 1969.

23. Cf. *Malta Suwiċida: Ahna, in-Noġs-Maltin* fi *Problemi ta' Illum*, 23/7, Awissu-Settembru, 1983.

*teżisti partigjanerija jew, jekk trid, partitokrazija. Fl-aħħar mill-aħħar, ittrasferejna t-tendenzi religjużi tagħna għal-livell tal-politika. Il-politika spiċċat biex tokkupa l-post li qabel kien okkupat mir-religjon...Nippreferi nissejjaħ pinnur, jew opportunist, iżda skond ir-regoli tal-Verità...fi kliem ieħor, irrid niddeskrivi lili nnifsi bħala idealist, imqar jekk nissogra li f'Malta nkun ikkunsidrat bħala bniedem mingħajr principji.*²⁴

Il-qagħda dissidenti tal-poeti tas-sittin hawnhekk hija artikulata ċar u tond, xhieda li, wara kollox, il-moviment tal-modernisti antiċipa d-delużjoni tat-“temi grandjużi” li dejjem ippropaganda l-Istabbiliment. Għoxrin sena wara l-Indipendenza politika tagħha, Malta tidher li għadha lanqas stabbiliet l-identità ta’ bejn l-ahwa nnifishom: il-mistoqsija dwar “l-alla gdid” fl-“arena maltija” (*assedju – stil 1967*) għadha tikwi llum daqskemm meta nkitbet (fl-1965).

Huwa ta’ min jikkonsidra wkoll kif il-kriżi ta’ l-identità gieghlet lill-poeti tas-sittin jiċċidu n-narrattiva passiva ta’ l-istorja retorika ta’ pajjiżhom, u dan biex jikkuntemplaw l-ambjent kontemporanju, dak li huwa mmedjat. F’dan il-kuntest, il-modernisti f’Malta jikkorrispondu ma’ poeti “konfessjonali” Amerikani (Ginsberg, Corso, Plath, Ferlinghetti), mal-kontinentali radikali (Palazzeschi) jew ma’ l-angry generation fl-Ingilterra.

Serracino Inglott jikkwota lil Lawrence Ferlinghetti:

*Roads radiate into air
like the labyrinth wires
of a telephone central
through which all calls are
infinitely untraceable*

Il-fili intraċċabbli ta’ l-identità Maltija ossessjonaw lill-modernisti: il-preżent giddeb lill-imghoddi. U fit-telfa mħabbla tal-kriżi ta’ l-identità nazzjonali kontemporanja, grotteska u perversa, il-modernisti donnhom ngħaqdu f’kor biex jixlu lil ta’ qawilhom b’esspressjoni li ssejfu mingħand Kingsley Amis: “Nobody wants to listen to any more themes of grandeur.”

VII JIEN U ARTIJET IMBIEGHDA

Il-Professor Serracino Inglott jintroduċi din it-taqsimha tal-ktieb bi kwotazzjoni minn Baudelaire,²⁵ li għandu jkun ta’ riferenza spissa fl-analiżi tal-poeżija

24. Cf. *30 Giorni*, Milan, Settembru, 1983.

25. Baudelaire jikkorrispondi, ngħidu aħna, mal-fehma tal-modernisti Maltin li l-poeżija m’għandhiex timmoralizza b’mod esplicitu, jew mal-fehma li l-onestà għadha tkun il-karatteristika ta’ kwalunkwe *esperjenza* poetika. Kien il-hsieb ta’ Baudelaire li jespjoni “l-għajn poetika” sakemm din issir “l-emblema ta’ dak li huwa indefinit u mingħajr qies.”

modernista f'Malta:

You know that feverish sickness which comes over us in our cold despairs, that nostalgia for countries we have never seen, that anguish of curiosity? There is a country that resembles you, where everything is beautiful, rich, honest and calm. Where fancy has built and decorated an Occidental China, where life is sweet to breathe, where happiness is wedded to silence. It is where we must live, it is where we must die. Yes, it is where we must go to breathe, to dream, and to prolong the hours in an infinity of sensations.

Il-modernisti f'Malta bdew jiktbu fi żmien meta l-mass media kienu qeġdin jassedjaw il-moħħ tal-generazzjoni l-ġdida, u dan minkejja li sas-sena 1966, sen-tejn wara l-Indipendenza politika ta' Malta, fostna kien għadu jeżisti l-Indiċi tal-kotba pprojbiti (*librorum prohibitorum*) maħruġ mill-awtoritajiet tal-Knisja.²⁶ Minbarra l-mass media kien hemm is-safar li fetaħ tweqi multiplikanti fuq l-inkonxju ta' l-awturi l-ġodda. Aktar ma beda jinqata' mill-aspett parrokkjali u każaling tal-hajja mikrokożmika f'Malta, il-poeta modern beda jixxennaq biex jaqta' l-kurdun taż-żokra ma' Malta "maternalista" u jfittex li jassumi identità kożmopolita. Fil-proża, fix-xoghlijiet ta' whud bħal Frans Sammut u Alfred Sant, l-eroj sar l-anti-eroj li jixbah lil xi Stephen Dedalus f'*Ulysses* ta' James Joyce, jew *L'Etranger* ta' Albert Camus; l-awto-eżilju jew is-suwiċidju f'rumanzi bħal *L-Ewwel Weraq tal-Bajtar* ta' Sant u *Samuraj* ta' Sammut kienu amplifikati mill-poeti tas-sittin. Il-mottiv tal-vjaġġ deher li kien wiehed fundamentali: il-poeta kien qed jivvjaġġa biex, 'il bogħod minn art twelidu, jitkixxef dwar l-identità tiegħu, jiskopri Jien "ġdid u ħieles" (fi kliem Oliver Friggieri) li kien irċieva t-timbru primarju f'Malta, fejn il-bniedem li jaħseb (inkluż, ċertament, il-poeta intellettuali) ta' spiss iħossu barrani emarginat f'pajjiżu stess.

Serracino Inglott innotta tajjeb li l-vjaġġ huwa "nigġiezza li tislet il-mistoqsija metafizika", u dan sewwasew għaliex il-poeta jistħarreg permezz tas-safar mhux is-sempliċi nostalgija sentimentali lejn art twelidu meta jkun imbiegħed minnha, iżda biex jippenetraw l-inkonxju tagħhom biex iġarrbu Jien aktar awtentiku, Innifsi aktar realizzat. Iku ta' interess tqis kif il-metafora tal-vjaġġ bħala arċitip qadim thaddmet minn poeta bħal Azzopardi f'ċiklu shiħ ta' poeziji bħal ma tixhed l-antologija tiegħu *Tabernakli*, li waslet fl-1979.²⁷

Fis-snin sittin, il-vjaġġ wassal lill-modernisti biex jirrealizzaw realtà oħra: id-dinja hija magħmula minn bnedmin li lkoll għandhom il-krizijiet partikulari tagħhom; filwaqt li Malta hija gżira ta' dimensjoni ristretta geografikament, id-dinja wkoll hija "gżira" enormi fejn in-nies tixxennaq ukoll għas-serħan. Il-vjaġġ tal-poeta modern aqtarx li huwa l-vjaġġ fid-deżert, fejn ir-ruħ hija għatxana

26. Fost l-awturi pprojbiti kien hemm Boccaccio, Voltaire, Flaubert, Balzac, Wilde, Moravia. *L-indiċi* tnehha f'Gunju, 1966. Sal-1948 kienu harġu għoxrin edizzjoni ta' l-Indiċi ta' kotba pprojbiti; l-aħħar edizzjoni kienet tinkludi suppliment li jkopri awturi bbanjati sad-data tal-31 ta' Marzu, 1959.

27. *Tabernakli*, huwa xhieda ta' kif, fis-snin sebgħin, poeta bħal Azzopardi għadda mill-polemika empirika għall-meditazzjoni.

għall-kalma, għall-egħjun ta' l-ispiritwalità. Il-lessiku ta' Achille Mizzi f'*Arizona* huwa wieħed aridu, iżda minnu jitnisslu wkoll il-fjuri tal-kaktus:

*Jiena d-deżert għatxan tal-Arizona
Bil-lejl ħolma ta' serħ u poeżija.
Il-ward tal-kaktus jitla' f'għaxwa ħamra
Iz-zkuk bajdana
B'dirgħajhom imberrħin jinbidlu f'arpi
Tal-fewgħa helwa.*

L-awtodefinizzjoni tad-deżert mistiku (*Jiena d-deżert għatxan tal-Arizona*) tiegħu bixra ta' avventura spiritwali matul it-taqsimha kollha, ibda mill-platonizmu li jevoka Dennis Agius fi *Ljeli Fid-Deżert*, u spiċċa fil-qasma Jien-Huma li jħoss Mario Azzopardi bit-ton delusiv ta' *bahnhofstrasse* (mhux *bahnhofstrasse*):

*Jien ukoll wiċċi abjad bħalhom
iżda nibża' ngħidilhom
la ma ntebhux wehedhom.*

L-aljenazzjoni tal-bniedem urbanizzat hawnhekk tidher sew fl-eqqel tagħha, dokument soċjologiku dwar dawk illi l-kritiku Serracino Inglott iqabbel ma' l-*oqbra mbajda* tal-Vangelu. Ir-riflessjoni hija ta' interess interpretattiv, iżda Mario Azzopardi jistqarr illi n-nota fundamentali li ried jolqot kienet din:

L-uċuh bojod fil-poeżija aktarx li jfissru l-istat enemiku fl-ispirtu tal-bniedem modern; daqs li kieku hemm marda fid-demmi li tinnwtralizza l-kulur u turi kisja lelluxija, moribonda. L-effett mixtieq huwa dak li jissuġġerixxi x-xbiha kważi surrealistika ta' katavri mexjin. U l-poeta miexi magħhom lejn id-destinazzjoni ambigwa, indefinita.

It-tleħħin tad-deżolazzjoni tal-poeta Malti f'artijiet barranija jrid ikun ikkun-sidrat ukoll fit-totalità tiegħu. L-elizir barrani donnu li ma nstax, u t-temp tal-mixja tal-pellegrin f'artijiet imbiegħda ssir waħda ritwalistika, determinata mill-isfumaturi tal-ħarifa (il-metфора tar-ruħ għajjiena). Daniel Massa jitbiegħed mill-“gonna taż-żgħożija” u jistqarr il-mixja tiegħu “fiċ-ċpar tul il-ħarifa” (*Weraq*), filwaqt li fil-poeżija ta' wara (*Metro*) jagħti xhieda tiegħu nnifsu niezel fl-*underground* ta' Londra bħallikieku niezel fl-“infern ħaj tal-bnedmin” (eki oħra ta' *L'Enfer Est Les Autres* ta' J.P. Sartre).

...u jien

*nitkaxkar 'l isfel minn folla tisgħol in-nugrufun
go wiċċi go vagun...*

Il-vagun li jivvjaġġa fih Massa donnu jsir il-vejikola tal-mewt spiritwali, ifful-lata bi bnedmin korrotti u perversi. U l-poeta, mill-qtuġħ in-nifs tat-tren ta' taħt l-art, jixxennaq lil Malta (bir-riferenza għaż-“Żurrieq”). Imqar hawn, it-tifikira tas-“sigra (fiż-) Żurrieq” mhix waħda sentimentali, iżda spiritwali: “speċi ta' talba li l-ambjent Malti...ikollu effett ta' tisfija għall-ħajja familjari tal-poeta li tbiegħed minnha” (biex jiskopri lilu nnifsu aktar fil-fond).

Joe Friggieri jippersisti wkoll fit-tnissil ta' xbihat mgħagħlin, impressjonijiet li jindikaw li, matul il-vjaġġ spiritwali tagħhom, il-poeti tas-sittin sabu dinja miżgħuda bil-fatati:

*Anki fi Praha
x-xita niezla
u s-shab idemma'...*

jew

*In-nies imkeffna bħal uhux
fil-lampi tal-merkurju.*

VIII JIEN U L-ĠRAJJA TA' ŻMIENI

Hemm bosta devjazzjonijiet fil-modernisti²⁸ li juru li l-membri herqana tal-grupp tas-sittinijiet f'Malta fittxew li jinqalghu mir-ristrezzjoni mikrokożmika ta' Malta-Raħal (jew Malta-Parroċċa) u jirrestawraw il-poezija lokali billi, b'kull mezz possibbli, iressquha lejn burdata awtentika ta' internazzjonalità. Digà semmejna l-influssi tal-*mass media* u l-effetti tal-vjaġġ frekwenti tal-poeti l-godda, li komplew affermaw ir-reazzjoni tagħhom kontra l-insularità ta' Malta.

Bħala poeti ċerebrali, il-geografija fizika ta' Malta għalihom ma kinetx biżżejjed; lanqas ma kienet biżżejjed il-fizjonomija każalinga jew folkloristika li r-Romantiċi imponew fuq il-letteratura tradizzjonali. Skond Oliver Friggieri, wiehed mill-poeti prekoċi tas-sittinijiet, il-modernisti riedu jfejqu lill-poezija Maltija "mill-marda ta' romantiċiżmu dekadenti li kien ilu li qeda l-funzjoni li tatu l-estetika ottoċenteska" biex minfloku jdaħħlu "forom u temi godda misluta minn avventuri letterarji u minn esperjenzi soċjali kontemporanji." Ir-riħ tal-bidla fl-Ewropa u fl-Amerika²⁹ ħakem l-immaginazzjoni tal-modernisti: affettwathom il-kontestazzjoni studenteska, l-evoluzzjoni tal-Moviment Negru fl-Afrika u fl-Istati Uniti, ir-Rivoluzzjoni Ċekoslovakka, l-assassinju ta' ġellieda għall-~~helsien~~ bħal Patrice Lumumba u Martin Luther King kif ukoll avvenimenti oħrajn li rriflettew l-avvent ta' l-epoka spazjali. Mill-konkwista spazjali, il-modernisti f'Malta ħolqu ritwal riflessiv, bħal m'ghamel Daniel Massa f'*Astronawti*. Tajjeb li nfissru aħjar dan il-motiv.

Minhabba li l-ortodossija religjuża, bil-kon-ċelebrazzjoni "kattolika" tagħha, sfat miċhuda fil-poezija tal-modernisti, il-grupp tas-sittinijiet beda jfittex kwalitajiet godda ta' "kristjanità" u spiritwalità, imqar fl-aħbar li kienet qed twassal l-avvent spazjali tal-Bniedem-Astronawta. Għall- poeti Maltin, l-Astronawta tela' fl-ispazju "jfitteq lil Alla wara li kien ċaħdu." Dwar il-poezija *Spazju*, (Dun) Lawrenz Cachia kiteb hekk:

*Wiehed dejjem isib fil-kitba tiegħi f'it ottimiżmu u riflessjoni
tal-Fidi f'dinja soprannaturali.*

Infatti, Cachia jtemm il-poezija tiegħu *Spazju* billi jedifika mhux biss il-helsien li hemm jistenna lill-bniedem li jaċċetta l-fidi f'Alla:

*nintilfu fl-infinit sabiex ninstabu
mill-gdid għal dejjem.*

It-ton metafiziku huwa ċar biżżejjed u jikkontrasta mal-pożizzjoni aktar

28. Minbarra devjazzjonijiet tematiċi, wiehed irid jiftakar kontinwameŋt fit-tifsiriet metaforiċi, sintattiċi u stilistiċi li wettqu l-modernisti; dawn id-devjazzjonijiet bosta drabi riedu "jixxuk-kjaw" apposta, biex b'hekk tkun aċċertata l-waqgħa ta' l-ordni tar-Romantiċiżmu dekadenti. Ara Oliver Friggieri, *Saġġi Kritiċi*, A.C. Aquilina & Co., Valletta, 1979.
29. Ara M. Azzopardi, *Fl-Isfond ta' Linji Godda*, Merlin Publications Ltd., Błata-l-Bajda, 1983. L-atteggjamenti tal-modernisti kienu mnebbhin ukoll mill-Movimenti Beat, il-Moviment Futurista Taljan, is-Surrealiżmu u s-Simboliżmu Franċiż.

materjalista (u aktar suspettuża) li jiehu Philip Sciberras, *il-mit ta' l-astronawta*. - Qeghdin ngħidu "materjalista" mhux fis-sens fluwidu tal-kelma iżda fis-sens aktar ristrett tal-bniedem *sekularizzat* li xorob mit-teoriji assurdisti dwar ix-xejn tal-bniedem u dwar il-kummiedja tragika ta' l-istess eżistenza tiegħu. Minħabba f'hekk terġa' tittempra ruhha l-mistoqsija *Jien Min Jien*?

P. Serracino Inglott jikkwota estensivament³⁰ minn waħda mill-aħjar poeti Amerikani moderni, May Swenson:

Who or what are we? And what are we becoming? What is the relation between man and the universe? Those are the questions that ached in the mind of the first poet. They can still be said to have created the first poet and to be the first source of the art of poetry. Does the fact of our consciousness, unique and seemingly miraculous among all of nature's creatures, a priori indicate a superconsciousness – shaping and manipulating the cosmos? How is it that with our minds we can explore our own minds? And can we develop a technique to explore Mind?

L-aħħar *Mind* mill-kwotazzjoni għandha tittiehed li tfisser id-Divin, l-Esseri Suprem, dak li drajna nsejħulu Alla.

Il-preokkupazzjoni b'Alla bħala sostitut għandu jittiehed għar-religjon "maltija" aktar komda u aktar hafifa (u wisq inqas ikkumplikata) hija waħda mill-marki l-iktar preokkupanti fil-poezija tal-modernisti. Hafna drabi, bħal fil-każ ta' Sciberras, dan is-sostitut imfittex huwa mċajpar minħabba l-influenzi ta' awturi bħal Voltaire (1770-1831), Hegel (1694-1778) u Nietzsche (1844-1900). L-aħħar strofa tal-poezija *il-mit ta' l-astronawta* donnha trid turi lill-bniedem jazzarda jisfida r-regola tal-gravità biex jitla' jfittex (u jisfida?) lis-setgħa tal-"Mohħ", lil Alla nnifsu:

*dak li nholoq fitt jum fix-xbieha tiegħu
libes hu stess l-ilbies ta' l-astronawta
u tela' jinfeđ satellit
il-waħx ta' univers dagħbien u mingħajr widen
forsi jiskopri f'tarf is-sema
lil dak li ma jidhirx u jista' kollox,*

Tajjeb nosservaw illi t-tliet poeziji f'din it-taqsimha li jiċcelebraw il-konkwistà ta' l-ispazju jintemmu fuq nota ta' thewdin biex tinstab saltna ġdida li teħles lill-bniedem:

- i. *forsi jiskopri tarf is-sema* (Sciberras)
- ii. *nintilfu fl-infinit sabiex ninstabu*

30. Serracino Inglott, fil-Kummentarju tiegħu għal *Linji Godda*, jagħmel ukoll riferenzi għax-xoghlijiet ta' għadd ta' artisti letterarji, teatriċi, pittoriċi u muzikali li setgħu hallew influwenza fuq il-modernisti f'Malta; fost il-hafna li jsemmi Serracino, ta' min ifakkar f'Cowley u Donne (metafizika), Blake (preokkupazzjoni fl-Infinità), Picasso (is-simbolu tal-hamiema fuq kubizmu li jisfigura lill-bniedem modern), Beckett (teatru assurdu li jenfasizza n-nuqqas ta' komunikattiva bejn il-bnedmin tal-lum), Jackson Pollock (pittura konfuża u astratta bit-teknika tad-*drip paint*) u John Cage (muzika b'waqtiel twal ta' spazji jalternaw elettro-nikament).

mill-ġdid għal dejjem. (Cachia)

iii. *biex teħtes mill-baħar magħluq* (Massa)

It-tiftix universalizzat kif ukoll il-polemika soċjali bħala effett ta' l-aħbar internazzjonali jikkumplimentaw lil xulxin fil-poezija *Wara* ta' Victor Fenech li, bħal Azzopardi u Sciberras, għandu jitqies bħala wiehed mill-esponenti l-aktar assidwi tal-polemika fil-modernisti. *Wara* hija sensiela koncentrata ta' *tesis* u *antitesis* (vena tipika tal-kontradizzjoni u l-indeċizzjoni kif murija ta' sikwit minn Fenech). L-aspett politiciżat tal-ġrajja kontemporanja jidher fiż-żewġ versi:

wara l-ħakma għakkiesa

l-ġhajta maħnuqa

filwaqt li l-bixra metafizika hija inkapsulata fit-tliet linji qosra li jtemmu l-poezija:

Ma' nżul ix-xemx –

ix-xejn ta' kulhadd

u l-baħħ ta' kollox!

Nifhmu li, wara kollox, il-kontestazzjoni u l-polemika soċjali tal-modernisti huma motivati minn kriżi profonda tal-Jien; u dan għaliex jidher sew illi, mqar jekk l-iṅustizzji kellhom jintgħelbu minn rivoluzzjoni (politika, religjuża, eċċ.), xorta waħda ser jibqa' l-vojt tal-bniedem ċerebrali li għadu ma laħaqx l-ekwilibriju tiegħu nnifsu fil-kuntest ta' l-ispazji infiniti tar-ruħ li qed tfittex li tghix għal dejjem. Izda fejn? Kif? X'sens għandha l-istorja soċjali paragonata ma' l-immensità ta' l-essenżjalità kożmika?

Dawn huma mistoqsijiet li la l-martirju ta' Martin Luther King ma solva u lanqas il-konkwista spazjali ta' Yuri Gagarin.

IX NEMMEN U NISTAQSI

Jekk hemm devjazzjoni ċerta tal-modernisti min-nixxieġha tradizzjonali ta' dawk ta' qabilhom, din, bla dubju, tinsab riflessa f'din it-Taqsima tal-ktieb. Aktarx illi r-religjon u n-nazzjon huma l-aktar żewġ aspetti fundamentali li dwarhom il-poeti l-ġodda kkonfrontaw ir-retorika ta' l-iskola Dunkarmjana. Ikun nuqqas serju min-naħa tal-qarrej li jaħseb li l-modernisti huma irreligjużi. Ovvjament mhumiex devozzjonali, fis-sens li fil-poezija tagħhom m'intix ser tiltaqa' ma' versifikazzjoni dwar San Frangisk jew il-Madonna.³¹ Izda dan ma jfissirx li mhemmx spiritwalità fil-poezija l-ġdida.

Qabel xejn wiehed irid jifhem illi l-istess reazzjoni tal-modernisti kontra l-*istituzzjoni organizzata* tal-“kattoliċizmu” f'Malta hija fiha nfisha att ta' fidi:

31. Il-poezija “ta' l-okkażjoni” kienet prevalenti hafna fl-eżerċizzji tar-romantiċi. Dun Karm, nġidu ahna, kiteb innijiet lil San Duminku, San Frangisk, San Gejtanu, San Frangisk Saverju, San Ġużepp, Santu Wistin, Santa Rita, San Ġwann Bosco, Santa Tereza, San Mikiel, San Filippu, Santa Monika, Sant'Anjeze, San Gorg, San Girgor, Sant'Elena, San Lawrenz u innijiet annwali lil San Pawl bejn l-1915 u l-1936. Fl-1919, meta l-Maltin irvellaw għax ma kellhomx x'jieklu u l-Ingliżi qatlu lid-demonstranti, Dun Karm kiteb poezija waħda biss u ddedikaha mhux lill-martri tas-7 ta' Ġunju, izda lil San Pawl. Għall-modernisti, din il-mankanza serja “anolitika” kienet fiha nnifisha att “immorali” min-naħa tal-poeta.

il-modernisti qegħdin jiddikjaraw illi jridu alternattiva għall-iskorċa rqiqqa li taħtha nħbiet “religjon” li mmanifestat ruħha b’ċelebrazzjoni infatwata u hafna drabi pagana (p.e. in-nar fil-festi u s-sokor quddiem il-vara tal-patron).

F’dan il-kuntest, il-kummentarju ta’ P. Serracino jagħmel din l-osservazzjoni:

Ta’ din il-preżenza tad-dimensjoni reliġjuża fl-ambjent Malti, id-dagħa huwa sinjal xejn inqas milli meta jingħad ir-Ruzarju. U x-xbihat reliġjuzi baqgħu fil-poeżija kontemporanja element mill-iktar jolqtok imqar f’uħud li ma jiktbux biex iqanqlu devozzjoni.

B’din ir-riflessjoni, Serracino Inglott donnu qed jimplika illi: (i) is-sintomi tad-dagħa huma sinjal ta’ familjarità żejda, anzi abbużiva tal-Maltin li jipprattikaw għall-konvenjenza iżda mingħajr dinjità, u (ii) minkejja r-reazzjoni tagħhom kontra l-ipokrisija “reliġjuża” Maltija, il-modernisti ma setgħux jehilsu mill-immagini reliġjużi li trabbew fihom fi tfulithom u fis-snin ta’ l-adolessenza tagħhom. Irridu niftakru wkoll li l-poeti tas-snin sittin għexu ż-żmien ta’ kunflitt tremend bejn il-Knisja u l-Istat, meta l-Knisja Maltija imponiet id-dnub mejjet fuq min jimpenja ruħu favur il-partit politiku li ried idahħal ligijiet għas-sekularizzazzjoni tal-poplu Malti. Ma setgħux ma hallewx marki wkoll it-tendenzi puritaniċi reliġjużi li nfiltraw f’moħħ il-poeti tas-sittin li, fil-maġġoranza tagħhom, kienu gejjin minn familji tal-haddiema b’genituri illitterati jew semi-illitterati.

Dan kollu wassal għal atteggjamenti godda lejn ir-“religjon”, tant li l-modernisti, b’modi differenti, inqatgħu mill-kurrent ta’ religjon manifestattiva u ċelebrattiva biex bdew jippruvaw ifittxu essenzja għdida fit-twemmin tagħhom. Fid-daħla għall-ktieb *Tabernakli* (1979), Oliver Friggieri qabbel lil M. Azzopardi (wieħed mill-esponenti ewlenin ta’ din il-ħtieġa għal reviżjoni reliġjuża) mal-poeta Franciż Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) li wkoll tnissel-fih kunflitt dwar il-formola ta’ religjon kattolika antikwata li imponewlu meta kien żgħir. Friggieri kkwota minn Roger Shattuck biex isahħaħ it-tezi li poeta bħal Mario Azzopardi jikkorrispondi sewwa ma’ poeta kontroversjali bħal Apollinaire.

One force remained paradoxically strong for so independent a personality as Apollinaire: the Catholic Church. We know that he was baptized and had a Catholic schooling; later in life he maintained no regular connection with the Church. Yet this early training left its mark on him in two ways: a scornful fascination with the meaning of Catholic dogma, and a recurring feeling for the cadence of the liturgy, especially those of the litany.

Bħal Apollinaire, Azzopardi u modernisti oħrajn holqu stil burlesk dwar il-“kattoliċizmu Malti”, u fl-istess waqt holqu rikonoxximent karikaturat u devjanti tas-saħħa ta’ l-*establishment* kattoliku fil-pajjiż. U dwar il-poeta modern Malti li holoq il-problematika dwar l-ambigwieta ta’ Alla, nistgħu nerggħu nikkwotaw:

Whatever (the poet’s) attitude toward the Christian God, faith in a deity was never entirely absent from his consciousness.³²

32. Guillaume Apollinaire, *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, R. Shattuck ed., Londra, Harvill Press, 1950.

Jidher illi fit-tradizzjonalisti ftit li xejn kien hemm križi religjuża. Kollox kien aċċettat bħala *status quo*. Ir-religjon kienet monolitika u suprema, użata kemm-il darba biex tintrabat ma' motivi folkloristiċi sabiex jinkiteb l-innu nazzjonali, ib- bażat fuq il-knisja "imperjali" (skond Dun Karm), l-għarusa ta' Alla. Min-naħa l-oħra, id-dimistifikazzjoni tal-knisja fil-modernisti wasslet għan-neċessità li Alla jkun rivalutat fl-isfond ta' valuri godda u fil-kumpless tal-mixxjet tax-xjenza u tat-teknoloġija. Alla ma baqax esseri determinattiv u assolut li ma tistax tidd- jaloga miegħu għaliex jixhitek fin-nirien ta' l-infern. Minflok, il-poeta modern beda jirivaluta l-idea ta' Alla, imqar jekk ħafna drabi beda jinqabad fi križi ta' dubbi. Hawn jinsab il-qofol ta' l-attitudni diversa lejn Alla li tintlemaħ minnufih bejn it-tradizzjonalisti u l-moderni. Ta' l-ewwel ma "ssugrawx" jidhlu fi križi; għalihom li "tistaqsi" aktar milli suppost kien perikoluż anzi, kien abbuż li jim- merita biss id-dannazzjoni. Il-modernisti ma beżgħux jistqarru dawn id-dubbi tal- kuxjenza u, fl-istil tal-Moviment tal-Konfessjonalisti fl-Amerika, esponew il- mistoqsijiet interjuri tagħhom dwar Alla, dwar il-problema tat-Tjieba u l-Ħażen, dwar l-ambigwiż ta' Alla moħbi, sabiex b'hekk jippruvaw jersqu lejn l-interpretazzjoni ġdida tal-moralità Kristoloġika.³³

L-Istabbiliment m'aċċettax il-pożizzjoni personalizzata tar-religjon fil- modernisti u l-poeti l-godda ta' spiss ġew ristretti minn ċensura uffiċjali. Daniel Massa, ngħidu aħna, kien akkużat minn kritiċi reazzjonarji bi spirtu anti-religjuż meta pprova jressaq il-poeżija tiegħu *Il-Bajja ta' San Tumas* biex tinqara pubb- likament fit-Teatru Nazzjonali. Fil-polemika li nqalgħet, Massa fisser il-qagħda tiegħu fid-dawl tal-poeżija ċitata:

Il-Bajja turi l-poeta jfittex il-valuri supremi fuq xtajta ffullata b'insara u pagani jiddevertu. Il-kelma "waħdi" li tinsab f'ras kull waħda mill-hames strofi tishaq fuq il-firda u d-distanza bejn il-poeta u l-folla...Il-poeta xejn ma jieħu gost b'dak li jara, bir-redikolaġni tal-bniedem modern li donnu "kuntent bil-mirakli" biss. Din il-poeżija tista' tkun ikklassifikata fil- kumpless tal-Poeżija tat-Tiftix.

Poeti bħal Massa kienu wkoll attakkati sarkastikament u akkużati li qegħdin jedhew jiktbu poeżiji li aktar jixbhu lill-*crossword puzzles* milli 'l-letteratura.³⁴ L-akkuża li l-poeżija l-ġdida kienet oskura kienet waħda kontinwament rikorrenti u dan il-pregudizzju aktarx li għadu ma sfumax. Imqar meta l-modernisti kitbu dwar sugġetti mill-iktar intimi (bħall-križi religjuża tagħhom), huma baqgħu jir- riflettu intellett kumpless li wiret mill-metafora mnissla fl-inkonxju u dan skond il-psikanalizi Freudjana.

F'Ottubru tal-1983, f'intervista³⁵ mal-Professor Gużè Aquilina, wiehed mill- akkademiċi li l-aktar li pprova jimblokka r-radikalizmu tal-modernisti mill- Katedra tal-Malti fl-Università, il-Giżwita Patri Alfred Darmanin, psikologu,

33. Diversi poeti moderni tnebbhu mit-teoloġija rigoruża u "xjentizzata" ta' Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Bernard Haring, Andrew Greeley, Eugene Kennedy u oħrajn.

34. Ara, p.e. *il-Malta News*, 10. 3. 1969, jew diversi hargiet tal-gazzetta umoristika *Ix-Xewka* tat-tieni nofs tas-snin sittin.

35. *The Sunday Times*, 30. 10. 1983, p. 14.

fisser il-htieġa ta' l-analizi Freudjana fir-rivalutazzjoni ta' Alla. Forsi huwa importanti li hawnhekk nikkwotaw mill-intervista attwali, jekk xejn biex il-qarrej jifhem il-pożizzjoni rigida ta' akkademiċi bħal Aquilina li ma setgħux, jew ma ridux, jifhmu li hsiebbhom ried iċedi għar-rivoluzzjoni kulturali b'valuri godda. Siltiet mill-intervista:

M. Don't you think that Freud's anti-religious feelings, like those of Karl Marx, could be partly, if not wholly, influenced by his Jewish background?

T. When Freud, the father and founder of psycho-analysis, writes about religion, he views it as a universal obsessional neurosis of humanity, as a form of sublimation, and God as the projection of unconscious desires. His negative experience as a Jew, considered and treated as inferior before a Catholic majority, could have provoked in him an emotional reaction against the Catholic religion as practised at the time. This could have led him to look for psychological arguments to disprove God's existence...I think we should take Freud more seriously. His criticism of religion ought to make us re-examine our ideas on religion and our notions and images of God. Such serious reflection would help us purify our religion from an infantile type of religiosity to a more adult, mature faith. Freud does not speak about God, but about the god which we have made, and maybe that type of god does not exist.

Ir-riflessjoni tal-Ġżwita Patri Alfred Darmanin, li ddikjara ruħu bħala "personalità Freudjana" fis-sens tal-kumplessità u l-profondità tal-bniedem, hija ta' importanza kbira biex wieħed jifhem l-attitudni li hađu ċerti poeti moderni fil-konfront ta' l-"alla" li holqu l-Maltin li jhassru l-immagini infantili u falsifikata ta' "alla" pre-fabbrikat għall-kumdità parrokkjalista tal-Maltin reazzjonarji u bigotti.

Il-fidi li jridu jnisslu fihom il-modernisti hija dik li titnebbah minn awturi kristjani bħal Pascal ("Alla jrid li jcaqlaq ir-rieda tal-bnedmin mhux il-moħħ"). Blaise Pascal (1623 – 62), filosofu reliġjuż, xjenzat u matematiku, kien avvanza l-idea tal-"karità kristjana" li titlob umiltà mhux it-ton moralegganti. Ċertament, il-modernisti li nisslu l-poetika l-ġdida dan l-ingredjent *umli* ma sabuħx b'nemes fl-organizzazzjoni reliġjuża Maltija.

X EPILOGU: MILL-HAJJA GĦALL-ARTI

Il-modernisti ma ddakkru biss minn influssi letterarji anglo-amerikani jew kontinentali. Bħala prodotti ta' l-epoka li holqot l-estetika pluralistika permezz tat-teatru sperimentali, iċ-ċinema, it-televiżjoni, l-arti plastika astratta u hjiel iehor ta' arti awdjo-viżiva, il-modernisti Maltin nisslu xbihat mill-medja kollha tal-kommunikattiva artistika. Il-kross-riferenzi tagħhom għal xoghlijiet pluralistiċi ta' l-estetika huma diversi. Hawnhekk hawn devjazzjonijiet importanti oħra x'wieħed jinnota fil-poeti tas-sittin: filwaqt li ta' qabilhom aktarx li tnebbu minn materji strettament letterarji, il-modernisti okkupaw ruħhom b'kull for-

ma ta' arti oħra li setgħet tagħtihom palata biex iwasslu l-messaġġ tagħhom.³⁶

Aktarx li minn hawn ukoll gejjja l-ossessjoni ta' whud minnhom bil-*poesie concrete* (bl-Ingliż, *pattern jew concrete poetry*). Fl-għarfien tagħhom ta' forom oħra ta' arti, il-modernisti ddikjaraw li jaqblu essenzjalment mal-manifest importanti li Charles Olson kien hareġ fl-1950, fejn seddaq il-htieġa tal-*kinetika* (moviment) fil-poezija. Kien Olson ukoll li nsista li l-poeta għandu jkun il-“kunduttur ta' enerġija li tgħaddi bejnu u bejn il-qarrej”.

Fil-qofol tagħha, l-arti hija kwalità fittizja: l-artist jipprova joħloq illużjoni biex jirreġistra emozzjoni jew esperjenza partikulari. Id-differenza bejn it-tradizzjonalisti u l-modernisti tinsab fil-fatt li ta' l-ewwel ittrattaw l-opra tagħhom mill-aspett ta' regoli pjuttost akkademiċi, filwaqt li l-modernisti riedu jinżlu huma nnifishom fl-arena ta' l-esperjenza biex joħolqu arti awtentika. Assorbew kull ma sabu: krizijiet, kunflitti, dubji religjużi, korruzzjoni, mankamenti u wkoll, l-arti ta' haddieħor. Minn dawn is-sintomi kollha politiko-estetici ħolqu spiritwalità partikulari tagħhom li tieħu bixriet differenti. L-“innu” tagħhom ma baqax l-innu epiku jew l-innu tal-patrija romantika, iżda sar fih innifsu *l-innu ta' l-estetika*.³⁷ L-arti nkorporat ruħha f'kull aspekt. F'poeta bħal Sciberras hija sensorja u apostrofika: *Diane! Diane!* tixhed senswalità u muzikalità mnebbhin mill-*femina eterna*, l-idealizzazzjoni tal-Mara-Anima skond Jung (innota li “Diane” hija passiva, sewwasew għaliex ix-xbieha tagħha mhix waħda reali iżda pitturata). Fuq stil differenti li jfakkar fil-poeta li l-estetika tiegħu mhix milqugħa, *chants sans paroles* tevoka mill-ġdid is-senswalità (metafora għall-arti nnifisha) u tissabbar bl-opra artistika ta' żewġ artisti oħra: Fragonard (1714-1806), artist frivolu u spontaneju li miet bil-ġuħ u Gluck (1714-1787), kompożitur operistiku meġjus bħala figura erojka u innovattiva f'dal-qasam ta' l-arti. Fil-konfront tad-delużjoni estetika-femminili, il-poeta jaqqa' fl-għammieq tar-riflessjoni dwar l-assenza-preżenza tat-tfajla li tnissel il-poezija ta' xewqat:

*imma fommi ntebaq lazzru
f'meditazzjoni mingħajr kelma*

-
36. Il-modernisti, fl-ossessjoni tagħhom biex jinkorporaw b'enerġija kull mument ta' l-eżistenza estetika, ta' spiss okkupaw ruħhom, kif rajna, b'forom oħra artistici, inkluż it-teatru, li fih innifsu jista' jagħti indikazzjoni għaliex hemm daqstant ġesti “ritwalistiċi” (imqar jekk konfużi jew primittivi) fil-poezija l-ġdida. Poeti oħra Maltin kitbu bl-Ingliż u ċertament il-poezija protestarja jew surrealista ta' whud bħal Kenneth Wain u Lillian Sciberras setghu sabu posthom faċilment fi traduzzjoni għal din l-antologija.
37. L-estetika moderna evokat imqar ir-redikolu b'ċerta ardità u b'ċerta guffagni; l-iskop kien li l-verità hija aktar essenzjali mil-limaturi teknici. Serracino Inglott iqis li fil-bidu tal-karriera tagħhom, poeti bħal Azzopardi u Marshall setghu hallew impatt iktar qawwi kieku wrew dispożizzjoni aktar metikoluża dwar ix-xogħol tagħhom. Fl-istess waqt, Serracino Inglott jara li poeti bħal dawn setghu kienu qegħdin jimxu mal-kredu tal-*Beat Generation* fl-Amerika. Fi kliem Gregory Corso, l-importanti kien li tikteb “from the top of your head”. Corso kkonkluda hekk: “I write from the top of my head and to write so means to write honestly, but it also means to write clumsily; but I decided to heck it so long as it allows me to speak the truth.” Fi programm letterarju fuq Xandir Malta (1980) Azzopardi sqarr li kien jikteb direttament bit-tajpraġter, u li x-xogħlijiet tiegħu tal-bidu qatt ma ried jirrevedihom għax kien jibza' li jtellfilhom mill-*mument* tal-ġenesi tagħhom.

*imma xufftejja bbiesu żonqor
mal-bdil ta' l-istaġuni*

F'xi hadd bħal Marshall, poeta li, skond il-kritiku P. Serracino Inglott, kapaċi jagħmel *strip-tease* tar-ruħ (fuq l-istil tal-Konfessjonalisti Amerikani) u wkoll ikellem lill-qarrej b'ton "ipokritu" klawnesk, jieħu pozizzjoni oħra. B'ton ta' tinbix, il-prodott artistiku tiegħu jixtieq (ipokritikament) iżommu sigriet (bejnu u bejn persuna oħra waħda):

*turiha 'l hadd dil-poeżija
maħbuba
żommha biss għalik u għaliġa³⁸*

Biex jintlaħaq l-iskop tal-poeżija l-għdida, il-modernisti ta' sikwit jużaw metafori ossessivi li jorbtuhom fil-veru sens tal-kelma mal-persuna, ma' l-oġġett, jew ma' l-ambjent. It-temi tagħhom huma imprevedibbli (kif jistqarr Carmel Attard f' *Il-Vers li Ġej*). Is-sakra metaforika jleħhinha Achille Mizzi:

*Ġenninni l-bosk ...
Ma nistagħgibx jekk naqta' vina u jinżlu
Hodor il-qtar tad-dmija.*

38. B'dan l-istil ta' kitba "puwerili" Marshall kien qed jagħti lehen "lit-tifel etern fil-poeta"; kien qed jissieheb mal-moviment ta' l-*Arti Naif*, moviment li kien *in voga* fil-pittura fis-snin sittin u sebghin. In-*Naif* jinkwadra ta' spiss innoċenza qarrieqa; l-artist, konxju li tleġ l-innoċenza tiegħu, jipprova jerga' jiksibha billi jikkrea arti purista li għandha tendenzi kważi esklużivi mqabbdin fin-nostalgija infantili.

