

The Gateway to Honour

**A History of Classics at the University of Malta
from 1800 to 1979**

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ABSTRACT

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Joining a vibrant area within Classical Reception that explores the role of Classics and classical learning in a colonial environment, this thesis situates Classics in the educational and political history of Malta during the British era (1800-1979).

While making use of a varied range of published, archival, and oral sources, it traces the history of Latin and Greek as academic subjects, primarily at the University of Malta, but also at other teaching institutions, in an island where Latin was essentially the domain of the Catholic Church. Both the bio-bibliographical account of the scholarly protagonists, and the analysis of the development of classical curricula and teaching methodologies, serve to fit Classics in the history of Maltese pedagogy within the socio-political framework of the times. Within this educational context, the study also seeks to investigate the interaction between Classics and politics in a period fraught with growing sentiments of nationalism and the struggle for a cultural identity. Encased as Latin was in the religio-cultural notions of *Italianità*, this thesis argues that seldom if ever did Classics in Malta manage to produce a real and explicit effect outside the purely educational environment.

The situation provides a unique and interesting study in Classical Reception and the rise of modern nationalism in a small Mediterranean island with a long history.

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, Carmel Serracino, hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this thesis, 'The Gateway to Honour: A History of Classics at the University of Malta from 1800 to 1979', and that it is my original work. No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of higher education. I hold the University of Malta harmless against any third party claims with regard to copyright violation, breach of confidentiality, defamation and any other third party right infringement.

Signature: _____

Carmel Serracino

Date _____

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Ph.D. thesis to my parents, Joseph and Jane.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAM	Archiepiscopal Archives, Malta
ACM	Archives of the Cathedral, Malta
Art. / Arts	Article / Articles
<i>ARU</i>	<i>Annual Report of the University of Malta</i>
ASM	Archiepiscopal Seminary Archives, Malta
ASCD	Archives and Special Collections Department, Library, University of Malta
<i>CG</i>	<i>Debates of the Council of Government of Malta</i>
<i>KD</i>	<i>Debates tal-Kamra tad-Deputati</i>
<i>LA</i>	<i>Debates of the Legislative Assembly of Malta</i>
<i>MBB</i>	Malta Government Blue Books
MGG	Malta Government Gazette /Gazzetta del Governo di Malta
MS / MSS	manuscript / manuscripts
n.	note
NAM	National Archives of Malta
NLM	National Library of Malta
p. / pp.	page / pages
RGD	Reports of the Workings of Government Departments
<i>Rosa</i>	<i>Rosa Melitensis</i>
TCJ	The Classical Journal (Malta Branch of the Virgil Society)
<i>TM</i>	<i>Times of Malta</i>
<i>UC</i>	<i>University Calendar</i>
UMHA	Heritage Archive Collection, Archives and Special Collections Department, Library, University of Malta
UM	University of Malta
vol. / vols	volume / volumes



Figure 1 - The Old University gateway, Valletta Campus, University of Malta

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 *A maxim in Greek*

One early September morning in 1920, Robert Eric Shepherd walked through the streets of the city of Valletta for the first time in his life.¹ A young English poet who had studied at the University of Oxford but left without graduating,² Shepherd (Fig. 2) had recently been appointed Professor of English Literature and Lecturer in General History at the University of Malta.³ He was now on his way to pay his respects to the University Rector before the start of his academic career on the island.⁴



Figure 2 - Eric Shepherd

Shepherd was later to write in his memoirs that the first thing he noticed as he approached the building of the University (now the Valletta Campus, Fig. 1) was the inscription on its gateway. The inscription is in Greek and reads *ΠΡΟΠΥΛΑΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΤΙΜΗΣ Η ΜΑΘΗΣΙΣ*, which means ‘Learning is the Gateway to Honour’ or ‘Learning is the Gateway of Honour’ (Fig. 3).⁵ Although not a

¹ Shepherd 1926: 61. Cf. Bonello, G. 2014.

² I am grateful to Simon Bailey, Keeper of the University Archives, Bodleian Library, for the information he communicated by email dated 19/08/2016 regarding Shepherd’s examinations at Oxford.

³ For academic references supporting Shepherd’s appointment, NAM, CSG01, Educ 2003/1920; for conditions of appointment, including privileges and salary, NAM, GOV02.2, telegram dated 19/04/1920.

⁴ The Rector at the time was (Sir) Themistocles Zammit: see Ellul-Micallef 2013: 2.350-351.

⁵ In Ancient Greek, *τιμή* could also connote situations which come from, or are conducive to, honour, such as ‘office, prestige’. *μάθησις* could also mean ‘education, instruction’. Cf. Liddell and Scott’s *Greek Lexicon*.

quotation from ancient literature,⁶ the motto is clearly a reminder to students (and professors) of their mission in entering the place. Shepherd confesses his failure to understand it – a rather unexpected admission considering he had successfully answered questions on the original Greek text of Plato’s *Apology* and *Meno* in one of the public exams in Oxford.⁷ Nevertheless, he says he found the presence of the incomprehensible Greek inscription ‘very reassuring, not to say improving’. Shepherd fails to clarify why the inscription should have aroused in him such positive sentiments. One facile reading of the statement is that the unexpected sight of Greek kindled in the Englishman a surge of vocational enthusiasm, not to say a momentary swell of pride, for his new academic post. The statement is probably not without some typically British irony, especially since the first impressions of Valletta had awakened in Shepherd a certain foreboding that his Malta experience would not be a happy one, as indeed it was not.⁸ Be that as it may, the presence of Greek on the University gateway, rather than of Latin, or of Italian (or, for that matter, of colloquial Maltese), seems to have appeared to Shepherd a harbinger of better things to come. That the Greek language, as he goes on to remark, was at the time ‘not studied in Malta’ appears to have also contributed to the sudden feeling of optimism experienced by the Englishman.

⁶ The line can be scanned as a variation of a Bacchiac tetrameter. Since this meter is mostly associated with (Roman) comedy, its existence here is probably coincidental.

⁷ The year was 1911; cf. n. 2.

⁸ Shepherd 1926: 46, *passim*.



Figure 3 - The Greek motto at the University gateway

Perhaps Shepherd was, on that September morning of 1920, still too new to Malta to know much of the history of its University. By the time he was writing his memoirs he would most likely have learnt that the gateway was a century old, and that it had been built by the British authorities around 1824 – almost a quarter of a century, that is, since their arrival in Malta in 1800 – as part of their plan to improve the accessibility and the aesthetics of an old building that had served as the location for higher and tertiary education on the island for over two centuries.⁹ In the same way as other monuments commissioned by the British during the first two decades of their presence on the island, such as Sir Alexander Ball’s monument (1810) at the Lower Baracca Gardens

⁹ There seems to be no consensus as to the date of construction. Vella, A.P. (1969: 66) states the works were completed by April 1824, but fails to support this statement with any references. Borg (2001: 33) dates it to 1826. Ellul (1982: 15) follows Vella, but in a later work (Ellul 1989: 64) only attributes the design to the Maltese architect Giorgio Pullicino without a reference to a date. Buhagiar and Fiorini (1992: 9) strangely report that the motto ‘is thought to have been coined by [Rector] Sir Temi Zammit himself’. A few days before the author’s viva-examination, the researcher Victor Bonnici drew the author’s attention to a passage in the *Acta Academiae Melitensis* (1. 27) that seems to indicate 1821 as the year of the completion of works in the University building, including the new gateway (‘Hinc elegantiori janua reserata’). *MBB* 1823, Abstract of the Net Revenue and Expenditure, 8, reports on the great expenditure incurred during 1823 for ‘the newly fitting up of the different School rooms and Lecture Halls’ at the University, but does not mention the gateway *per se*. Hopefully future research might shed more light on the origin and the date of the gateway.

and the Main Guard Portico (1814), both also in Valletta, the gateway was built in the Doric order that typified the neo-classical style of architecture.¹⁰ Writing in 2001 about the decorative aspect of British neoclassical architecture in Malta, a Maltese architectural historian was right to observe that ‘the Old University doorway was ... decorative but equally important. It witnessed the cultural change affecting the educational system.’¹¹ However, he does not mention the maxim on the doorway. Shepherd had done better: he *had* noticed the strangeness in the choice of language. His surprise would have been greater had he known that, even when the gate was under construction a century earlier, no formal study of Classical Greek existed at the University.

Almost another century has gone by since Shepherd made his astute observation, and we might as well express similar astonishment and formulate it into a number of questions for further discussion: why, in 1824, was the inscription set up in Greek? Who was behind it? Even if, for argument’s sake, Greek had formed part of the curriculum of the University, why should it have been favoured over Latin? To the Maltese, Latin was the language which, for a number of historical reasons, was far more available and familiar than Greek.¹² Latin not only enjoyed a hallowed association with the Catholic Church,¹³ but was also a standard of post-primary education, being a requirement for embarking on a professional career in Law and Medicine.¹⁴ For a long time it was the language of notarial deeds.¹⁵ A number of Maltese *literati* had in the previous centuries distinguished themselves as writers in Latin.¹⁶ Above all, Latin was the language traditionally employed for public

¹⁰ Cf. Ellul 1982.

¹¹ Borg 2001: 33.

¹² Cf. Goff (2013: 146) for the story of the boy from Lagos who mistook for Greek the epigraph in the Yoruba language on the gate of Wesley College Ibadan, founded in 1905. This could reflect the stronger presence of Greek teaching in British Colonies of West Africa about which Goff writes elsewhere in her book.

¹³ ‘Malta is a land of churches and of priests’ observes Fletcher 1850: 29.

¹⁴ See 3.5 and 3.7.

¹⁵ Cf., e.g., Wettinger 1993: 10; Fiorni 2016: lviii. In 1784 the De Rohan Code required all commercial contracts to be written in Italian; cf. De Bono 1897: 205.

¹⁶ Notably, G.F. Bonamici (1639-1680) and G.A. Ciantar (1696-1778); cf. Laurenza 1934a: 537-538, 541-543.

inscriptions.¹⁷ Even without any knowledge of Latin, many Maltese would still have been able to make out the gist of a short Latin inscription through their acquaintance with Italian, a legacy bequeathed to the islanders by the long period (1530-1798) of the rule of the Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem.

Why, then, should a motto intended to convey the ultimate objectives of university learning be in a language that was unreadable to local passers-by,¹⁸ and unintelligible to most of the students and professors who walked under it? 'I do not know if ten per cent of the people who walk through the entrance have ever read the motto or whether any single professor at the University could parse it', complained Count Gerald Strickland, the Leader of the Constitutional Party, in 1923.¹⁹ Moreover, it is surprising that the inscription, so singular in its choice of language,²⁰ has continued to pass unnoticed by scholars of Maltese architectural and educational history. One could suggest that the language corresponded with the Greek architectural style, or that Greek was a predictable option during the fashion of Romantic Hellenism.²¹ Both arguments may have some truth, but other contemporary neoclassical edifices in the Doric style, such as the two mentioned above, bore inscriptions in Latin, not Greek.²² This indicates causes that possibly go beyond stylistic appropriateness or the Romantic spirit of the times.

¹⁷ A published corpus of Latin inscriptions in Malta does not exist. NL, Libr Ms 372 (F.V. Inglott) covers the extant inscriptions of Valletta and the Three Cities up to the mid-19th century. Of the hundreds of inscriptions, the huge majority are in Latin and only a handful in Italian.

¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, 'nobody in Valletta ever seems to know where its principal seat of learning is', complains Shepherd 1926: 61.

¹⁹ *LA*, 11/06/1923, 1779. Strickland had learnt Greek: see 5.5.

²⁰ NL, Libr Ms 372 (see n. 17) features only one inscription (Fol. 217) in Greek, from the Greek church of Our Lady of Damascus in Valletta. I am grateful to Victor Bonnici for bringing this to my attention.

²¹ See 1.2.

²² Cf. Stray 1998a: 76 on the rarity of Greek mottoes in England.

1.2 The historical circumstances

It had been an aesthetic stimulus, notably the work of the German art theoretician J.J. Winckelmann (1717-1768), that sparked on the continent the great fervour for ancient Greek art and literature known as 'Romantic Hellenism'.²³ In a matter of decades, Romantic Hellenism had swept over Europe, leaving a lasting impression on art and scholarship, while propagating fresh concepts of nationalism and freedom.

In 1821, this movement took on a violent turn in Greece itself with the outbreak of the War of Independence (1821-1832). Malta was watchful of the insurrection brewing up in Greece: 'She [Greece] was then filing her chains, and soon she snapt them, to the astonishment of all in Malta', observes the English Protestant missionary Reverend Samuel Wilson, who lived in Malta between 1819 and 1824 before proceeding to Greece.²⁴ At about the same time when the University gateway was constructed in Valletta, the war in Greece claimed the life of its most famous foreign victim, Lord Byron, at the siege of Missolonghi.²⁵ Byron was not unknown in Malta. His first eventful sojourn on the island took place during his Grand Tour of 1809, which was the last stop before he reached Greece for the first time in his life; his second visit occurred only two years later.²⁶ There can be no doubt that our Greek inscription is a symbolic evidence of the philhellenism that had lured Byron, and other Europeans, to the East for the cause of Hellenic freedom, and in quest of individual heroism. Nevertheless, is it only that?

²³ On the rise of Romantic Hellenism, see, e.g. Jenkyns 1980: 1-20. The ushering of Romantic Hellenism could be conveniently ascribed to the publication of Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* in 1764.

²⁴ Wilson 1839: 86. See 3.6.

²⁵ He died on 19 April 1824. Vella, A.P. (1969: 66) states that the University remained closed until the gateway works were carried out, to reopen in April 1824. But see n. 9 above.

²⁶ Galt 1835: 72-75, 155.

Byron had received the typical public school grounding in Classics before proceeding to Trinity College, Cambridge, at a time when the knowledge of Greek outclassed that of Latin as the recognised hallmark of the English Oxbridge-educated gentleman.²⁷ Another Cambridge graduate and English philhellene, a literary influence on Byron,²⁸ was the likely mover behind the Greek inscription in Malta. The Right Honourable John Hookham Frere retired to Malta in 1822 where he played a prominent role in the cultural and social scenes of the island until his death in 1846.²⁹ An early official duty came in 1824 when the Government appointed him Chairman of the new University Council.³⁰ Frere surely possessed the prestige and the power to decide on the language for the new gateway of the University,³¹ while coining a fitting Greek adage would have been easy for the translator of Aristophanes. He was also responsible for the introduction of the Greek language, both in its ancient and modern versions, in the curriculum taught at the Lyceum (the preparatory school attached to the University) and of New Testament Greek at the *alma mater* itself. The appearance of Modern Greek may come as a surprise, but, as Revd Wilson remarks, Malta is only 'a stepping stone from Greece'.³² The strong commercial links between Malta and Greece, and possibilities for migration, were then as valid a reason for learning Greek as the overtly cultural ones.³³

Despite Frere's best intentions, Greek never quite took off at the University and its absence was a matter of concern for the Royal Commissioner Patrick J. Keenan in 1879.³⁴ His Report, however, flagged a rather more important British anxiety that was increasingly being felt at the time. The Italian layer in the Maltese consciousness was proving to be a persistent obstacle to the spread of the English language

²⁷ For the standard treatment, see Clarke 1945 and Turner, F.M. 1981.

²⁸ More 1873: 368.

²⁹ For Frere's biography, see Barker 2004. On Frere in Malta, see 5.1.

³⁰ UMHA, University Council 1824-1839, 13/09/1824.

³¹ The Maltese historian, Judge Giovanni Bonello, shared the same opinion in an email to the author dated 02/10/2014.

³² Wilson 1839: 62.

³³ See 3.6.

³⁴ See 4.5

on the island. The influx of a number of high-profile Italian Risorgimento exiles had heightened this particular nationalistic ethos among the Maltese. The British became progressively wary about what they conceived to be a rising sympathy for Italian irredentism, seeing this as a threat to the administration of their fortress colony so strategically located for the safeguarding of their empire in the Mediterranean and beyond. Because of the strong connection of Italian and Latin through the all-powerful Catholic Church in Malta, might not incomprehensible Greek – for this one occasion alone and at no less significant a location than the new University entrance – been preferred to the all-too-familiar Latin as a signal of a new era for the Maltese? Could the Greek inscription in 1824 have been an early symptom of the anti-Italian anxiety that would escalate many decades later in the form of the ‘Language Question’?³⁵ Could it have been meant to send a shrewd warning, somehow reminiscent of the famous prohibitory maxim traditionally inscribed on the door of Plato’s Academy in ancient Athens?³⁶ Perhaps, more than anything else, it was the use of Greek that subtly announced the ‘cultural change effecting the educational system’ in British Malta,³⁷ and much else besides.

By the time Eric Shepherd came to Malta in 1920, the language struggle pervaded all aspects and levels of society in Malta. The pro-Italian party sometimes sought political and cultural advantage by underlining the natural bond between Latin and Italian. The teaching of Greek, on the other hand, had long since disappeared.³⁸ But then again, Greek had lost much of its hold even in England where it was no longer compulsory for entry into Oxford or Cambridge.³⁹ Some lone voices still called to

³⁵ For further discussion, see 3.4; on the Language Question, 5.2.

³⁶ *ΑΓΕΩΜΕΤΡΗΤΟΣ ΜΗΔΕΙΣ ΕΙΣΙΤΩ*, ‘Let no one enter who is ignorant of geometry’, about which see Saffrey 1968; I am grateful to Dr Jurgen Gatt for suggesting the parallel.

³⁷ Cf. n. 11.

³⁸ In 1923 the Greek maxim was one of the six mottoes that the General Council considered for a new motto of the University. The other five were in Latin, and the choice fell on ‘Ut fructificemus in Domino’; cf. Vella, A.P. 1969: 95. Significantly, it was Gerald Strickland, Anglophile *par excellence*, who first suggested the Greek maxim for the motto (cf. n. 19). See further 5.2 and 5.4.

³⁹ Stray 1998a: 265-270.

mind the overarching significance of Greek. Gilbert Murray would express it memorably in 1941: ‘at home England is Greek. In the Empire she is Roman’.⁴⁰ This symbolic dichotomy in Classics perhaps says something about Shepherd’s elation. In an island so thoroughly Catholic and Latin,⁴¹ the sight of a Greek text on the gateway of the University must have stirred up in the Englishman, if only for a moment, intimations of home and family.

1.3 Research Question

The want of curiosity on the part of Maltese historians about the peculiarity of the choice of language for the University gateway in early 19th-century British Malta seems to indicate a general lack of sensitivity about the role that Classics have played in aspects of the island’s modern history. That Classics have exerted some form of influence is evident for the obvious historical and geographic reasons. Rather, the question is, how, and to what extent, have Classics been formative for Malta?

What do we exactly mean by Classics? In view of the far-flung and multifarious diffusion of influences that have emanated from the Graeco-Roman world across the centuries, the term ‘Classics’ has become an extremely elusive word to define. As early as 1904, the classicist J.W. Mackail already spoke of ‘the ambiguous name of the classics’.⁴² Nearly a century later, another classicist, Christopher Stray, could explain that, ‘What we call “classics” is a symbolic repertoire from which many different conceptions of antiquity have been assembled.’⁴³ Classicists who, like Stray, work in Reception Studies have increasingly come to value the interdisciplinary approach that lays bare the cornucopia of

⁴⁰ Quoted by Jenkyns 1981: 337.

⁴¹ Ironically, during his years at Oxford Shepherd had converted to Roman Catholicism; cf. Bonello 2014.

⁴² Mackail 1925: 2.

⁴³ Stray 1998b: 449.

interlinkages that continuously crisscross between traditionally academic attributes of the ancient Classics, and the oftentimes implicit reverberations of Classics in the outside world.⁴⁴ This has resulted in new, exciting approaches by which scholars are studying manifestations of classical legacies in modern times. To give but one example, Mark Bradley, in introducing his edited publication on Classics and Imperialism, states that ‘one could chart the formative relationship between classical influences and imperialism, for example, in the British educational system, national dramatic productions, political rhetoric, public architecture, or the activities and representation of the monarchy.’⁴⁵

In similar fashion, the readings of the Greek inscription above suggest multiple possible avenues by which the history of Classics in Malta can be approached and examined. They could be as diverse as the educational and academic, the political and ideological, or the cultural and artistic. Classics in Malta could be studied in the light of Classics’ relationship with colonial Britain, or as the continuous symbolic manifestation of the power of the Church on the island. These different directions will invariably intersect or converge at several points along their paths. No single viewpoint would paint a complete picture without drawing extensively upon aspects from other viewpoints.

Seen from a broad cultural perspective, it is evident that the inscription at the Valletta Campus provides insightful, at times ambiguous, inferences about shifting perceptions in Malta of the importance of the classical languages as scholarly disciplines, as well as about their multiple resonances across different societal levels. From an imperialist perspective, it also suggests the use of Classics as an element of soft power intent on changing a colony’s culture to make its people more amenable to rule. This makes this multifaceted case study relevant not

⁴⁴ See 2.3.

⁴⁵ Bradley 2010a: 10.

only to various aspects of Maltese history, but even to the history of the classical legacy and its uses in Mediterranean and European contexts.

Stray identifies three versions of Classics: personal, institutional, and national. The institutional version, he states, is advantageous in that only at this level 'can we see larger national traditions and various personal visions and preferences being mediated by curricular forms which developed within the one, and which influenced the other.'⁴⁶ As the subtitle of the present work declares, the major perspective chosen here is the institutional one, whereby the history of Classics in Malta will be reconstructed in terms of the development of a scholarly discipline conveniently encased in a university framework within a significant chronological compass. This study is engaging with three main questions. For the chosen period, it will seek to:

- (a) place Classics within a relevant and relative political and cultural context in British Malta. What can different and changing perceptions in Classics indicate about the historical development of the island, particularly the wavering relationship between Latin and Greek?

- (b) identify the major protagonists in the history of classical learning and dissemination in Malta,⁴⁷ by means of professional biographies which seek engagement and clarification of (a) by maintaining the sense of period;

- (c) analyse the developments within the discipline itself, and the evolving perception of Classics as a discipline over the relevant decades, particularly of the changing conception in the post-war period.

⁴⁶ Stray 1998b: 449.

⁴⁷ Ignorance about many of these scholars (embodied in Professor H.C.R. Vella's expression to the author, 'We know nothing about them!') was in fact what stimulated this research in the first place.

After the introductory two chapters, Part I, divided in three chronological chapters, gives an account of the story of Classics in colonial Malta, particularly at the University, set against the political progress of the period. Each of these three chapters is headed by a historical overview relevant to its period. Part II, likewise in three chapters, provides an appraisal of the major classical scholars in Malta of our period, native and foreign, their careers on the island and their works. Part III, comprising three final chapters, considers the development of ideas on Classics and classical learning, and the changes in the teaching methodologies of the subject. Chapter 11, especially, relies heavily on a series of interviews conducted for this research.⁴⁸

Now, Latin and Greek did not, for the greater part of the period under review, constitute an academic subject *per se* (i.e. what we nowadays commonly refer to as 'Classics'), but rather formed an essential part of the training leading to professional careers, such as Law and Theology. The existence of a 'Department of Classics' within the Faculty of Arts does not go further back than the late 1950s,⁴⁹ over a century after the Fundamental Statute of 1838 decreed a Chair of Latin and Italian Literatures (later to be split into two),⁵⁰ which actually means some years before a Chair of Latin was established in the Universities of Oxford (1854) and Cambridge (1869).⁵¹ This reflects both the historical developments locally, and is symptomatic of continental developments in Classics as an academic discipline, especially in Germany. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the main secondary education establishment, the Lyceum, was up to 1914 annexed to the University,⁵² which recruited lecturers and professors occasionally

⁴⁸ See 2.6.

⁴⁹ Cf. UMHA, Special Council-Faculty Board of Arts 1954-1960, 05/11/1957, for an early reference to a 'Department of Classics'.

⁵⁰ Anon. 1838: 39.

⁵¹ Stray 1998a: 143.

⁵² Laurenza 1933: 14. A strong administrative link between the two institutions prevailed long after 1914. Cf. University College London and King's College London, both of which had attached schools in the 19th century (Whyte 2015: 47).

teaching at both levels.⁵³ The Lyceum's elimination from any analysis would give a rather circumscribed view of the reality. Other secondary institutions, such as the Archiepiscopal Seminary, as well as private and religious colleges, were equally crucial in fostering classical teaching and preparing students for academic life, and thus merit attention too.

In Malta, Edward Coleiro's 1979 edition and commentary of Virgil's *Eclogues* must be ranked as the first Maltese scholarly work, at least since the island became part of the British Empire in 1800, which could lay claim to being a major contribution in the field of international classical scholarship.⁵⁴ The year 1979 is significant: it is the year when the country attained its full independence from the British Crown, but also the year when the Maltese Government abolished the Faculty of Arts and the classical languages in Malta sank to their lowest ebb. For all these reasons, the year makes a fitting chronological terminus to the present study.

However, lest this appear too much of an anticlimax, it is pertinent to add at this point that Classics in Malta started to experience a revival from the early 1990s, notably through the endeavours of Dr Horatio Vella, now Professor of Latin and Greek at the University of Malta. Vella has been responsible, almost single-handedly, for resuscitating a dying academic field and training successive groups of students. As a result, the subject is once again a thriving discipline both at the University and in pre-University colleges, and since 2010 has received continual promotion outside academic parameters through the efforts of the Malta Classics Association, of which Vella is a co-founder.⁵⁵ Since Professor Vella agreed to be the thesis's main supervisor it was considered ethically appropriate to exclude from its time frame the period of Classics' rebirth at the University, of which Vella was undoubtedly the main architect and driving force.

⁵³ E.g. Revd M.A. Albanese, Professor of Latin Literature, about whom see 6.8.

⁵⁴ See 8.2.

⁵⁵ Serracino 2016: 14-15.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Classical scholarship and Classics

Since this project is venturing into virtually unknown territory within a Maltese scholarly context, it cannot claim that it is trying to fill a particular gap in the research, for the simple reason that there has been locally very little research done in the area. In the light of this paucity, one inevitably needs to look beyond the island's shores to see how similar endeavours have been addressed and performed.

One question arose at an early stage during the writing of this thesis. Can we speak of 'classical scholarship' in Malta during the concerned period? Classical scholarship has always been seen as a vital organ in the continuation through the centuries of the existence of a classical tradition. Rudolf Pfeiffer, in 1968, stated that scholarship actually began as 'classical' scholarship in the third century BCE in ancient Alexandria, and describes it as 'the art of understanding, explaining, and restoring the literary tradition'; the reflection upon past activity of that scholarship and its historical reconstruction is indeed 'classical scholarship in the making'.⁵⁶ A German classical philologist, Pfeiffer was writing as a scion of the achievements of higher philology of 19th-century German *Altertumswissenschaft*.⁵⁷ As a school of thought, 'the science of antiquity' elevated Classics from the idealistic notions of Romantic Hellenism to a scientific discipline by establishing the conception that classical scholarship largely consists in a scholar's systematic analysis and holistic interpretation of a particular Greek or Latin text with the chief objective of producing a critical edition of the text, or a deeply

⁵⁶ Pfeiffer 1968: vii. On Pfeiffer, see Lloyd-Jones 1982: 261-70.

⁵⁷ On *Altertumswissenschaft*, see Pfeiffer 1976: 167-190; for an account of its spread, Turner, J. 2014: 168-183.

investigative commentary on it. The German influence gradually spread over northern Europe and across to North America. By the last years of the 19th century, it had left a huge impact on British classical scholarship. It was only at the beginning of the 20th century that Classics became 'a university-based field of study, inward-looking, gauging individual achievement by quality of research. Its practitioners published increasingly for each other';⁵⁸ in other words, the modern academic discipline as we understand it today. This gave rise to a heightening of self-consciousness which led some classical scholars to start looking at their discipline from a critical perspective and to produce works on its history. Such works could range from the massive opus in three volumes by John Sandys (1903, 1908), to the slim and impressively condensed overview by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1921)⁵⁹. The history by Pfeiffer was published in two separate volumes later in the century, and probably gained much advantage from such a vantage position. The three authors, Sandys, Wilamowitz, and Pfeiffer, were themselves classical scholars, and one other factor at least is common to their histories: the three deal with great classicists and philologists who had made some considerable achievement either in textual criticism or as commentators of classical texts, and who thus demonstrated, as Edward Said neatly put it, 'both a gift for exceptional spiritual insight into language and the ability to produce work whose articulation is of aesthetic and historical power.'⁶⁰

Now, with regard to scholarship in 19th and 20th-century Malta, where the few classical scholars were usually taken up with the teaching of Latin, and who possibly had either too little time for serious textual analysis, or too little acquaintance with the rigours of modern scientific philological study, one cannot really speak - at least for the greater part of the period under review - of a scholarly tradition in the sense just described. The Maltese classicists of the period were overwhelmingly more prolific in the

⁵⁸ Turner, J. 2014: 275.

⁵⁹ 'Easily the most fascinating and instructive survey of the history of classics as a whole', according to Brink 1985: 7.

⁶⁰ Said 2003: 131.

production of original Latin verse or inscriptional composition, often occasioned by some religious festivity or ceremony in the liturgical calendar, than in any Greek and Latin textual or literary criticism.⁶¹ A study of Maltese scholarly output in the bibliographical and career-orientated mould of Sandys or Pfeiffer would not fill many pages. This of course is not meant to detract from the ability or achievements of Maltese scholars, in Classics or any other discipline. Even British personalities who otherwise found a lot to criticise about the Maltese educational system, including the University, often expressed positive appraisal of some of the Maltese academics they encountered.⁶² However, the insularity of the island, as well as the miniscule dimension of the University and its financial constraints, were realistically held to be grave impediments to the advancement of Maltese scholarship. As John Hookham Frere expressed it in 1840, a professor at Malta, in any field, 'might waste a year in the solution of a difficulty, which had been already solved at Paris or London, and the same discoveries, even when published and printed, might in many instances escape his notice'.⁶³

It is important to point out that, in long portions of the period we are concerned with, the lack of a serious literary classical tradition was not confined to a small island as Malta. There was a similar situation in much of 19th-century Italy where a classical philological tradition was non-existent before the Unification of 1861. In 1930, the renowned Italian classicist Girolomo Vitelli (1844-1935) complained as follows:

Greek and Latin or ... the 'science of classical antiquity' is today, in Italy, in very different conditions to those of sixty years ago. Then it was not rare that many educated men, particularly of the preceding generation, willingly resorted to those thirty or forty verses or half-lines by Horace or Virgil that were like the membership card of the classicist culture of the time; it was not

⁶¹ Ijsewijn 1990: 1.101-103.

⁶² E.g. Keenan 1879: 53. Cf. Shepherd (1926: 63) on Rector Themistocles Zammit: 'any university might be proud to have for its head'.

⁶³ Frere and Frere 1874: 1.303. Over a century later, Professor J. Aquilina (1953: 12-13), using an official oration to bemoan the lack of research opportunities impeding the University, quoted the same passage.

rare for many others to have truly read and fruitfully studied Horace and Virgil; but it was a rarity to have *ex professo* inquirers and researchers of literary and non-literary classical antiquity ... More than once Giacomo Leopardi wrote of the unhappy conditions of classical studies in the first decades of the XIX century; they were not so different some decades later.⁶⁴

Greece was very much in a similar situation. Roughly at the same time when Vitelli was writing the passage just quoted, the Greek classical scholar Iannis Sykoutris was criticizing the arid, grammar-obsessed state of classical philology in Greece.⁶⁵

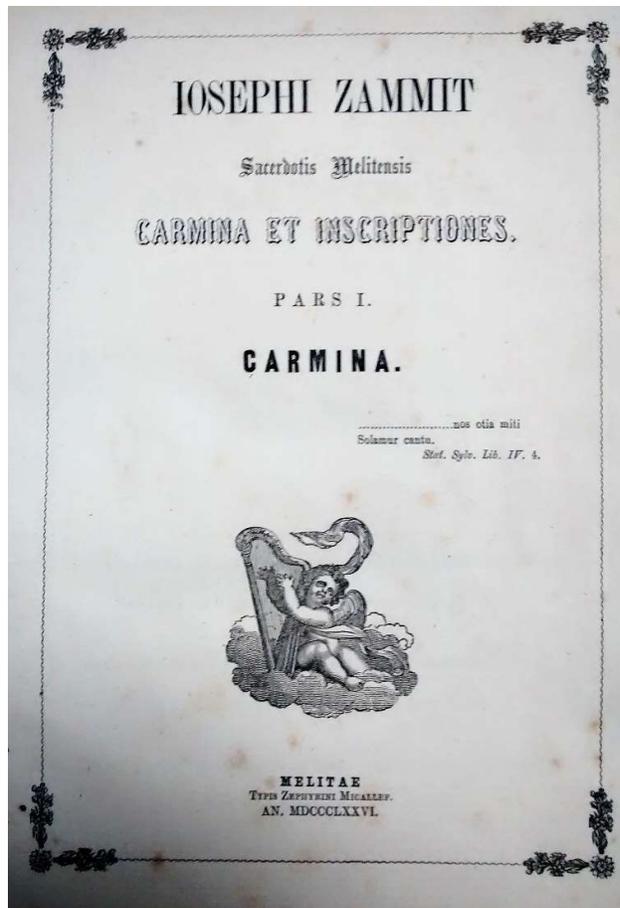


Figure 4 - Zammit 'Brighella's' *Carmina et Inscriptiones* (1876)

The prodigious amount of Latin verse and prose written by Maltese scholars, mostly clergymen, in the 19th and 20th centuries makes the meagre attempts by Maltese or foreign literary critics at evaluating such work rather puzzling. Rigord, Zammit 'Brighella', and Farrugia, were only the most eminent names who churned out copious amount of verse, a lot of which was inscribed or

⁶⁴ Quoted by Benedetto 2013: 87. On Vitelli's debts to, and views of, German classical philology, see Canfora 1980: 45-56. Here and elsewhere, I am indebted to Catherine Tabone for her assistance in the translation of Italian.

⁶⁵ For Sykoutris (1901-1937) and classical scholarship in Greece, see Güthenke 2010.

published during their lifetime (Fig. 4).⁶⁶ Back in 1990, Josef Ijsewijn, in his pioneering account of neo-Latin writing in the world, wound up his three-page survey on Maltese neo-Latin production by stating that ‘a comprehensive study of Maltese Latin remains an important desideratum in the field of Neo-Latin studies’.⁶⁷ The latest international reference work on the field, *Brill’s Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World*,⁶⁸ has certainly not fulfilled Ijsewijn’s desideratum, as it only made a few passing comments on a couple of Maltese poets,⁶⁹ although still describing Malta as the Mediterranean island, along with Majorca, which has produced ‘a disproportionately substantial body of work’.⁷⁰

There must be a number of reasons that account for the local scholarly neglect suffered by this poetry. Certainly, one major obstacle is the general decline in the knowledge of Latin that has rendered these works inaccessible to most and their authors obscure. In all fairness, the present study has a broader scope than to give these poets and writers the full linguistic appreciation they deserve, but it aspires to lay good groundwork for future attempts in this line.

2.3 Classical reception studies

The pages of the present study will be rather deficient in great scholarly names and publications such as fill the histories of Sandys, Wilamowitz, and Pfeiffer. Yet, some modern scholars have actually seen the concentration on individual scholars’ successes as constituting a weakness in these histories where the treatment often feels too divorced from the broader historical context. According to Stray, these works have suffered from two deficiencies, namely, ‘an ignorance of, or lack of interest in, the wider social and cultural contexts of its immediate subject-

⁶⁶ See 6.2, 6.3, and 6.10 respectively.

⁶⁷ Ijsewijn 1990: 1.103. Cf. Aquilina 1985: 21.

⁶⁸ Ford etc. 2014.

⁶⁹ Hosington (2014) mentions Giuseppe Zammit ‘Brighella’, while Money (2014) refers to G.A. Ciantar and Salvatore Formosa.

⁷⁰ Money 2014: 873.

matter', and from excessive 'celebratory piety which has glossed over dispute and kept skeletons firmly locked in their cupboards'.⁷¹ Another modern scholar, Phiroze Vasunia, discussing the interplay between Classics and colonialism, is more specific in highlighting how detachment from the socio-cultural context could render the history account two-dimensional:

For a variety of reasons, the early historians of classical scholarship did not discuss the relationship between classics and modern empire. Wilamowitz, Pfeiffer, and Sandys wrote histories of classical scholarship but saw little reason to think about European colonial expansion in relation to their subject, even though some of the best work in the field was inconceivable without the knowledge that came from the acquisition and maintenance of empires.⁷²

Stray and Vasunia are both established specialists working in the subfield within Classics generally known today as Classical Reception Studies. Reception has emerged in the wake of the appearance of books on the classical tradition published in the mid 20th century, such as those by Gilbert Highet and Robert Bolgar.⁷³ The etymological sense in the word *tradition* very much informed the approach by which such scholars viewed the continual presence of the Classics from the Middle Ages down to the Renaissance and its immediate aftermath, namely, as an inheritance that is handed down from one generation to the other. Reception has not only been mainly concerned with the later centuries (18th to the present, much work being addressed around the Victorian era⁷⁴), but its outlook is altogether broader and deeper, seeking and interpreting 'ways in which Greek and Roman material has been transmitted, translated, excerpted, interpreted, rewritten, re-imaged and represented.'⁷⁵ Vasunia, together with Hall, observed in 2010 that 'few areas within the field of ancient Greek and Roman research have grown

⁷¹ Stray 1999: xi.

⁷² Vasunia 2010: 290.

⁷³ Highet 1949 and Bolgar 1954.

⁷⁴ For two standard works, see Turner, F.M. 1981 and Vance 1997.

⁷⁵ Hardwick and Stray 2011: 1.

as rapidly as 'reception studies'.⁷⁶ Since then classical reception has continued to burgeon, with scholars persistently exploring avenues and discovering pathways where often-implicit influences of the Classics could be detected in subjects as diverse as art and architecture, gender studies, popular culture, and psychology.⁷⁷

In a career that already spans 40 years, Christopher Stray's series of excellent and groundbreaking studies on the history of Classics in education have seen him quite singlehandedly reinvent the study of classical scholarship. Starting with an unpublished MSc thesis at the University of Swansea in 1977, 'Classics in Crisis', in which he investigated the legitimation crisis of Classics teaching current at the time, Stray continued to produce a number of articles during the following two decades on aspects of classical education in Britain from Victorian to contemporary times.⁷⁸ This culminated in 1998 with the publication of his doctoral thesis, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830-1960*, which charted the processes of the general marginalization of Classics in the UK over the defined chronological boundaries. The workbench he chose for carrying out this enterprise was, in his own words, 'school and university curricula, teaching, and textbooks; ... the content, institutional forms, and definition of scholarship; and ... the social bases, location, and organization of classical knowledge'.⁷⁹ Stray introduced a very different perspective to classical scholarship from the bibliographical outlook of his famous predecessors, or, for that matter, from the approach adopted by more contemporaneous British researchers such as Hugh Lloyd Jones, C.O. Brink, or R.B. Todd, whose work on classical scholarship continued to be dominated by the great classical personalities.⁸⁰ His attention was exclusively on the subject of Classics as a scholastic and academic

⁷⁶ Hall and Vasunia 2010: 1.

⁷⁷ For key reference works, see e.g., Martindale and Thomas 2006, Hardwick and Stray 2011, Silk etc. 2014.

⁷⁸ For a list of published works, <<http://www.classicsandclass.info/stray/>> (accessed 23/08/2016).

⁷⁹ Stray 1998a: 3.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Lloyd-Jones 1982, Brink 1985, Todd 2004.

discipline and the role of Classics in the class struggles of the times. Albeit in very different circumstances, Stray's approach sets a good basis for a fairly similar exercise for Malta, not so much because Classics here also underwent a gradual degeneration, as it did everywhere after all, but rather for the reason that, as explained above, circumstances were more conducive to the practicality of the daily teaching of Classics than to delving into philology and philological publication.

However, owing to the absence of a modern historical record and appreciation of the main classical scholars in the period under review, this project cannot be devoid of the biographical aspect. In that respect, it cannot rely entirely on the model exemplified by Stray's *Classics Transformed*. Somehow, it must merge the two approaches, the biographical one and the socio-cultural one. In a number of more recent publications he has written or edited, Stray, obviously no less fascinated by the great classicists of the past than his predecessors, has followed the same approach, as he has done for his studies on Rouse, Murray, and Housman.⁸¹ He has also adopted this perspective for two edited volumes on Classics in Cambridge and Oxford.⁸² Harking back, to a certain extent, to the bibliographical slant, these two volumes build their story around the (mostly) successful careers of individual scholars. However, there is a lot more in them than the typical bibliographical assemblage, as both avoid the two main weaknesses that according to Stray characterised previous work on the history of scholarship and which has already been alluded to above.⁸³

Because of the historical state of affairs obtaining in Malta during the period under review, the relationship between Classics and colonialism will invariably contextualize this work. On an international level, the relationship has been addressed by a number of well-received studies that have discussed the often-paradoxical interactions between Classics

⁸¹ Stray 1992; 2009 (coedited with Butterfield); 2007. Stray is also the co-editor of forthcoming studies on E.R. Dodds, K.J. Dover, and F.M. Cornford.

⁸² Stray 1999 and 2007.

⁸³ Stray 1999: xi.

and colonialism. A seminal study was Barbara Goff's 2005 volume whose essays explored ways how the privileged colonial elite of the British Empire sought to establish ownership of the classical past so as to justify their imperial ambitions, but were at the same time wary of their rights to the claim.⁸⁴ Goff's collection spawned a number of similarly orientated studies where aspects of colonialism or postcolonialism are addressed in terms of classical resonances, such as the similarly themed but more inclusive collection by Bradley mentioned above.⁸⁵

In spite of these, and other, excellent works, there still seems to be a dearth of detailed studies on the relationship between classical scholarship and empire in national situations.⁸⁶ Vasunia observed that 'investigations of American, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish traditions have only just begun to further our understanding of the conjunction between empire and the study of the Graeco-Roman tradition.'⁸⁷ Vasunia, together with Susan A. Stephens, attempted to mitigate this lacuna through some of the contributions in their edited volume *Classics and National Cultures*, consisting of essays discussing how national cultures have variously engaged with Classics in their quest for identity.⁸⁸ Michael Lambert attempted a similar exercise for South Africa, and the result was an absorbing monograph.⁸⁹ Goff also responded to Vasunia's plea with the publication of her study on Classics in the educational establishments of British colonies of West Africa, where she sought to investigate a number of questions summed up in one: 'how were the classics interwoven with the power struggles that characterised colonial system and the resistance to them'.⁹⁰ Goff's study coincided with the release of what is arguably Vasunia's major contribution to the field to date, *The Classics and Colonial India*, where

⁸⁴ Goff 2005.

⁸⁵ Bradley 2010a.

⁸⁶ Bradley 2010b.

⁸⁷ Vasunia 2010: 286.

⁸⁸ Stephens and Vasunia 2010.

⁸⁹ Lambert 2011.

⁹⁰ Goff 2013: 2.

he analysed in a most thorough fashion the role of Classics both in British justification of empire and in Indian response to it.⁹¹

Much closer to Malta than West Africa or British India both in terms of geography and in terms of culture, Cyprus could provide an excellent field for comparison. It appears that no comprehensive study has as yet been carried out that explores Cypriot reception of the Classics during the British rule, but the educational historian Panayiotis Persianis has touched upon the subject in some of his published works.⁹² The Cypriot and Maltese colonial experiences offer interesting points of comparison, such as British scepticism about the stature of classical studies among the locals, while British fear of nationalistic propaganda through the teaching of classical literature in Cyprus is echoed in Malta with British mistrust of *Latinità* and Italian.⁹³

2.4 Research and Methodology

Since this study was venturing into largely uncharted terrain of Maltese educational and cultural history, a method needed to be devised, as it were, from scratch that would best suit the task's objective.⁹⁴ A combination, as already explained, of the biographical and the socio-cultural perspectives, in the light of recent reception studies, was from an early stage determined to be the ideal presentation. But where should one start from? Christopher Stray speaks of the exploration of 'long rows of neglected volumes' as his way to come to terms with the complexity of his theme.⁹⁵ A similar bottom-up approach seemed like the only possible option for the present work by which one could start laying the groundwork and gradually forming a structure. Indeed, at the initiation of

⁹¹ Vasunia 2013.

⁹² Notably Persianis 1978.

⁹³ Cf. Persianis 2013: 37 for a brief discussion of the parallels between colonial Cyprus and Malta.

⁹⁴ E.g., Fiorini 1991, on the development of Mathematical education in Malta, covers only up to 1798. General works on Maltese educational history, such as those by R.G. Sultana (see List of References), have been helpful.

⁹⁵ Stray 1998a: 3.

the enterprise, there was no way of telling where, or how, the journey would end.

This journey started with the exploration of a range of archival material housed at the Archives and Special Collections Department of the University Library (ASCD). From the vast array of letters and petitions that make the Miscellanea Collection, the search shifted to University minutes and other official documents. While research continued to be mainly focused at the ASCD, other archival sources were intermittently consulted, such as the National Archives at Rabat, the Cathedral Archives at Mdina, and the National Library at Valletta.⁹⁶ While much data was collected which eventually did not find a place in the following pages, some data will have been overlooked whose importance could not be appreciated at an early period of research, while a lot more must still be left unexplored. Time-consuming as it most certainly is, the examination of archival text illumined new pathways to the study, pointing the way to an extensive variety of published material, some of which practically forgotten, such as academic orations, University reports, old pamphlets and newspapers, Royal Commissioner reports, collected works of Latin epigraphy and neo-Latin works, personal memoires, official and private correspondence, travel and creative literatures, and parliamentary debates. The experience recalls that of Goff's, who, for her construction of the story of Classics in colonial West Africa, also drew upon a wide spectrum of sources, including 'British Parliamentary papers, school and university histories, autobiographies, essays, journalism and creative literature.'⁹⁷

Although the University provided a fitting platform for such a study, it was soon apparent that this in itself was not without its challenges, the major stumbling block being that a comprehensive survey of the convoluted history of the University of Malta remains to this day non-existent. Andrew Vella in 1969 concerned himself mainly with the early stages of

⁹⁶ See List of References: Archival sources.

⁹⁷ Goff 2013: 3.

its long history and moved rather briskly over the period of British occupation.⁹⁸ There were several developments in the course of the University's existence that exercised direct or indirect effects on status of Latin and Greek, from statutory reforms, to the reorganization of faculties, to modifications in the examination systems. Although relevant chapters in Roger Ellul-Micallef's recent biography of Sir Themistocles Zammit (University Rector 1920-1926) have partially filled the gaps left by Vella,⁹⁹ the researcher of any particular discipline, not only Classics, still needs to navigate rather uneven territory. It is with this in mind that a brief history of the University within the relevant historical framework was seen as pivotal to a comprehensible account of the development of Classics in Malta.¹⁰⁰

The intensive scrutiny of archival material enabled the reconstruction of a complex web of past actions, relations, and social networks. After this lengthy period of data-collection, a certain rationale also started to take form, suggestive of a sequence of parts subdivided into chapters, which finally settled into the present format. Oral enquiry was an exciting process concomitant with the empirical investigation.

2.5 Oral enquiry

Since the 1970s oral history has increasingly become a recognised method in historical inquiry. Paul Thompson, a pioneer in this research methodology and the founder of the journal *Oral History*, has written of oral history's capacity 'for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself, and open up new areas of inquiry; it can break down barriers between teachers and students, between generations, between educational institutions

⁹⁸ See Vella, A.P. 1969. Anon. (1967: 3-12) provides a useful historical outline.

⁹⁹ Ellul-Micallef 2013, particularly 1.119-153 and 2.319-388.

¹⁰⁰ See 3.1, 4.1, and 5.1.

and the world outside ... it can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place'.¹⁰¹

Oral history is not new to the inquiry into the history of universities. It was, for example, used on a large scale in the preparation for the eighth volume, edited by historian Brian Harrison, of the massive *History of Oxford*, which covered the twentieth century and for which thousands of old members of the University filled up a questionnaire and related personal experiences.¹⁰² Oral history has also sometimes featured in the study of classical scholarship. For his MSc dissertation in Economics, Stray interviewed a number of South Wales Classics teachers whose responses formed an intrinsic part of the investigation.¹⁰³ The value and the appeal of this kind of research was commended by Stephanie West in an interesting essay on the classical scholar Eduard Fraenkel and his years as Professor of Latin at Oxford University:

Oral enquiry into the not too distant past is an instructive experience ... I have been fortunate in my sources, the oldest of whom arrived in Oxford in the year when Fraenkel was appointed. I have thought first-hand, specific information of great importance, and the willingness of my older informants to reminisce is striking testimony to the impression that Fraenkel made on the young.¹⁰⁴

In the case of the present study, qualitative interviews have been the major source for the coverage of the post-war period. Forty-six persons allowed themselves to be interviewed. As D.A. Ritchie has described, the interviews provided information which was unlikely to be acquired in documentary research. They strengthened, opposed, or contradicted, ideas and assumptions formed through the examination of the available textual material. They provided new perspectives, connections, and individual links.¹⁰⁵ Often, interviews were a wellspring of personal

¹⁰¹ Thompson 2000: 3.

¹⁰² Harrison 1994: iii.

¹⁰³ Stray 1977: 126.

¹⁰⁴ West 2007: 204.

¹⁰⁵ See Ritchie 2011: 11-16.

anecdotes, perceptions, gossip, and memories which, seemingly haphazard and relatively unimportant, threw significant light on persons and events. Additionally, they offered unique moments of human contact in the otherwise solitary exercise of study.

Generally, the people interviewed were either ex-teachers or academics who taught Classics in the past, or ex-students of Latin, or of Classics.¹⁰⁶ Appendix II lists the interviewees and provides the reason/s why each person was asked for an interview. A set of questions forms the basis for all interviews, given in Appendix III. These questions were usually adapted according to the biography of each person. Besides, rather than restricting oneself to the confines of a systemized questionnaire, preference was given to what sociologists have termed “active interviews” that transform the interviewees from “subjects” into “constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers.”¹⁰⁷ This approach facilitated a more conversational style of interview, one that provided a more conducive environment for the interviewee to open up and perhaps cover an unplanned but equally important side to the topic. Subject to the individual’s acceptance, the interviews were recorded by an electronic audio device and, for the majority of cases, later transcribed from Maltese in English translation.¹⁰⁸ The transcriptions appended to the thesis as Appendix IV are edited versions of the first transcripts, consisting of material directly relevant to the thesis. In the main text, references to interviews are given in footnotes. The name of the interviewee follows the word ‘Interview’ (or ‘Interviews’ in the case of multiple references): e.g. Interview: Gatt.

Unfortunately, the human condition sets an uncompromising threshold to the distance in past time that interviews can recover. The oldest persons interviewed could not stretch their memories farther than the

¹⁰⁶ Clearance to carry out these interviews was sought from the University Research Ethics Committee. The UREC issued its permission in an email dated 24/10/2012.

¹⁰⁷ Ritchie 2001: 13.

¹⁰⁸ A few interviews were conducted by email.

mid-1930s. For the earlier decades of that century and the preceding one in its entirety, only review of written or printed material was possible.

PART I - CLASSICS IN BRITISH MALTA

CHAPTER 3 – A LATIN CULTURE (1800-1850)

3.1 A historical preamble

Napoleon Bonaparte expelled the Hospitaller Knights of St John from Malta and occupied the island in June 1798. A few months later, the Maltese rose up in arms against the French forces. A long blockade, and some help from the British, resulted in the capitulation of the French in September 1800. Rather than risking a return to the rule of the Knights, the Maltese asked for the protection of Great Britain. The administration of the island was placed in the hands of the Royal Commissioner, Captain Alexander Ball.¹

One of Ball's first acts in 1800 was 'the reopening of the University and the College of Jesus attached thereto,'² which Napoleon had abolished. This University setup had its origins in a Jesuit grammar school ('Collegium Melitense') which had been established in Valletta in 1592.³ Over the years, the 'Collegium' had developed into an establishment of tertiary education which could also confer degrees.⁴ Following the expulsion of the Jesuits, the 'Collegium' became a state-run 'Public University of General Studies' in 1769.⁵ Thus, in contrast with other territories they occupied and where they would set up new, imperial, universities, the British found in Malta a University with old, Latin, roots.⁶

Alexander Ball appointed Canon Saverio Caruana to the Rectorship.⁷ A Preceptor of Rhetoric who had assumed leadership in the Maltese uprising against the French, Caruana was now entrusted with the task of finding suitable persons to fill the several Chairs. The University provided

¹ Blouet 2017: 127-135.

² Laferla 1946: 12.

³ Vella, A.P. 1969: 5-12.

⁴ Ibid. 16-17.

⁵ Ibid. 22-38.

⁶ An oft-ignored fact: cf. Cilia 2017.

⁷ On Caruana, see Schiavone 2009: 1.478-479.

also for a measure of elementary instruction and for secondary education, leading to training in Latin and Italian Literatures (Humanities and Rhetoric) and Philosophy.⁸ To assist the new Rector in the administration of the University a Council composed of 40 members was appointed of whom eight represented the Faculty of Theology, twenty-two the Faculty of Laws, and ten the Faculty of Medicine.⁹

The first decade of the 19th century was a period of great political upheaval across Europe and the Mediterranean region. With the great European powers vying for the possession of Malta, the political future of the island was uncertain. A marked rise in commerce, primarily brought about by many English trading posts shifting to Malta from Italian cities, suffered a major recession through a great outbreak of the plague. Sir Thomas Maitland, appointed Governor and Commander in Chief of Malta, declared the islands a British Colony on 5 October 1813.¹⁰ The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1814, ratified the British annexation by laying down that the islands of Malta were to belong 'in full right and sovereignty to His Britannic Majesty'.¹¹

During the years 1800-1813, when Malta was only a British Protectorate, the British authorities had paid little attention to education in the island.¹² Consequently, Governor Maitland found the University in a dismal state. In a dispatch of 1815 addressed to Lord Henry Bunbury, Under Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Maitland poured scorn on the *modus operandi* of the University, still seemingly carrying the name of 'College' from its Jesuit origins: 'Of all the various institutions here grossly vitiated and mismanaged as they have been, possibly the College is the very worst. It is in truth on a scale and under regulations of a nature to make it more a nuisance than a seminary of instruction and must be totally

⁸ Cassar Pullicino 1958.

⁹ Vella, A.P. 1969: 64.

¹⁰ Blouet 2017: 137-147.

¹¹ Laferla 1946: 100

¹² Sultana, R.G. 1992: 33-44.

altered.¹³ The University was in a state of chaos, 'composed of a number of Classes of every kind open to all without any rules for its guidance'. Maitland equally expressed a very low opinion of the professors, who, 'from having no interest in the thing, and no character to maintain, totally neglect their duty and consider themselves generally as holding merely sinecure places'. He describes to Bunbury a number of reforms he intended to make to the whole University system, including the removal of elementary classes from its setup, raising the very low academic salaries, and the abolition of lecturing posts he perceived as unimportant.¹⁴ Most of these reforms, however, failed to materialize, at least during his governorship. Improvement in the infrastructure and aesthetics of the University edifice was showcased in the construction, during the last months of Maitland's life, of the new gateway, with its enigmatic Greek motto. Its practical purpose was the separation of the University section of the building from the undergraduate classrooms. This was the initiation of the Valletta Lyceum.¹⁵

The works were completed under Maitland's successor, Francis Rawdon, Marquess of Hastings, who also formed a new University Council in 1824.¹⁶ As its first Chairman, Hastings appointed the Right Honourable John Hookham Frere, who continued to wield his influence on the running of the University long after his brief chairmanship came to an end.¹⁷ During these years, the Council had to address difficult situations occasioned by international events which came into conflict with the Catholic sensitivities of the Maltese and their 'inveterate sensibilities', as Maitland had put it in his dispatch to Burnbury quoted

¹³ NAM, GOV 1/2/1, Maitland to Burnbury, 09/04/1815. Cf. Zarb (1948:27-28) who suggests that, in the writing of this dispatch, Maitland might have let his characteristically cynical inclination get the better of him.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Vella, A.P. 1969: 63-64.

¹⁶ Ibid. 66-67.

¹⁷ See 6.1.

above.¹⁸ The Government often needed to find a compromise to conciliate the ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁹

A dire economic situation prevailed in Malta at the time, the abject poverty of the islanders often appalling British visitors. The Oxford academic Richard Hurrell Froude, visiting Malta together with John Henry Newman in 1832, described the population as being in a 'wretched state, almost starving', and hating the British rulers for it.²⁰ In 1835 a Council of Government was formed for the purpose of advising and assisting in the administration of the island.²¹ Thorough reforms were called for and, in 1836, a Royal Commission ('Austin and Lewis'²²) was appointed to enquire into the economic conditions and general administration of the island. The Commissioners spent nearly two years in Malta, and their Report, published in 1838, considered a number of important aspects.²³ In their investigation on the state of the University, at a time in which it was described as 'a tower of Babel',²⁴ Austin and Lewis found that, at least in theory, the complete academic course lasted six years, with the three first years given to instruction in Philosophy, the last three to instruction in Theology, Law, or Medicine.²⁵ Students were admitted only once every three years, that is, in the year in which the triennial course of philosophy began. The University granted a Bachelor Degree at the end of the triennial course in Philosophy. At the end of the academic course of six years the University conferred the Degree of Master in Arts, or of Doctor in Theology, Law or Medicine. At the time of the Commissioners' visit, the number of students that had been admitted

¹⁸ E.g., the Oath Question (clauses of the 1829 Roman Catholic Relief Act committing Maltese officeholders to swear to uphold the Anglican Establishment), and the Press Question (the British desire to introduce freedom of the press in Malta which irked the feelings of the Clergy); see Vella, A.P. 1969: 75-76.

¹⁹ Cf. [Austin and Lewis] 1938: 38.

²⁰ Sultana, D.E. 1960: 53. For Maltese starvation in 1826, cf. Webster 1830: 297.

²¹ Frendo 1993: 88-89.

²² On George Cornwall Lewis, also a classical scholar, see 3.7.

²³ [Austin and Lewis] 1838. Cf. Vella, A.P. 1969: 77-80.

²⁴ Cumbo 1839e: 41. Cf. 'una vera babele' in Anon. 1849: 9.

²⁵ This was the Parisian system, starting with Arts and Philosophy, and then the three higher (professional) faculties: cf. Rashdall 1895: 322-335.

for the last triennial course was 159, although the number of students actually attending the different classes was 130.²⁶

Austin and Lewis attempted to douse their recommendations in a spirit of utilitarianism, proposing that instruction should be ‘limited to sciences and arts of practical utility.’ Their reasoning, as they explained, was partially based on suggestions proffered by the current Rector, Canon Dr. E. Rossignaud (1834-41), who had alerted the British Commissioners to a situation in Malta where ‘the supply of priests, lawyers, and physicians, greatly exceeds the demand for them’, and had insisted that the instruction at the Lyceum be adapted to the future needs of the students attending it, the majority of whom would not be embarking on a professional career.²⁷

Some of the suggestions that Austin and Lewis made on education were embodied in the Fundamental Statute of 1838,²⁸ which vested the control of the University in the Rector who was to be responsible only to the Governor. The Fundamental Statute established that there would be a General Council and that courses were to be given by four faculties, namely, Philosophy and Arts, Medicine, Laws, and Theology, each under its own Special Council.²⁹ The Statute was to be *in vigore* for many decades to come.

²⁶ [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 38.

²⁷ Ibid. 39. For the contemporary fear of oversupply of educated men in Western Europe, see O’Boyle 1970.

²⁸ Anon. 1838.

²⁹ Vella, A.P. 1969: 80-81.

3.2 Latin culture in Malta

The British found Malta steeped in a Latin and Italianate tradition which was as strong as it was old, inseparable from education and religion. Together with Latin, Sicilian had been the language of administrative and legal documents since the late Middle Ages.³⁰ The long period under the Hospitaller Knights of St John (1530-1798) had strengthened the linguistic connection. Latin was the high language of these protectors of the Roman Catholic Church, but, being a multinational Order comprising eight 'Languages', Tuscan Italian gradually became the most common tongue among them, both as a spoken and a written form of communication.³¹

The old Semitic language that the Maltese spoke among themselves was, until the early decades of the 20th century, generally considered a dialect, unworthy to be taken seriously as a literary means of expression, or to be studied in a scholarly fashion or as a subject at school. Italian was in fact the language that children learnt in their elementary schooling, and continued to be the main language of instruction at higher levels of education. Those with a professional bent would start learning Latin later on in life in anticipation of their University studies. In theory at least, Maltese priests, lawyers, and doctors were all proficient in Italian and Latin. Italian was the formal language used at the law courts. Besides, lawyers have always relished the opportunity of garnishing their speeches with Latin maxims, in court or in political functions.³² On the commercial scene, many business transactions were carried out in Italian, necessarily so when done with Sicily, the Italian states, and the central Mediterranean region.³³ The educated classes of Maltese society were normally attracted to Italian culture, in literature, music, and every other social refinement, including cuisine. British visitors in Malta were struck by the Italian appearance of Valletta, with its Baroque churches

³⁰ Brincat 2011: 77.

³¹ Ibid. 192-197.

³² Interview: Mifsud Bonnici.

³³ Brincat 2011: 275.

and palaces, to such an extent that Alexander Ball called it ‘the most tranquill [sic] City in Italy’.³⁴

If the bond between Latin and Italian was grafted onto the Maltese consciousness, the Church and religion served as the combining element that cemented the union. Italian was the official language of the Church in Malta.³⁵ Priests in church conducted the liturgy in Latin but delivered their sermons in Italian. Latin was always spoken in the ecclesiastical pronunciation,³⁶ which sounded like Italian and, to the untrained ear, must have been indistinguishable from that language.³⁷ In many ways, Latin was the common factor that consolidated the three-way kinship that existed between Malta, Italy, and the Church. Having strong ties with the Vatican in Rome, the Church’s fear of Anglican proselytizing was a major cause of ecclesiastical resistance to the Anglicization of the island.³⁸ This, however, never escalated to a full-blown opposition, as it would do in Cyprus,³⁹ since the British constantly sought to appease the clerical authorities in Malta. One way of doing this was by awarding military honours to Maltese Bishops, seven of whom having been thus honoured in the history of Colonial Malta.⁴⁰ ‘It is Pontius Pilate, united with Herod’, is how an American traveller, Andrew Bigelow, described the allegiance.⁴¹ The patriarchal eminence enjoyed by a Maltese Bishop was captured in an account of a satiric nature, *The Adventures of Julius Caesar in Malta by a Centurion of the LXXI Legion*, written by an anonymous British serviceman seemingly as an antidote to the boredom of a long interlude in the sickbay:

Once more was the alarm given on which occasion I beheld what I took to be a sacred chariot which was saluted with the highest

³⁴ Quoted by Hull 1993: 6.

³⁵ Until 1975, when it was replaced by Maltese; cf. Hull 1993: 105.

³⁶ In 1989, H.C.R. Vella was probably the first lecturer at the University to teach Latin in the classical pronunciation.

³⁷ Cf. Tallack (1861:70): ‘the sonorous Latin sung with Italian accent’ at St John’s Co-Cathedral in Valletta.

³⁸ Frendo 2013: 70-76.

³⁹ Persianis 1978: 19-23.

⁴⁰ Gauci 2015: 47-56.

⁴¹ Bigelow 1831: 135. Bigelow visited Malta in 1827; cf. Freller 2009: 140.

honours, the charioteer the while returning the salute by waving aloft his whip: this, I was informed, was the state chariot of the Pontifex Maximus to whom as I learnt are paid 'the honours due a Brigadier General save only when forming part of a religious procession'.⁴²

Italian culture and the Catholic faith were the two principal values which distinguished the Maltese from their new rulers, and they held on to them with great determination. Latin was the common factor that concretised this combination on physical, spiritual, and ideological levels. The Maltese elite opposed early British attempts to suppress Italian, the abolition of which they considered tantamount to their degeneration into cultural nullity. This was expressed by Judge Ignatius Bonavita (1792-1865), the President of the Court of Appeal:

The total abolition in Malta of the Italian language and the complete suppression of local legislation (Roman law) as was contemplated since 1814 ... could have broken asunder the link which, by the force of nature, binds this Island to Italy, and would again raise the geographical problem which our forefathers considered so humiliating, as to whether Malta belongs to Africa rather than to Europe, a valuable argument being lost in favour of our character as Europeans derived from *our* language and our laws.⁴³ [emphasis added]

The fear of being swallowed up by North Africa evokes the misty memories of the long Muslim occupation in the Middle Ages but also hints at even remoter times when Malta was under the power of Carthage. It was the same Bonavita who, in 1838, formulated the Fundamental Statute of the University, where Article 53 declared that, on the opening of courses every year, one of the professors would recite 'an oration in the Italian language, on a theme of science or letters, of his own choice'.⁴⁴ Previously, Latin had been the language of the oration, such as the one given by Revd Filippo Pullicino, the Professor of Canon

⁴² Anon. 1897: 18.

⁴³ Quoted by Hull 1993: 12-13.

⁴⁴ Anon. 1838: 20.

Law, on 7 October 1803, an oration described at the time as ‘mire artificio elaboratam, variisque elegantioris latinitatis flosculis ubique refertam’.⁴⁵ Moreover, the Fundamental Statue also prescribed that all lectures should be held in Italian, including those in Theology,⁴⁶ to the disappointment of one of the professors who took it upon himself to write a long letter to the Rector about the importance of Latin to Theology studies and to ask his permission for the use of Latin in lectures and examinations.⁴⁷ An element of *Latinità* occasionally needed to be sacrificed as a conscious strengthening of *Italianità*.

At any rate, Latin still enjoyed a special prestige as the language of high culture in Latin composition and inscriptions. Latin composition was a means to showcase one’s literary attainments, both through published work and public inscriptions, but also by recitation at public occasions. Such a display was occasioned by a celebration of King George III’s birthday in June 1816 at the Public Library in Valletta with the recitation of Abate Luigi Rigord’s Latin poetry.⁴⁸ Sir Walter Scott’s visit to Malta in 1831 was an opportunity for John Hookham Frere, presiding over the University Council, to propose a Latin verse competition in honour of the great poet and novelist, with a prize of 50 *scudi* assigned for the winner, and another of 25 *scudi* for the runner-up.⁴⁹ The Council’s disapproval of the proposal did not discourage Frere.⁵⁰ In a postscript to a letter to his brother, Bartle, Frere wrote:

I have opened my letter again for a commission with which I must trouble you; it is to send me half a dozen handsomely bound classics as presents for lads here, who have been writing complimentary Latin verses to Sir Walter Scott, at my instigation.

⁴⁵ UMHA, Acta Academiae Melitensis 2.15 (henceforth cited as ‘Acta’).

⁴⁶ Anon. 1838: 58, 64 (Arts. 142, 153 respectively). Ironically, a century later (in 1936), in the thick of the Language Question (see 5.2) Latin would in turn replace Italian as the language of instruction for many courses in the Theology Course; see *MGG*, 05/10/1836, 946-947.

⁴⁷ UMHA, Miscellanea 1837-1840, 23/09/1839. The professor was Pietro Paolo Psaila.

⁴⁸ *MGG*, 19/06/1816. On Rigord, see 6.2.

⁴⁹ Debono, M. 1978: 14, quoting the minute from Council’s sitting of 05/12/1831.

⁵⁰ Clinquant (undated): 6.

Two of them or three should be handsomer than the others.
Horace would do. The whole not to exceed £20.⁵¹

Far from being restricted to priests or teachers of Latin, the cultivation of the language was the cultural hallmark of the truly learned professional. A man could have a career in, say, the medical profession and still demonstrate a deep interest in Latin composition. Archangelo Pullicino was an important physician and politician who died in 1862, aged 81.⁵² In an encomium written by his nephew, the educational reformer Revd Paolo Pullicino,⁵³ praise is lavished on the deceased doctor for having continued the study of letters, particularly Latin, on his own as a sideline to his busy professional activity.⁵⁴ He had done this by participating in literary academies organised either in public, or more regularly in circles of like-minded friends, at a time when 'the love of letters was ... very lively among the Maltese'. Revd Pullicino attributes this passion for Latin to the survival, until the early decades of the 19th century, of the old Jesuit traditions, still actually represented until 1823 in the person of Abate Luigi Rigord, 'old and blind, the famous translator of Catullus'.⁵⁵

By the late 1830s the practice of public recitation of Latin compositions seemed to have declined. In 1839 Revd Salvatore Cumbo, later Professor of Latin and Italian Literatures, proposed the formation of an 'Accademia Filologica' at the Lyceum where students who had completed the Rhetoric course could meet twice weekly to read and comment on Italian, Latin and (even) Greek classics, as well as to recite their own prose and verse compositions.⁵⁶ Members of the 'Accademia' would also act as examiners for the lower classes at the Lyceum, and the most distinguished one would receive preference for the filling of a teaching-post when a vacation arose. For Cumbo, the institution of

⁵¹ Frere and Frere 1874: 1.238.

⁵² Schiavone 2009: 2.1337.

⁵³ Pullicino (undated).

⁵⁴ Ibid. 15-16.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 15.

⁵⁶ Cumbo 1839d: 24-26. On Cumbo, see 6.5.

'accademie' was a 'cosa importantissima' on which depended the progress of Science and Letters.⁵⁷

The general perception was that Latin was an adjunct to Italian, to be used for special purposes. In 1838 the Royal Commissioners Lewis and Austin remarked that 'every Maltese author who has not written in Latin has written in Italian'.⁵⁸ A century later, Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, a leading member of the Nationalist Party, was more specific, if slightly over-simplistic, as to the criteria behind Maltese literary choice between Latin and Italian: 'all our writers have written either in Latin, when it was a question of speaking to the outer world, or in Italian, when it was a question of limiting themselves to the Continent or to the people of Malta'.⁵⁹

3.3 The real knowledge of Latin

The hallowed association of Latin with the Church, and the predominance of Latin in education, might give one the impression that priests were thoroughly conversant with the language. Evidence from the first half of our period, however, suggests a different reality, and indicates that, broadly speaking, Latin held no stronger a position than it had done during Monsignor Petrus Dusina's well-known Apostolic Visit to Malta in 1575. In the wake of the decision of the Council of Trent to retain Latin as the language of the Church,⁶⁰ Dusina's extensive Report had laid bare a widespread ignorance among Maltese priests of the language.⁶¹ This Latin illiteracy was not commensurate with clerical hierarchy, as even, for example, the Dean of the Cathedral at Mdina,

⁵⁷ Ibid. 24.

⁵⁸ [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 42.

⁵⁹ Anon. 1931: 79.

⁶⁰ Waquet 2001: 47-50.

⁶¹ Aquilina and Fiorini 2001, for priests and Latin, e.g. 267-279.

then still Malta's capital, had never learnt grammar and thus 'parum intellegit sermonen latinam'.⁶²

Yet, after over two centuries of presumed development in higher education, many members of the Maltese clergy were still found to be wanting in the knowledge of Latin. Such opinions, especially when proffered by British Protestant witnesses, were often and understandably tinged by some degree of prejudice against the Roman Catholic Church. One very severe commentator was S.I. Mahoney, a former Capuchin friar turned bitterly anti-Catholic.⁶³ Writing about his seven-month stay in Malta in 1834,⁶⁴ at a time when, according to his statement, there were 'more than five hundred [secular] priests' in Malta,⁶⁵ Mahoney vents a very low opinion of the Maltese priest's level of education. He blames priests for the pervasive ignorance among the Maltese people in matters of religion, and goes on to observe that:

as for understanding the leading points of Christianity, the greater number of priests themselves do not understand farther of them than reciting a few prayers in a language, of which they are as ignorant as they are of every polite accomplishment - I mean the Latin language - for there are *not ten priests* in the island who can be said to perfectly understand it.⁶⁶ [emphasis added]

Mahoney was equally sceptical about the knowledge of philosophical Latin possessed by the Maltese 'lazy monks' living in 'ten to twelve convents'⁶⁷:

The stock of information which they possess is very trifling, never exceeding, with very few exceptions, a slight knowledge of Latin, and a few useless *distinctions* in *dogmatical* theology, so metaphysical and nonsensical, that they learn them as parrots by

⁶² Ibid. 267.

⁶³ Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.90.

⁶⁴ Mahoney 1836: 338-366.

⁶⁵ Cf. Bigelow 1831: 129, 'priests, their number is 'Legion, for it is many'. On Bigelow, cf. n. 41.

⁶⁶ Mahoney 1836: 339. Cf. Bigelow 1831: 130, Maltese priests are generally 'scandalously ignorant. They pick up a smattering of Latin ...'

⁶⁷ Mahoney 1836: 345.

rote; and he is thought the most learned theologian, who can quote from the Angelic doctor, Thomas d'Aquinas, or from the Seraphic doctor, Bonaventure, the greater number of sentences, which, so far from understanding the meaning of, he often does not understand the literal translation of the Latin words, in which they are written.⁶⁸

A decade or so earlier, the more tolerant Protestant missionary, Revd Samuel Wilson, had formed a similar judgement about Maltese monks' meagre level of Latin proficiency. On a tour of the Augustinian church and convent in Valletta, Wilson observed a Latin volume behind the pulpit and asked the guide, a monk of the same Order, whether the book was in Latin, in a bid, admits Wilson, 'to test the knowledge of our cicerone'. The monk answered that it was Italian. 'I fear this poor soul had no more knowledge of the language of Canaan than of Rome,' remarks Wilson wryly, thus alluding also to the ignorance of Hebrew widespread among Maltese clergy.⁶⁹

A comparable estimation of the average Maltese priest's knowledge of Latin was also expressed by George Percy Badger, the English Anglican missionary and orientalist who grew up in Malta.⁷⁰ Writing in 1839, Badger claimed that the Latin attainment of Maltese priests considered to be the most learned consisted only in the ability 'to sustain a theological thesis with arguments in syllogistic form, *nego et probo minorem, - Distinguo majorem, - subdistinguo, - et explico distinctionem*'. Moreover, Badger held that the Latin Classics were 'Minerva oscura' to Maltese priests.⁷¹ The Revd Salvatore Cumbo, journalist and scholar, used his journal *Il Filologo Maltese* to launch an attack against Badger and defend Maltese clerical familiarity with Latin,⁷² citing as paradigms

⁶⁸ Ibid. 347-348.

⁶⁹ Wilson 1839: 96-97. A century later, Sir R. Storrs, British Governor of Cyprus (1926-1932), would be disappointed with the level of Ancient Greek he observed in Cyprus: 'The only Greek scholar I ever found was the Archbishop, and even his beatitude would have been defeated by an average sixth form boy in a competition in classical Greek iambs'; quoted by Persianis 1978: 186.

⁷⁰ For an assessment of Badger, see Roper 1984.

⁷¹ Badger 1839: 36.

⁷² Cumbo 1839f. On Cumbo, see 6.5.

his own published Latin poetry and that by the contemporary Latinist, Abate Giuseppe Zammit, famously known as 'Brighella'.⁷³ Elsewhere Cumbo would nevertheless admit that the study of Sacred Scriptures in Malta (particularly when it came to the Biblical languages) was altogether neglected. This negligence, according to Cumbo, was largely due to the facility by which one could still receive the Holy Orders without any academic study of Theology, and the few who did pursue such study usually earned the low esteem and even hatred ('la poca stima ed il disprezzo') of their unlearned peers.⁷⁴

And yet, Badger also maintained that priests' linguistic deficiency was not confined to Latin but extended also to Italian, a language he said they only understood 'a stento', with difficulty.⁷⁵ This was certainly not the case with Maltese priests who studied in Italy, and who returned to the island equipped with a fluency in both Italian and classical Latin of the highest level. They could adopt a pure form of the Italian language in the pulpit which came to be considered highly beneficial to the education of the people.⁷⁶ Revd James Philip Fletcher encountered an unidentified exemplar on his voyage from Naples to Malta in 1842:

A Maltese ecclesiastic, who had accompanied us from Naples, saluted me in Italian; but being ignorant of that language, I endeavoured to call up my school recollections of Cicero and Virgil, and addressed him in Latin. He answered me with great volubility, having been accustomed to speak in the college at Rome where he was educated. I felt disposed to envy his fluency, as I perceived myself getting confused with concords and cases, and had besides an awkward consciousness that my sentences were not very Ciceronian.⁷⁷

⁷³ Cumbo 1839f: 26. On 'Brighella', see 6.3.

⁷⁴ Cumbo 1839a: 3.

⁷⁵ Badger 1839: 35.

⁷⁶ Casolani 1867: 11.

⁷⁷ Fletcher 1850: 17. On Fletcher, see Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.90-91.

3.4 Anglicization, Italian, and Latin

Perhaps Revd J.P. Fletcher, who in his travel-book confesses an ignorance of Italian, hardly possessed the best qualification to judge the knowledge of Italian in others and to describe the Italian language in Malta as ‘a tongue perfectly unintelligible to the great mass of the people’.⁷⁸ However, this judgment is corroborated by other contemporary testimonies. G.P. Badger, who knew Italian well, stated in his publication of 1838 that ‘if Italian has obtained a partial footing in the town, it is an entire stranger in the country’.⁷⁹ In the same year, Royal Commissioners Austin and Lewis remark on the Maltese that ‘though the Italian may be deemed their language for all purposes but those of familiar conversation, few of them speak or write it with correctness and propriety of expression’.⁸⁰ This is rather surprising in the face of the ingrained Italian cultural identity, the so-called *Italianità*, that the British authorities, from a very early time in their administration of Malta, recognized as a major obstacle to the Anglicization of the island.⁸¹

When the British took over Malta, knowledge of English on the island was almost nil. Although Alexander Ball added English to the University curriculum in 1800, a sufficiently competent lecturer in the language could not at first be found.⁸² In 1813 the Earl of Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, charged the Colony’s first governor, Thomas Maitland, with a specific task, namely, ‘the Diffusion of the English Language among the Inhabitants; and the promotion of every method by which the English may be brought to supersede the Italian Tongue.’⁸³ In spite of his awareness of what he described as the

⁷⁸ Ibid. 29.

⁷⁹ Badger 1838: 80.

⁸⁰ [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 48.

⁸¹ For a contemporary assessment, cf. MacGill (1839: 12): ‘in the Cities, there is a great profusion and confusion of tongues, badly spoken, as was at the building of Babel.’

⁸² Hull 1993: 8.

⁸³ Laferla 1946: 95.

'inveterate prejudices' of the Maltese, Maitland attempted to implement drastic measures in bringing Bathurst's instructions into effect. English was declared the official language of Government while the use of Italian in official correspondence was for a while discontinued. Furthermore, legal practice was to be prohibited to anyone who could not read, speak and write in English. But these attempts proved futile and had to be abandoned.⁸⁴ The subduing of Italian proved to be a long-drawn cultural conflict, which the British only managed to achieve over a century later, in 1936.⁸⁵

It is not inconceivable to consider the choice of Greek over Latin as the language of the inscription for the new University gateway,⁸⁶ inaugurated about 1824, to be suggestive of the early British strategy to remove Italian. For all of its appositeness to the architectural style of the gate's neoclassical design and the obvious philhellenic authenticity of the times, the Greek inscription might have also been intended, if only subconsciously, to signal a change, at least to the sector of the native population that mattered in this case, namely, the Italian-speaking Maltese upper crust. The political implications become more noticeable when one examines the wider design of the the gateway (see Fig. 1). The British coat of arms above the motto features a lion on the left holding a chain tethered to a collared unicorn on the right. Emblematic of British power, the lion is here in full control of the unicorn, a mythic beast typically symbolic of wild nature and ancient pride.⁸⁷ The new University gateway, with its inscription in Greek, might have been a sign heralding a break from tradition on a number of fronts, both in the wider

⁸⁴ Frendo 2012: 45.

⁸⁵ Blouet 2017: 190.

⁸⁶ See 1.1 and 1.2.

⁸⁷ On the unicorn's symbolism in heraldry and coat of arms, see Friar 1987: 353-354. In Scottish heraldry, the unicorn represented Scotland's national pride. A pair of lions feature in the 1824 cenotaph of the Maltese jurist, Sir Joseph N. Zammit, at the Upper Barracca Gardens, Valletta. Commissioned by Governor Maitland, this memorial was designed by Vincenzo Dimech, a colleague of Giorgio Pullicino. Pullicino, the Professor of Architecture, was the likely designer of the gateway; see Ellul 1982: 15-16. Rather revealingly, the inscription on Zammit's memorial praises the jurist for having been 'lingua moribus legibusque Anglicanis quamplurimum versatus ...'.

political contexts and, more significantly, in the local scene. Latin was not only the language of the Catholic Church, the official language of the Hospitaller Knights, and the parental language of Italian. Latin, and Rome, had also been appropriated by Napoleonic France as a paradigm of empire-building.⁸⁸ To Romantic sensibilities espoused by great figures such as Winckelmann, Goethe, and Shelley, Greek had denoted novelty, intact nature, and the enticement of the unknown. As Stray has observed, 'Greek has always been the Other, except in Greece'.⁸⁹ Turner, moreover, noted that 'the search for new cultural roots and alternative cultural patterns developed out of the need to understand and articulate the disruptive political, social, and intellectual experience that Europeans confronted in the wake of the Enlightenment and of revolution.'⁹⁰ The British at this juncture in history were presenting the Maltese with the opportunity of 'alternative cultural patterns' that, if accepted, would make them (i.e. the Maltese) let go of their revered bond - cultural, political, and otherwise - with Italy and the Catholic Church. This would, in return, bring to the Maltese greater social promotion, employment openings, and, possibly, prospects for participation in the government of their island.⁹¹ As a presage of the anti-Italian anxiety that would materialize over half a century later and develop into a multiform manifestation, one could reasonably see the Greek inscription as a subtle and polite attempt to start percolating a new culture through the island at the expense of an old one.

One of the first to realize the danger that lurked in the Maltese bond between Italian and Latin, especially in the field of Law, was Sir John Stoddart. An English lawyer and editor, Stoddart received in 1826 the appointment of Chief Justice in Malta, which he held till 1839.⁹² From

⁸⁸ Huet 1999.

⁸⁹ Stray 1998a: 14.

⁹⁰ Turner, F.M. 1981: 2.

⁹¹ The representation of five garlands immediately above the Greek motto on the gateway evoke the five wrungs of the hierarchical ladder of the Roman *cursus honorum*. I am grateful to Victor Bonnici for alerting me to the potential significance of the garlands. Roman insignia feature more prominently in the memorial to Zammit (see n. 87), including fasces and curule chair.

⁹² Laferla 1946: 129.

1833 he sat as a member on the University Council.⁹³ In spite of his being a staunch promoter of the adoption of the English language at the Maltese courts, Stoddart still advises George Cardew, Acting Lieutenant Governor of Malta, in a lengthy handwritten report he compiled in 1836,⁹⁴ that codes should be drawn up in Italian as the majority of Maltese lawyers 'understand no other [language], unless it be Maltese or Latin'. Stoddart seems to have harboured rather ambiguous feelings about Latin. To him, the presence of Latin at the Courts of Law had 'kept Europe, for so many years, in a kind of slavery to the Latin language ... It is the maxim which enable a peculiar body of men to stand between the Sovereign and his Subjects, & to delude and tyrannise over both, in the dark.' In Malta, 'the great bulk of the Laws & Legal authorities cited in the Courts of Malta are written in Latin.' Even as late as 1814, attests Stoddart, 'the sentences of the Criminal Courts were in that language, as those of the Ecclesiastical Courts are to this day.'⁹⁵ Stoddart did not let an opportunity pass without stressing the need for Maltese lawyers to know English. Delivering an address in Italian, in open Court, on the admission of Dr Sigismondo Dimech and 30 others as lawyers,⁹⁶ in 1831, Stoddart spoke of the professional importance of learning English by drawing a comparison with the indispensability of Latin to the legal profession: 'Could any one ever become versed in the Civil or Canon Law, if he did not understand Latin?', he asked.⁹⁷

Anglicization must have also contributed, if only indirectly, to British growing interest in the native Maltese language and the opportunity to capitalize on its Semitic potential as a commercial link with North Africa and the Levant. It is well known that John Hookham Frere established and financed the first Chair of Maltese at the University for his friend Mikiel Anton Vassalli, later hailed as the 'Father of the Maltese

⁹³ *MBB* 1837, 134.

⁹⁴ NAM, GMR 8, Report to Lt. Col. the Hon. George Cardew, Acting Lt. Governor of Malta 9th January 1836. Cf. Laferla 1946: 155-156.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 43, 55-56, 57, 62 (underlined text as in the MS).

⁹⁶ On Dimech, see 3.5.

⁹⁷ NAM, GMR 8 D, Extract from the Chief Justice's address delivered on 13/06/1831(in Italian).

Language',⁹⁸ a controversial voice of the enlightenment who as early as 1796 had advocated the teaching of the vernacular in state schools.⁹⁹ The Royal Commissioners Austin and Lewis, for whom Maltese was 'a corrupt form of Arabic', suggested a Preceptor of Arabic at the Lyceum, maintaining that a Maltese learner of Arabic was 'merely acquiring the art of employing his own [language] correctly'.¹⁰⁰ There was even talk of starting children entering primary schools learning Arabic simultaneously with Maltese, Italian, and English, an idea which drove Revd Cumbo to exasperation: 'Oh what a lovely fate for an island where even craftsmen have to be such polyglots!', he exclaims.¹⁰¹ George Badger went so far as to propose that Arabic should be adopted as the national language of the Maltese.¹⁰² Frere was less of a radical, but still realized the potential existing in Malta where, as he puts it in one of his letters, Arabic 'walks the streets'.¹⁰³ As chairman of the new University Council in 1824, Frere had by its second sitting proposed the establishment of a School of Syriac and Chaldaic.¹⁰⁴ He later expressed scepticism about the University's ever becoming an important institution for humanistic learning, despite its old Latin tradition, envisaging a better future should the institution seek to establish an expertise in oriental languages: 'We possess within ourselves the materials for a branch of literary industry, which, if properly employed, would enable us to enter with advantage into the general commerce of literature'. Drawing from the example of newly-founded University of Corfu,¹⁰⁵ where he says new discoveries were expected from the study of Ancient Greek literature by students who were familiar with the idiom from their infancy, Frere expresses the hope 'that an equally favourable expectation would be excited, of new illustrations likely to arise in the cultivation of a very extensive branch of Oriental literature, if zealously pursued and candidly

⁹⁸ Sammut 2002: 46.

⁹⁹ Ciappara 2006: 76.

¹⁰⁰ [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 43, 47.

¹⁰¹ Cumbo 1839e: 2. Cf. Badger 1838: 80.

¹⁰² Badger 1838: 78-81, 296.

¹⁰³ Frere and Frere 1874: 1.191.

¹⁰⁴ UMHA, University Council 1824-1839, 09/10/1824.

¹⁰⁵ See 3.6.

encouraged in the University of Malta'.¹⁰⁶ This strikes an ironically contradictory note when compared with T.B. Macaulay's notorious Minute of 1835, where the poet of *The Lays of Ancient Rome* declared that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.¹⁰⁷ A handwritten University report, also from 1840, proposing reforms to the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts,¹⁰⁸ puts forward similar suggestions with regard to the exploitation of the Maltese language's 'affinità utilissima' for the acquisition of oriental languages, arguing that the University could become a centre of education for the children of many Europeans settled in the Orient who would alternatively be sending their children to study in France or Italy.¹⁰⁹ Such a notion continued to reappear through the century, finding expression even in Royal Commissioner Keenan's Report of 1879.¹¹⁰ 'If Frere's advice had been taken', wrote F.W. Ryan in 1910, 'the University of Malta might have by this time become a great imperial, if not international, centre for the study of Eastern Languages'.¹¹¹

Maltese Anglophiles would eventually start bringing the conservation of the vernacular's semitic roots to their cause. Charles Casolani campaigned for a purified Maltese language, purged 'from barbarisms and italicisms which have crept into it, gradually taking away everything which is foreign to the Arabic element'.¹¹² The fact was that, by the time Casolani was writing in the late 1860s, the Anglicization of Malta still seemed very remote. Italian culture in the island had actually received a major boost during the period that led to the unification of Italy.¹¹³ Given

¹⁰⁶ Frere and Frere 1874: 1.304.

¹⁰⁷ *Minute by the Hon'ble T.B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835*, about which see Vasunia 2013: 20-22, 202. Stray (1998a: 53) interprets 'European' to refer exclusively to 'Greek and Latin classics'.

¹⁰⁸ UMHA, Rapporto sulla ripartizione delle materie componenti la Facoltà di Filosofia ed Arti giusta gli articoli 146, 171 dello Statuto fondamentale dell'Università, 1840.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 2.

¹¹⁰ Keenan 1879: 57. Also Savona, cp. Frendo 2013:35.

¹¹¹ Ryan 1910: 124. Ryan opines that the opportunity was lost once the Language Question became the main controversy.

¹¹² Casolani 1867: 6. On Casolani, see Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.40.

¹¹³ The standard work is Bonello *et al.* 1982. See also Hull 1993: 13-14, 19-21; Brincat 2011: 285-291.

the geographical proximity and the British liberal approach to the Risorgimento,¹¹⁴ many important Italian exiles, mostly Mazzinians, converged on Malta as refugees but also as agitators and militant insurgents. One of the first to arrive was Gabriele Rossetti in 1821, who struck up a friendship not only with John Hookham Frere but also with Maltese literati, such as the Latin poet, Abate Rigord.¹¹⁵ Later exiles included leading figures of the Risorgimento, such as Nicola Fabrizi, Ruggero Settimo (who died in Malta in 1863), and the future Italian prime minister Francesco Crispi. Many of the Maltese elite were in direct contact with exiles and empathized with their fight for freedom from despotism and occupation. Such a movement could not but have a strong impact on a rising Maltese liberalism and nationalistic sentiments.¹¹⁶ From this period, we start coming across sporadic allusions of sympathy with Italian irredentism. Maltese anglophiles saw fit to raise the alarm, as did Casolani in 1867 when, writing on Maltese ecclesiastics who had studied in Italy, he asked:

What practical good did they derive from their Italian education, or their familiarity with the manners, character, and institutions of that country? What will their connection (some with Mazzini) with that people avail them? Has any one of them ever obtained employment in that country? They might indeed realise their object on Garibaldi's taking possession of the island in the name of King Victor Emmanuel, as some openly avow to be their ardent wish!¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Some actively supported it, such as Henry Lushington, Chief Secretary to the Governor of Malta from 1847 to 1855. Alfred Tennyson's bosom friend, Lushington had studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he distinguished himself in Greek verse composition; see Boase 2004. On Lushington in Malta, see Caruana Dingli 2014.

¹¹⁵ On Rossetti in Malta, Vassallo, P. 2012: 49-57.

¹¹⁶ Bonello, V. *et al.* 1966.

¹¹⁷ Casolani 1867: 11.

3.5 Early careers in Latin teaching

When Canon Saverio Caruana, the University's first Rector under British colonial rule, drew up his programme of studies,¹¹⁸ he followed closely on the programme of studies that the University's first Rector, Roberto Raniero Costaguti, had formulated in 1771.¹¹⁹ Caruana, a Preceptor of Rhetoric at the Seminary and the author of a book on Latin grammar,¹²⁰ imitated Costaguti's programme by having the teaching of the Latin and Italian languages and literatures dominate the first years of the curriculum. In this Costaguti had broadly followed the syllabus taught at the Jesuits' 'Collegium Melitense',¹²¹ which must partially explain why the University was still known by the name of 'College' even down to Maitland's times. From Costaguti's 'trivium' framework of Lower, Grammar, and Rhetoric, Caruana's chief modification was in establishing four initial classes of Italian and Latin. These classes formed a Grammar School, later to develop as the Lyceum. Besides the training in Latin grammar, students in these classes were gradually introduced to literature through the translation into Italian of 'easy Latin books' by Year II, which changed to 'less easy' ones in Year III, when they were also assigned the translation into Latin of 'qualche tema Italiana'.¹²²

It is with 'Humanities and Rhetoric', the next class following the four Grammar ones, that the University course properly started. In Humanities students learned the rules pertaining to literature, while in Rhetoric they were taught the art of composition, both in verse and in prose. It was in Rhetoric that 'the Latin and Italian language had to

¹¹⁸ UMHA, Acta 1.10-11.

¹¹⁹ Laurenza 1933.

¹²⁰ *Metodo piano e facile allo acquisto della Lingua Latina*. Schiavone (2009: 1.479) provides the title only. No copy exists at the NL in Valletta. Cf. Zarb (1948: 14): 'This work was highly appreciated and one of the best Maltese Latinists, the late Professor [F.M.] Sceberras, a lustre of this Alma Mater, speaks of the perfection and utility of this book'. At the Seminary, Caruana had also taught Philosophy and Mathematics, besides Rhetoric; cf. Marchetti 1847: 6. As a great patron of the arts, Rector Caruana promoted classical artistic training in the new School of Design attached to the University; cf. Spiteri 2011: 17-22, 48-60.

¹²¹ Cassar Pullicino 1958.

¹²² UMHA, Acta 1.10

become Eloquence', Costaguti had stated in his programme of 1771, with Cicero's *De Oratore* and Horace's *Ars Poetica* being standard texts.¹²³ Students who had gone through the Grammar classes, and those of Humanities and Rhetoric, qualified to enrol into one of the three Faculties of Law, Medicine, or Theology. In principle, everyone who graduated from the University as a lawyer, medical doctor, or theologian would have received a solid training in Latin and Italian. Besides University, other clerical establishments provided such education.¹²⁴

As we have seen, Governor Maitland expressed a very low opinion of Maltese University professors. Consequently, he planned to remove 'several that are mere nominal Professors' and, for those left in the job, to increase their salaries 'possibly a very little'. Maitland admitted that the current professorial salaries 'were hardly worth mentioning',¹²⁵ scarcely an understatement when in 1821 a so-called 'Professor of Rhetoric' earned £30 per year and the Governor's salary was £5000.¹²⁶ Yet, despite the poor wages, there was never a dearth of Maltese scholars wishing to embark on a career in the noble profession.¹²⁷ Once a scholar infiltrated the academic corps, there was much opportunity to move up the hierarchical ladder of the academy with a corresponding increase in prestige and, probably at a lesser rate, pay. Since the first classes were devoted to Latin and Italian, many scholars started off as teachers in one of these classes, gradually working up to higher posts in the Faculties.

Some scholars enjoyed long careers. Revd Paolo Busuttill was one of the lecturers chosen by Rector Caruana in 1800; he was engaged as a teacher of the second class of Italian and Latin with a salary of 150 'scudi'

¹²³ Laurenza 1933: 14-15.

¹²⁴ Vella, A.P. 1969: 19.

¹²⁵ NAM, GOV 1/2/1, Maitland to Bathrust, 09/04/1815. Cf. [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 39.

¹²⁶ *MBB* 1821, 'Expenditure' (unpaged).

¹²⁷ Cf. Keenan (1879: 68): 'How learned men can be induced to take office on such inadequate salaries is really surprising'.

(equivalent to £12.50 by 1825).¹²⁸ In 1804 we find him acceding to the Chair of Humanity,¹²⁹ rising in 1811 to the Chair of Rhetoric,¹³⁰ meanwhile also filling the position of University Secretary in 1809. From 1815 he also served as Chaplain in the Foundling Hospitals, for which he received the annual salary of £60 and additionally apartments at the Ospizio.¹³¹ An even more illustrious career was that of Sigismondo Dimech, who received his appointment in 1824 as a Preceptor of Humanity. In 1832 he was teaching Canonical Jurisprudence, when he also obtained his Professorship at the Faculty of Law, a post he retained until his retirement in 1879,¹³² a short while after Royal Commissioner Keenan attended one of his lectures.¹³³ In 1878 Dimech still had enough energy in him to compose one of the many Latin inscriptions for the funerary commemorations held in Malta upon the death of Pope Pius IX,¹³⁴ a couplet later exposed by the merciless author of *Sillabo di Erroruzzi* as being actually taken from the monument dedicated to Nicolò Machiavelli in Florence.¹³⁵ Dimech's salary increased noticeably in the course of his long career, being just over £20 in 1824 and rising by 1879 to £160 with Good Service pay of £40 a year.¹³⁶

Chairs were normally appointed by competition, the procedure of which we can attempt to reconstruct from the records of contemporary University minutes. The Chairs of Rhetoric and Humanities having been vacated, the Council under the presidency of Hookham Frere met on 6 November 1824 to discuss the process to be established towards the filling of these posts. For the post in Rhetoric, besides the writing of an essay in Italian and Latin on two chosen themes, the Council agreed to include 'un componimento poetico latino'. For that in Humanities, the

¹²⁸ UMHA, Acta 1.10-11.

¹²⁹ UMHA, Acta 2.20, where the post is titled as 'Chair of Humaniorum Litterarum'.

¹³⁰ UMHA, Acta 2.47; Busuttill was succeeded by 'Can. Michaelangelo Farrugia, who was head of Grammar Studies for 23 years' (Acta 2.49).

¹³¹ *MBB* 1821, Establishment, University of Literature (unpaged).

¹³² *MBB* 1824, 178; *MBB* 1835, 84; *MBB* 1879, M114.

¹³³ Keenan 1879: 61, where the name is incorrectly given as 'E. Dimech'.

¹³⁴ Ferres 1878: 184.

¹³⁵ Anon. 1878: 9. About *Sillabo*, see 4.4. The inscription was 'Tanto nomini / nullum par elogium'.

¹³⁶ *MBB* 1824, 178; *MBB* 1879, M114. Cf. Keenan 1879: 61.

writing of a 'saggio' seems to have been considered sufficient, although the language is not specified. The competition commenced on 23 November 1824 and ended six days later. There were two contestants for the Chair of Rhetoric (Revd Dr Giovanni Romeo and Revd Fortunato Panzavecchia) and four competed for the Chair of Humanities (Revd Dr Serafino Marmara, at the time Master of Grammar, Giovanni Camenzuli, Revd Dr Giuseppe Fenech, and Sigismondo Dimech). During the meetings held on 27 November, 4 December, and 6 December, Council read all the work delivered by the contestants for the two chairs. On 11 December, the Council, by secret ballot, elected Giovanni Romeo to the Chair of Rhetoric and Sigismondo Dimech to the Chair of Humanities.¹³⁷

A year later some of the same scholars were competing for the Chair of Philosophy. Fortunato Panzavecchia was elected 'suffragiis unanimitate', having outdone Sigismondo Dimech, the Preceptor of Humanities, and Giuseppe Fenech, the Preceptor of the Lower Class of Latin Language.¹³⁸ The Chair was vacated again in 1827, and in the competition organized by the Council still presided over by Frere, a certain Signor Cicognani Cappelli was found insufficiently equipped to hold the Chair of Philosophy due to a 'deficienza della lingua latina'. Frere proposed that Cicognani Cappelli be requested to give one course in Metaphysics and Logic instead.¹³⁹ Frere also took charge of the competition for the Chair of Canonical Jurisprudence in 1832, for which three Latin titles drawn by lot in the presence of the contestants have been preserved. At 9:30 in the morning, the contestants proceeded to write their compositions, for the completion of which the time allowed was 'fino i tocchi, così detti, del Ave Maria' (i.e. at noon), but corrected in the minutes to read 'fino al tramontar del sole', 'till sunset', instead. Dr Sigismondo Dimech, Preceptor of Humanity, was this time appointed Professor of Canonical Jurisprudence, not before he was also orally examined by the Council. It was also agreed to send a letter to the

¹³⁷ UMHA, University Council 1824-39, 06/11, 13/11, 27/11, 04/12, 12/12 1824.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 23/09/1825.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 14/08/1827. Yet, *MBB* (1827, 162) lists 'Dr. C. Cappelli Cicognami' as 'Dr of Philosophy' at a salary of £25.15s per annum.

Governor recommending Revd Michele Seychel, one of the contestants for the professorship, to the Class of Humanity, a post now vacated by Dimech. Seychel received an appointment as Preceptor of Humanity,¹⁴⁰ and was also elected 'Prefect of the Lyceum' two years later.¹⁴¹

3.6 Early notions of Greek

In the Thirteenth Article 'On the Sacred Scriptures' of the Constitutions for the new studies (1771), Roberto Costaguti, the first Rector of the University, had stated that, 'And since, for the understanding of the Sacred Scriptures and of the Interpreters, the study of the Greek and Hebrew Languages is of great necessity, we therefore wish that it should be the task of the Professor of Sacred Scriptures to teach these two languages'.¹⁴² Each one of the Faculties would have its own College whose members would propose three candidates for filling a vacated post with the proviso that 'preference would be given to those Theologians who may have studied the Greek and Hebrew languages, and to those Jurists and Doctors who may have studied the Greek language'.¹⁴³ This made Vincenzo Laurenza suggest in 1934, at a time when the absence of Greek was increasingly becoming an embarrassment to the University, that in the early years of the history of the *alma mater* the creation of a chair of the two languages had been planned, at least of Greek, a language that even students of Law and Medicine at the time were encouraged to study.¹⁴⁴ However, the University would not have its Professor of Greek until the mid-20th century.

It appears that, during the first two decades of British administration in Malta, no teaching of Greek was available at the University. By 1827 the

¹⁴⁰ UMHA, University Council 1824-1839, 06/10, 11/10, 23/10 1832.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 09/01/1834.

¹⁴² Laurenza 1933:16.

¹⁴³ Laurenza 1934b: 16.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 16, n. 1. On Laurenza, see 7.3.

American traveller Andrew Bigelow could still assert that, at the University, 'No provision is made for instruction in Greek, whether ancient or modern.'¹⁴⁵ It might have been a different story had the prospect of the setting up of a 'Greek College' not been so readily dismissed by Governor Maitland in 1815. In a dispatch from Lord Bunbury, Maitland was informed of an idea that at the time was being entertained in London, namely, that of establishing a 'Greek College' on the island of Gozo, Malta's sister island.¹⁴⁶ We learn from Bunbury that this College had been originally planned for the Ionian island of Zakynthos (hence the name), and a number of Greek professors from Constantinople had been engaged to form part of its teaching corps. It seems that Gozo became a potential relocation for the College when Britain's hold on the Ionian Islands became, at one point, questionable.¹⁴⁷ He expressed great optimism that the College in Gozo would grow into a 'considerable University', under the direction of three main professors (one English, one Italian, and one Greek), which would attract the young men of affluent Greek and Italian families and, moreover, would prove 'a lasting instrument for the extension of England's moral influence throughout the Levant and the south of Italy'. The teaching of English Language and Law would be central to the curriculum, together with utilitarian subjects such as Mathematics, Agriculture, Navigation, and Military Science, such studies being, in Bunbury's opinion, 'of more immediate importance & more attractive than the "Humanities", or Philology or Ethics'.

Governor Maitland revealed in his reply that he was not particularly enthusiastic about having the 'Greek College' on Gozo, or on Malta for the matter.¹⁴⁸ He foresaw severe dissatisfaction and unrest on the part of the Maltese professors of the University, especially should a great discrepancy exist in the salaries paid at the two institutions. Maitland

¹⁴⁵ Bigelow 1831: 256.

¹⁴⁶ NAM, GOV 2/1/6, Bunbury to Maitland, 12/02/1815, in which Bunbury relays the instructions of Lord Henry Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Laferla 1946: 101.

¹⁴⁸ NAM, GOV 1/2/1, Maitland to Bunbury, 09/04/1815.

need not have worried too much, however, since the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1815 settled the question. The Ionian Islands fell under a British Protectorate and, in addition to his governorship of Malta, Maitland became the Islands' first Lord High Commissioner.¹⁴⁹ The Greek College was transferred to Corfu and inaugurated in 1824 as the Ionian Academy.¹⁵⁰ It was 'the first university institution to be established on Greek soil',¹⁵¹ where, in spite of London's original plans as expressed by Bunbury in his correspondence with Maitland, the Humanities and Philology played a prominent part in the curricula and lectures were invariably delivered in Modern Greek.¹⁵² One can only speculate about the effect such a College might have exerted on the future of Maltese educational history, and of Classics specifically, had Maitland been more receptive to his superiors' proposal.

There is evidence of a thriving Greek presence at the time on the island.¹⁵³ The Scottish traveller James Webster, who died in Cairo in 1828 at the age of twenty-six, visited Malta in 1826.¹⁵⁴ In his delightful narrative, he describes a meeting with a Greek priest of the Catholic Greek Church:

This minister was dressed in black, and wore his beard very long. He shewed us his wife and two daughters, and invited us to accompany him to the other Greek church, in which he generally officiates, and which adjoins his own house. Then he shewed us an ancient picture of the Madonna and child...¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Laferla 1946: 120.

¹⁵⁰ Henderson 1988, who yet makes no mention of the British idea of a College on Gozo.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 1.

¹⁵² *Ibid. passim.* Cf. Wilson 1839: 503-505, 516-517, where an eyewitness account is given, from c. 1828, of lectures at the Ionian Academy. In Malta, Wilson had met Frederick North, Earl of Guilford and the founder of the Academy: 'he did me the honour to call on me in Malta, when this same university was our theme' (p. 503). See also Whyte 2015: 31.

¹⁵³ Cf. Bigelow 1831: 126, 'The Greeks of Malta form a much more considerable body' than the Jews whose number, according to this author, did not exceed one hundred.

¹⁵⁴ For a biography, see entry in Gorton 1833 (unpaged).

¹⁵⁵ Webster 1830: 263-264.

The reference is to the ancient icon venerated to this day at the Greek Catholic Church of Our Lady of Damascus in Valletta,¹⁵⁶ which corresponds to 'the other Greek church' in the passage. The meeting described above took place in another Greek church, dedicated to Saint Nicholas, that existed at the time in Valletta.¹⁵⁷ Webster continues to relate how the priest told the story of the icon's miraculous journey from Damascus to Rhodes after the Knights Hospitallers fled from the Holy Land, and how the icon was finally brought to Malta 'by the Greeks who followed the fortunes of the Knights'.¹⁵⁸ A lot of commercial trade was in existence between Malta and Greece, especially the Ionian Islands.¹⁵⁹ Maltese migration there was not uncommon. 'The Maltese are a very industrious race - a contrast to the Ionians. The most industrious servants at Corfu are Maltese,' observed a young John Henry Newman.¹⁶⁰

By the start of the 19th century, English and American Protestant missionary societies were taking advantage of the situation considerably. The London Missionary Society considered Malta an excellent mission-base.¹⁶¹ 'The island is encircled by an amphitheatre of nations, where the beast and the false prophet wanton at ease', observed Samuel Wilson in typically vivid language.¹⁶² Wilson was one of the Protestant missionaries who, before proceeding to Greece for proselytizing work, spent some years in Malta to learn Italian and Modern Greek. The first missionary of the L.M.S. to arrive in Malta had actually been a young German, John Weisenger, who set foot on the

¹⁵⁶ See Chetta-Schirò 1920. To most Maltese clerics in the early decades of 20th century, the Greek language was fitting only for this Greek Church in Valletta; cf. Interview: Borg, V. (1).

¹⁵⁷ Both churches were destroyed during WWII; the Church of Our Lady of Damascus was rebuilt after the war, where the icon is still to be found.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Brincat 2011: 211.

¹⁵⁹ Sultana, D.E. 1960: 54. Cf. Mozley 1890: 1.272, where J.H. Newman describes Marsamxett Harbour in a letter of 1832 to his sister Harriet, remarking on the presence of 'not a few Greek trading-vessels of respectable size'. For Maltese trade in Eastern Europe between 1770 and 1820, see Theuma 2016.

¹⁶⁰ Mozley 1890: 1.293, for Newman's letter to his sister Jemma, dated 15/01/1833.

¹⁶¹ Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.85-88.

¹⁶² Wilson 1839: 74.

island in 1809 to 'acquire a knowledge of Modern Greek and Italian'.¹⁶³ The next missionary was Revd Bezaleel Bloomfield who came to Malta in 1811 'where he might have an opportunity to learn the Italian language, and to perfect himself in modern Greek'.¹⁶⁴ Bloomfield was succeeded by Revd Isaac Lowndes in 1816, who, during his three-year stay in Malta, began the compilation of his Anglo-Greek Lexicon.¹⁶⁵ Wilson's evaluation of Lowndes' lexicon was very high: 'a work which in some measure redeems the literary reputation of our country, so far eclipsed, in this walk of philology, by the more adventurous spirits of France and Germany'.¹⁶⁶ Lowndes proceeded to Greece, spending many years on Corfu where he led a prominent life as missionary and educationalist.¹⁶⁷ Wilson came to Malta in 1819 as Lowndes's successor, staying on the island until December 1824.¹⁶⁸ After two years in Malta, he could already claim to have made 'some encouraging progress' in Greek (and Italian).¹⁶⁹ However, it is not clear where exactly in Malta such effective instruction was provided, or indeed by whom.

At any rate, Greek was soon to be introduced as an area of study at the Lyceum, an initiative unsurprisingly supported by John Hookham Frere, an ardent philhellene.¹⁷⁰ The Greek motto on the new University gateway inaugurated in 1824 must have also, among other signals already discussed,¹⁷¹ indicated that the language was to be an official area of study inside the precincts. Given the strong connections that existed

¹⁶³ Ibid. 62.

¹⁶⁴ Edwards 1832: 272. Wilson (1839: 63) dates Bloomfield's arrival to 1812.

¹⁶⁵ Wilson 1839: 68-73. Lowndes' *English-Modern Greek Lexicon* was eventually published in 1827.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 66.

¹⁶⁷ On Lowndes' activities on Corfu, see Brown 1854: 273-275.

¹⁶⁸ Wilson 1839: 249.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 135. Interestingly, during these years, and as a result of Protestant activities, Malta became the principal book-manufactory for the L.M.S. According to Edwards (1832: 273), there were at the time in Malta 'three printing presses, two of which are in constant use. There are founts of type for printing in English, Italian, Greek, Greco-Turkish, Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, and Arabic'. Even after leaving Malta, Revd Wilson continued to have books and translations printed in Malta for his missionary purposes in Greece and, as noted by Brown (1854: 2, 274), between 1825 and 1834 Wilson printed 'for insular and continental Greece upwards of 132,000 copies of various works'.

¹⁷⁰ Cassar, P. 1984: 55. Mifsud Bonnici, G. and Mifsud Bonnici, U. 2012: 576.

¹⁷¹ See 1.1, 1.2, and 3.4.

between Malta and Greece at the time, both political and commercial, it is not so perplexing that, once Greek appeared on the curriculum at the Lyceum, it was both in its classical and modern versions.¹⁷² Greek was then not only a prestigious cultural language but a living language which, if known, carried with it significant utilitarian benefits.

The first Lyceum's teacher of Greek, Ancient and Modern, we hear of is Nicolò Ziongo, who was elected as 'Preceptor of the School of Ancient Greek or Literal' in 1833.¹⁷³ Ziongo enjoyed a very long career which lasted nearly 30 years, and was considered a fine teacher of the language. The Maltese politician Sigismondo Savona, discussing the preceptorship of Greek during a debate at the Council of Government in 1878,¹⁷⁴ would speak of Ziongo as a much abler teacher than his eventual successor, Archimandrite Gerasimos Solomos:

I believe that the attendance in a school depends very much on the qualifications possessed by the Teacher. The last Preceptor that filled the Chair of Greek in the Lyceum does not seem to have been such as to attract many young men to his school; but it is well known that when the late Mr Ziongo was a Preceptor of Greek a great many young men frequented his school and derived much profit from his instruction.¹⁷⁵

By 'a great many young men' Savona must have in mind the noteworthy rise of students of Greek at the Lyceum, from 15 in 1859 to 39 in 1865 (the year when, of a total of 420 students attending the Lyceum, only 22 were studying Arabic, and 45 French).¹⁷⁶ Royal Commissioners Austin and Lewis in 1838 seem to have held a lesser opinion of Ziongo, probably owing to his lack of academic qualifications. They allow for the expediency of the procurement of 'a properly qualified teacher', even if

¹⁷² In all likelihood, the Greek taught in Malta at this time was an educated form of the spoken language, i.e. Demotic Greek. See Horrocks (2014: 438-470) for a survey of the development of the Greek language from the early 19th century to the present.

¹⁷³ UMHA, University Council 1824-1839, 11/11/1833.

¹⁷⁴ See 4.3

¹⁷⁵ *CG*, 18/12/1878, 60. See further 4.3.

¹⁷⁶ Anon. 1865: 46.

this necessitated a rise in the salary above the amount they proposed of £50, which was actually the salary Ziongo was receiving then.¹⁷⁷ At all events, they obliterated any prospect of advancement to the University that Ziongo might have cherished:

In our opinion, however, it is not expedient that the Greek language and literature should be taught at the University. Few of the Maltese youth could afford to addict themselves to philology, or to any speculative pursuit; and the few whose pecuniary means would enable them to do so, could easily find the desired knowledge at a good German or other continental University.¹⁷⁸

The Report continues that it was making this recommendation in the general spirit of ‘the fitting of youth for practical, rather than speculative life’. Only a few years later, however, there was talk that Greek Literature might be promoted as an area of study at the University. Revd Salvatore Cumbo, at the time a lecturer in Moral Theology, expressed his satisfaction at the prospect of such ‘misura utilissima’, adding that Greek Literature is the ‘original spring of every beauty and every delicacy that one observes in the literatures of other nations. Therefore, such study leads the way to good taste, to sophisticated knowledge, to profound literary culture’.¹⁷⁹

As a matter of fact, John Hookham Frere had already sought to revive the scholarly study of Biblical Greek at the University by his recommendation in 1834 of one of his Maltese friends, the Hebraist Revd Serafino Marmara, for the Chair of Hebrew and Greek Text of the Sacred Scriptures.¹⁸⁰ As occupant of the Chair, Marmara, who had written a treatise on the Punic elements in the Maltese language, drew up a three-year course in Hebrew.¹⁸¹ In spite of the illustrious patronship of Frere, Marmara found a detractor in George Badger, who describes Marmara’s professorship as ‘nothing more than a class of the Hebrew language’

¹⁷⁷ For Ziongo’s salary, *MBB* 1838, 134.

¹⁷⁸ [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 50.

¹⁷⁹ Cumbo 1842b.

¹⁸⁰ *MBB* 1834, 106. Cf. Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.313.

¹⁸¹ Cassar, P. 1984: 54.

(which indicates an absence of Greek from the sphere of teaching), denouncing it as ‘a disgrace to the nation, but more especially to the ecclesiastics’, and even calls for the abolition of the Chair.¹⁸² By 1839 Marmara was only teaching Hebrew at the Lyceum.¹⁸³

In the same year, 1839, Revd Salvatore Cumbo published a pamphlet, *Breve Cenno sulle Lezioni Scritturali*,¹⁸⁴ in which he lamented the general disregard still suffered by Hebrew and Greek in the education of future Maltese priests. According to Cumbo, the Bible, for all its apparent simplicity, requires more careful instruction than any of the classical authors. Were the reading and studying of Dante, Homer, and Virgil abandoned, man would certainly be deprived of much literary cognizance and delight, but no real harm would befall him. However, if the reading of the Bible were to be abandoned, then ‘crolla, bisogna dirlo, crolla la religione’ (religion will collapse).¹⁸⁵ As much as it is impossible to expound Homer or Virgil without knowledge of Greek or Latin, Cumbo affirms that a professor of Sacred Scriptures should not find it conceivable to lecture on the Bible without real knowledge of its original languages. The Latin Vulgate has many obscure passages that an ability to read the original texts would do much to enlighten, and reliance on other scholars’ interpretation is often inadequate.¹⁸⁶ Cumbo himself must have been rather unique among Maltese intellectuals of his time to have enough knowledge of Greek to pen some verses in the language.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Badger 1838: 182. On Badger, see 3.3.

¹⁸³ *MBB* 1838, 134.

¹⁸⁴ Cumbo 1839d.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 5.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 9. For similar arguments roughly at the same time in South Africa, cf. Lambert 2011: 34.

¹⁸⁷ See 6.5.

3.7 A Professor of Latin and Italian Literature

Reporting on the situation of education in Malta in 1838, the Royal Commissioners John Austin and George Cornwall Lewis observed that 'A properly qualified professor of Latin and Italian literature, composition and elocution, is much wanted in Malta. Though many of the students at the University write modern Latin with remarkable ease and clearness, the Latin Classics are generally neglected by the Maltese.'¹⁸⁸ Lewis (1806-1863) possessed full competency to judge the level of Latin in Malta. In spite of a civic and political career, he retained throughout his life the same precocious interest in classical scholarship which as a young man had earned him a first-class degree in Classics from the University of Oxford.¹⁸⁹

The Commissioners here make a distinction between classical and modern Latin, by the latter of which they probably mean the medieval and scholastic, non-Ciceronian, style of Latin.¹⁹⁰ A few years later, Revd Salvatore Cumbo made a very similar remark: 'Young men who write the language of Latium with skill and who yet show real confidence in the explanation of the Classics either emerge rarely from [our schools] or never at all'. Only by thorough and systematic study of classical Latin writers could real Latinists appear as they had done during the Renaissance and were still doing in Italy, asserts Cumbo.¹⁹¹ The Royal Commissioners do not only deem the Classics in Malta a neglected area, but moreover consider the general capability of writing in Italian as not satisfactory, to such an extent that, in eliciting the criteria required for a scholar to fill the post of a Professor of Latin and Italian Literatures, they

¹⁸⁸ [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 48.

¹⁸⁹ For Lewis' biography, see Smith 2004. Lewis' published works included a translation of Philipp August Böckh's *Die Staatshaushaltung der Athener* as *The Public Economy of Athens* (1834), and, with Henry Tufnell, of Karl Otfried Müller's *Die Dorier* as *The History and Antiquities of the Doric Race* (1836). His edition of 1857 of Babrius' second collection was rejected by continental philologists. Lewis was one of the few English scholars in his time to know German; cf. Turner, J. 2014: 172-3. John Austin (1790-1859) was a noted English jurist and legal theorist.

¹⁹⁰ Leonhardt 2013: 171, *passim*.

¹⁹¹ Cumbo 1840: 140. Cumbo was a supporter of the Italian system of classical learning, see 9.3

aver that no Maltese scholar was qualified enough, since 'a person well acquainted with the literature of both languages, and writing and speaking both of them with correctness and propriety, could hardly be found in Malta.' They propose that the Chair should be occupied by an 'accomplished clergyman from the Roman States, or from Tuscany or Lombardy' who is properly qualified for the job. As to the salary annexed to the Chair, Austin and Lewis deem it unnecessary that this should be fixed at a high rate. They propose a salary of £80, which was similar to that advised for many of the other chairs, although half as much as that for the professors of Law.¹⁹²

The Fundamental Statute of the University, established in 1838 partly on the recommendations in the Royal Commissioners' Report, laid down that in the Faculty of Philosophy and Art, there will be 'A professor of Latin and Italian Literature, of composition and elocution'. The title is suggestive not only of the tendency, so common at the time, of viewing the two literatures as naturally bonded, but also of the strong oratorical dimension that went with them. The Latin and Italian Literatures, together with composition and elocution, were to be studied during the first two years of the three-year course of Philosophy and Art. To gain admittance to the Faculty of Art and Philosophy, the Statute ordained that a student must be certified to have studied at the Lyceum the subjects of Latin, Italian, English, Arithmetic, Geometry and Algebra, Universal History and Geography, or may choose to be examined by the preceptors of those subjects in the presence of the Rector. The Statute also laid down the composition of studies at the Lyceum, for which thirteen preceptors were assigned. One of the subjects, Latin, was considered to also need an assistant preceptor. Another area of study was Ancient and Modern Greek. The Latin School would also comprise the elements of rhetoric and all other instruction necessary for admission into University, for the study of Literature, and for Composition and Elocution.¹⁹³

¹⁹² [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 48.

¹⁹³ Anon. 1838: 38-40, 65-66.

Like many of Austin and Lewis' recommendations, the implementation of the employment of an Italian scholar to the Chair was apparently problematic.¹⁹⁴ The next best thing was to engage a Maltese scholar who had studied in Italy. The first scholar to be appointed to the Chair, with the full title of 'Doctor of Latin and Italian Literature, Composition and Elocution at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts', was Lorenzo De Caro (1817-1853), a Maltese lawyer and poet who had studied Law and graduated from the University of Pisa.¹⁹⁵ De Caro was appointed to the post in 1839 at a yearly salary of £80,¹⁹⁶ but a charge of plagiarism in 1844 connected to two of his Latin poems appears to have put an untimely end to his academic career.¹⁹⁷ The charge was instigated by two anonymous letters in English which appeared on the journal // *Mediterraneo: Gazzetta di Malta*.¹⁹⁸ The author, signing the letters as 'A Constant Reader', seems to have been set on bringing De Caro's literary reputation to ruin, although his declared motive was the exercise of literary justice, 'it being high time that the public of Malta, and indeed the republic of letters, should be disabused on the subject; a subject affecting the literary reputation and scholastic honour of the Island.'¹⁹⁹

After the resignation of De Caro, the General Council of the University met to discuss the process of the competition for the filling of the Chair, a discussion which extended over a number of sittings. It was agreed that the competition was to spread over three days. On the first day, the contestants had to produce (a) a note ('un commento') on a number of excerpts from the Latin classical authors in verse and prose; (b) a dissertation in Latin on a subject relative to the History of Latin Literature; and (c) a short composition in Latin verse. On the second day, the contestants had to write a dissertation in Italian on a subject from the

¹⁹⁴ Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.124.

¹⁹⁵ On De Caro, see 6.4.

¹⁹⁶ *MBB* 1839, 130-131 (pages mistakenly numbered as 230-231).

¹⁹⁷ De Caro 'fu costretto a dimettersi dalle sue cariche all'Università' according to Tufigno 1932: 39.

¹⁹⁸ 'A Constant Reader' 1844a and 1844b. For *Il Mediterraneo*, see Fiorentini 1982: 34-35.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 02/10/1844.

History of Italian Literature and a short verse composition in the same language. On the third day, the contestants were each to deliver a lecture on some theoretical aspect of the study of Literature.²⁰⁰ All excerpts and themes were to be chosen by lot ('cavati a sorte').²⁰¹ When the competition was published and applications started to pour in, members of the General Council expressed certain doubts about some candidates who had failed to provide suitable documentary evidence for their 'sana securale e religiosa condotta'.²⁰² A formal request was put forward to the British Governor, Sir Patrick Stewart, for authorisation of a secret vote on the moral suitability of each contestant for participation in the competition.²⁰³ Stewart refused, describing such a practice as incongruent with the regulations prescribed by the Fundamental Statute.²⁰⁴ The Council's members were forced to take a *viva voce* vote on the merits of each candidate in the light of the presented documents and in the order in which the applications had been submitted. The Minutes record the list of the candidates and how the members voted, with the occasional explanation as to why a particular candidate was deemed ineligible:

1. Salvatore Debono: ineligible for the reason that in 1836 the Criminal Court had sentenced him to 10 years in prison;
2. Revd Dr Lodovico Mifsud Tomasi: unanimously approved;
3. Revd Dr Giuseppe Zammit:²⁰⁵ approval of all the members bar one (Professor Wettinger);
4. Dr Lorenzo Borsini: four members in favour, five against;
5. Lorenzo Garibaldi: six members in favour, while three abstained on the grounds that they could not form an opinion of the gentleman;

²⁰⁰ UMHA, Consiglio Generale 1840-1873, 06/12/1845.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* 11/12/1845.

²⁰² *Ibid.* 02/01/1846.

²⁰³ *Ibid.* 09/01/1846.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 14/01/1846. Cf. Anon. 1838: 16, where Art. 35 states, 'In difetto di una sola assoluta unanimità, si procederà a' voti, incominciando da' membri meno anziani. Tali voti si daranno apertamente ed a viva voce'.

²⁰⁵ Later nicknamed 'Brighella', about whom see 6.3.

6. Revd Giovanni Borg: unanimously approved;
7. Dr Tommaso Zauli Sajani: three in favour, four against, two abstain;
8. Marchese Dr Andrea Testaferrata Ollioier: unanimously approved.²⁰⁶

Although the minutes fail to record any more information on the outcome of this issue, official dispatches suggest that the polemic at the Council got so out of hand that the direct intervention of Governor Stewart was felt to be needed. The dilemma was acute enough that Stewart thought it better to resort to W.E. Gladstone, the politician and Homeric scholar, who was briefly serving at the time as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. At first, Stewart tried not to trouble Gladstone with details but merely requested official sanction of his (Stewart's) choice of Revd Salvatore Cumbo as the new professor and a raise in the salary to go with the Chair:

I have also to state that the Chair of Latin and Italian Literature became also vacant, and it was my wish that it should have been filled up by competition, but so many difficulties arose in the way, that I was obliged to abandon that plan - and I was led to appoint a very fitting person to the Chair, viz. Dr Salvatore Cumbo, who is at present professor of Theology, the salary of which latter chair is £80 a year, and which he will vacate at the end of June next, and I have recommended that the Salary of the Professor of Latin and Italian Literature be raised from £80 to £100 a year, as it is comparatively with the other a very laborious class, and it merits the additional £20 a year, and indeed it was only by this inducement of salary, that Dr Cumbo would accept the situation, and he is decidedly the best qualified person here for the Chair. I trust you will be pleased to sanction the arrangement I have made.²⁰⁷

Besides being the Professor of Moral Theology, the erudite Revd Salvatore Cumbo was, as already noted, the editor of *Il Filologo Maltese*,

²⁰⁶ UMHA, Consiglio Generale 1840-1873, 14/01/1846.

²⁰⁷ NAM, GOV 1/2/22, Stewart to Gladstone, 16/04/1846.

where, in a fascinating series of articles harping on the need for an exhaustive study of the Latin language, published during 1840,²⁰⁸ he had insisted that the choice of a Latin master should fall on a scholar who was also in possession of the ability to write Latin in 'the beautiful style'.²⁰⁹ Gladstone asked Stewart whether he had consulted the Rector and the University Council before appointing Cumbo.²¹⁰ In his reply, Stewart was more revealing as to what had caused his dilemma:

With regard to the Professorship of Latin and Italian Literature I have to observe that Article 41 of the Fundamental Statute of the University provides that vacant Chairs are to be filled up by the Governor, either by direct appointment, or by competition as he may deem most expedient.²¹¹ I wished on the occasion of the recent vacancy of the Chair of Latin and Italian Literature to adopt the latter mode of filling it up, but I was forced to abandon that intention on account of the unpleasant discussions which arose in the Council of the University touching the moral qualifications of the greater number of the candidates. Under these unlooked for difficulties, I had no alternative but direct nomination as authorised by the Statute, and I communicated to the Council of the University that I had appointed Dr. Salvatore Cumbo who was in temporary occupation of the Chair, and who had not been a candidate, he being one of the Professors of Theology, but who was acknowledged by all parties to be a most fitting person for the Professorship; thus getting rid of the embarrassment occasioned by the objections made to the greater number of the candidates, regarding whom the Council were by no means unanimous in opinion.²¹²

Stewart wound up by imploring Gladstone to approve his appointment of Cumbo, adding that 'I have no hesitation in stating that I despair of making any other arrangement that would be equally acceptable to, and equally for the benefit of those attending that particular and important branch of study'. It was Gladstone's successor, John Grey, who finally

²⁰⁸ Cumbo 1840.

²⁰⁹ Cumbo 1840: 113-114.

²¹⁰ NAM, GOV 2/1/42, Gladstone to Stewart, 18/05/1846.

²¹¹ Cf. Anon. 1838: 18.

²¹² NAM, GOV 1/2/22, Stewart to Gladstone, 23/06/1846.

sanctioned Cumbo's new position and the accompanying rise of salary.²¹³ Cumbo held the Chair until 1853.²¹⁴

In 1849, a number of articles in the Fundamental Statute were altered with the purpose of making admission to the three professional Faculties more selective, and the students admitted better prepared for their higher studies. Students applying to enrol in the Courses of Medicine, Law, and Theology were all to sit for a written examination in the major subjects, among them, Latin. A proficiency in Latin defined as 'competent' was compulsory for admittance to all three courses; however, the format of the examination in Latin varied according to course, as follows:

- Admission to the Course of Medicine required '*A competent knowledge of the Latin Language*, which is to be judged of by a *written translation* from *Latin* into *Italian* of a passage from some Latin Classic; as Caesar, Celsus, Cicero, or others'.
- Admission to the Course of Law, and to the Course of Study for Notaries and Attorneys at Law, required '*A competent knowledge of the Latin Language*, which is to be judged of by a *written translation* of a Latin Classic into *Italian*, and *vice versa*'.
- Admission to the Course of Theology required '*A knowledge of the Latin Language*, which is to be judged of by a *written translation* from *Latin* into *Italian*, and *vice versa*, from some Classic Author'.²¹⁵

Following the death, in 1863, of Revd Professor Lorenzo Pullicino, Cumbo's successor, Latin and Italian received separate Chairs.²¹⁶ This arrangement might have been prompted by problems to fill up the vacancy, as the following letter from Victor Houlton, Chief Secretary to the Government, to Rector Saverio Schembri, seems to suggest:

²¹³ NAM, GOV 2/1/42, Grey to Stewart, 15/07/1846.

²¹⁴ For Cumbo, see 6.5.

²¹⁵ Anon. 1860: 15, 21-22, 26 (italicised items as at source).

²¹⁶ Caruana 1864: 21; Ferres 1868: 7.

With reference to your letter of the 26th October last, reporting the death of the Revernd Lorenzo Pullicino, Professor of Latin and Italian Literature in the University, and with reference to your subsequent reports on the manner of filling up the vacant chair, I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to acquaint you that he has been pleased to approve of the arrangement submitted by you, and consequently to make the following appointments to have effect from 1st January next.

The Revernd Salvatore Caruana, D.D., Teacher of Latin in the Lyceum, to be also Professor of Latin Literature in the University. Gio. Antonio Vassallo, Esq., LL.D., Teacher of Italian in the Lyceum, to be also Professor of Italian Literature in the University.

Each of the abovementioned Gentleman will receive in addition to his present salary £20 a year, out of the sum provided for the salary attached to the professorship of Latin and Italian Literature in the University, the remaining £60 to be appropriated for providing additional means of instruction in the Italian School at the Lyceum.²¹⁷

After Salvatore Caruana (1864-1877), two other Maltese priests were to fill the Chair for the rest of the 19th century. These were Michele Antonio Albanese (1877-1885), and Francesco Maria Sceberras (1886-1913).²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Anon. 1871: 71-72 (letter dated 28/12/1863).

²¹⁸ See Chapter 6 for relative biographies.

CHAPTER 4 – CLASSICS IN A PERIOD OF REFORMS (1850-1899)

4.1 A historical preamble

The decades following the establishment of the Fundamental Statute were bleak times for the *alma mater*. A heavy lethargy took hold of the General Council, which met only once during the lengthy Rectorship of Dr Saverio Schembri (1854-1880).¹ The period has been described as one ‘of outstanding tediousness in the University’s history, during which statute followed statute and commission followed commission without appreciable progress, or even movement continuously in one direction’.²

By 1842, when the English missionary Revd J.P. Fletcher visited Malta, very little improvement seemed to have been achieved since Maitland’s days. Describing the institution at Valletta as one which ‘claims the pompous title of the University of Malta’, Fletcher remarked that ‘the whole place looks as gloomy and deserted as the halls of Oxford and Cambridge during a long vacation’. Fletcher did not mince his words in blaming the British government for the lack of effective intervention to improve this miserable situation: ‘Ever since the commencement of our *regime* in Malta ... rector has followed rector, and regulations, three months old, have been made to give way to fresh ones, until the more sensible of the Maltese lost all confidence in the institution, and the university has become a theme for derision and ridicule’.³

In 1865, Governor Sir Henry Storks commissioned an enquiry into the state of public instruction at Primary Schools and at the Lyceum.⁴

¹ Vella, A.P. 1969: 83; Keenan 1879: 52.

² Vella, A.P. 1969: 83.

³ Fletcher 1850: 29-30.

⁴ *MGG*, 08/07/1865, Storks Report, 233-240.

Reporting on the latter, at a time when the student population numbered 470 pupils, Commissioners R.C. Romer, E. Sciberras, and B.B. Baker highlighted as the main defect the facility with which students were admitted (i.e. dictation in easy Italian and simple sums) which ‘prejudices the decorum of the Institution’. Besides, they criticised the disorganised system whereby no regular course existed and every pupil on admission ‘follows the bent of his own inclinations’ by attending whichever classes he deemed best suited to his purposes.⁵

The Royal Commission of 1878 (‘Julyan and Keenan’) on Malta resulted in reforms which had far-reaching effects.⁶ Having been charged to report on the educational system, Patrick J. Keenan argued for extensive reforms, including better training for teachers, greater efficiency, the introduction of compulsory education at the primary level, and the development of technical education. Among its effects, there was the increasing of the powers of the Director of Education to an almost absolute level, and the institution of a Matriculation Examination governing entrance into the University. The Faculty of Philosophy and Arts was reorganized. The Royal Commissioner’s recommendation to adopt English as the main language of instruction had an overwhelming effect on Maltese national sensibilities and indeed triggered the foundation of the first political parties.⁷ This was the period when Sigismondo Savona, as the Director of Education, was practically the Rector of the University.

In 1887 the Government appointed a Commission to revise the system on which the Matriculation Examination and the examinations of the Faculty of Arts were based, as well as to consider the appointment of examiners, the framing of the programmes of study, and the setting of examination papers.⁸ Among its conclusions, the Committee recommended the appointment of a Senate composed of persons

⁵ Ibid. 237.

⁶ See 4.5

⁷ See Frenco 2013, particularly 15-60.

⁸ Anon. 1887.

interested in the education of the island generally. The Fundamental Statute of 1838 was repealed and a new Statute was promulgated in 1887, in which, although the powers of the Head of Government were limited, the University was still subjected to the Council of Government. Following expressions of disapproval from the academic side, Ordinance XII of 1889 vested the management of the University, subject to the approval of the Governor, in a Senate which was also empowered to recommend to the Governor candidates for appointment to the professorial staff and to alter or amend existing Statutes and to frame new ones. Any such amendments or additions to the Statute, however, were first to be laid before the Council of Government. All other matters, including that of framing syllabi and adopting textbooks, were left to the Senate, which was to be chaired by the Chancellor of the University and whose composition had to include six members not otherwise connected with the University. The powers of the Senate were further amplified in 1889 following the recommendations of a Commission appointed in 1888.⁹

In 1896, following the sudden resignation of Rector A.A. Caruana on the grounds of incessant obstruction of his work by the Senate, a select Committee of the Council of Government was appointed 'to enquire into and report upon the organisation of the Education', and the upshot of its interim Report of 1897 was the abolition of the Senate and the transfer of most of its powers to the Head of the Government.¹⁰ The Senate was replaced by a General Council which had merely consultative capacity and the management of the University was in the hands of the Rector subject only to the Governor. A new Statute was promulgated in 1898.

⁹ Debono, P.P. 1958: 13-15.

¹⁰ Anon. 1897a.

4.2 Utilitarianism and Latin

As a result of the writings of Jeremy Bentham, and later, those of John Stuart Mill, the principles of utilitarianism suffused 19th-century discourses on educational theories and reforms.¹¹ It is not surprising, then, that Royal Commissioners Austin and Lewis had, in their Report of 1838, insisted on a distinctive measure of utility as the basis of their recommendations on Maltese education. It had actually been the University Rector himself, Dr Emanuele Rossignaud, who alerted them to the serious need in Malta for instruction in scientific subjects and for an education in the arts of a more practical utility, suggestions which the Royal Commissioners considered 'judicious and sound'. Since many of the young men attending the Lyceum had no intention of pursuing a professional career, a 'learned education' (i.e. classical) was not the most suitable one for them.¹² Among their major proposals was the establishment of a Chair of Political Economy.¹³ The course in Philosophy should address fundamental ideas, such as basic metaphysical principles and Aristotelian logic. 'Nothing farther in the shape of mental philosophy shall be taught by any professor in the faculty of arts', as this, the Commissioners held, had 'too little of the practical character which ought to be given to the studies of the University.'¹⁴ Regarding the language, they saw little need for the imposition of English as a compulsory subject. Given the geographical vicinity of Italy and the commercial interests that existed with the peninsula, Austin and Lewis perceived Italian as 'far more useful to a Maltese than any other language, excepting his native tongue'.¹⁵ Later commentators, both British and Maltese pro-British adherents, considered this recommendation as constituting the opposite of

¹¹ For a general introduction, see Scarre 1996.

¹² [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 39.

¹³ Ibid. 47-48. Sultana, R.G. 1992: 44. The Chair was soon established, but then abolished in 1845: Anon. 1871: 71; cf. Senior 1882: 2.274, 278-279.

¹⁴ [Austin and Lewis] 1838: 47.

¹⁵ Ibid. 42.

utilitarianism, for which the two Commissioners were severely criticized.¹⁶

As has already been mentioned,¹⁷ most of the recommendations by Austin and Lewis were found too expensive to implement.¹⁸ By 1850, the whole system of education was, as much as ever, in great need for reform. The Italian-language newspaper *L'Avvenire* expressed the disappointment of the nation, declaring that 'the University, the Lyceum, and Public Instruction in general have been a whole joke from 1800 to this day'.¹⁹ A month later, the same newspaper alluded to 'a mysterious destiny' apparently hitting the Maltese people and bearing 'the tremendous words: *DANNATI ALL' IGNORANZA* (condemned to ignorance)!'.²⁰ *L'Avvenire* was at the time running a series of articles lambasting the educational system of the island.²¹ The excessive attention given to the teaching of Latin, worsened by antiquated teaching methodology, often came under attack in these articles. Like every other subject, Latin was taught in Italian, but *L'Avvenire* found the teaching of Italian no less inadequate and ineffective than that of Latin, and that in consequence it often produced University students with great deficiencies in the comprehension and writing of the language of instruction.²² It was 'truly deplorable' that ten years of a student's life time were wasted on a dismal acquirement of Latin.²³ Even if students did by the end learn something, the volume of learning in other fields they could have acquired in the same time would all be lost. 'Meanwhile, whoever learns how to speak Italian with correctness and to understand well a Latin book is very fortunate indeed'.²⁴ Ten years previously, another

¹⁶ E.g. Julyan 1879: 57, 'a great error was committed'. Former Chief Justice Sir John Stoddart (see 3.3) was another severe critic; see Blouet 2017: 157. See also 4.5.

¹⁷ Cf. 3.7

¹⁸ Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.124.

¹⁹ Anon. 1850: 58.

²⁰ Ibid. 97.

²¹ Anon. 1850.

²² Cf. Lorenzo Pullicino's observations of 1843, discussed in 9.1.

²³ Anon. 1850: 98 ('E' veramente deplorabile il tempo che si suole sciupare nelle nostre scuole latine...').

²⁴ Ibid. 105.

newspaper, *L'Amico della Patria*, had already questioned the ability of young students to deal with the exigencies of learning Latin, a language which should only serve as means for their development just like any other language they might study, 'such as Greek, French, or English ... Young people who have just started upon life's voyage, young people who have just turned 17, find the attainment of a dead language a hard endeavour, a language that requires labour, great application, a language that is perhaps *little known even by the examiners themselves*' [emphasis added]. The author bewails the fact that his contemporaries still believed Latin to be the only qualification to distinguish a student from the mass of population and that to them knowledge of a language was a greater attainment than the acquirement of a science.²⁵

It was partially in response to such widespread discontent that, in 1850, Governor R. More O'Ferrall, a Roman Catholic and Irishman,²⁶ appointed Revd Dr Paolo Pullicino as Professor of Primary Instruction at the University of Malta and Chief Director of Primary Schools. The erudite Pullicino (1815-1890) was a well-travelled Maltese priest. A year before his appointment, Governor O'Ferrall had sent him to Dublin to observe the system of the national educational establishment of that country, also Catholic and colonial. For the following three decades he worked ceaselessly towards the reform of education in Malta and the pervasive provision of elementary instruction. He was also a pioneer in seeing the imperative need of technical instruction in Malta.²⁷ He was 'the administrator, the inspector, the guide and the mainstay of the whole system of Primary Schools'.²⁸

Since the Lyceum and the University did not fall under Pullicino's authority as the Director of Primary Schools, his importance to the present study is limited. However, the secondary education he launched

²⁵ Anon.1840: 10.

²⁶ Blouet 2017: 162.

²⁷ On Pullicino's educational legacy, see Camilleri 2001.

²⁸ Keenan 1879: 47, who, yet, was otherwise a critic of Pullicino (e.g. of Pullicino's cultivation of Italian in primary education at the expense of English or even Maltese; cf. p. 4, *passim*).

on the island of Gozo shortly after he received his appointment is relevant because of the strong presence of Latin in the curriculum. Although annexed to Gozo Primary School, the Secondary School provided instruction in preparation to University education. Four classes composed the School, the first of which was dedicated to Latin and Rhetoric, while the other three gave instruction in Algebra and Trigonometry, Italian, and English. In its first year (1851-1852), the School was attended by 49 students. Of these, a total of 37 attended the Latin and Rhetoric Class, a greater number than those attending Arithmetic (30), Italian (33), or English (19). Commenting on this disparity, Pullicino remarked that 'the old system of making pupils study almost nothing but dead languages [is] very deeply rooted in Gozo'. This he considered one of the 'habits' of the system that required adjustment, in the form of encouragement of the pupils to attend more regularly to the study of modern languages and of arithmetic.²⁹ The statistics already show a change by the second year, when the number of students studying Italian (32) topped that of Latin (28).³⁰ However, Pullicino was by no means averse to the pursuit of Latin, a language, he affirms, which is 'doubtless of great advantage to those who may wish to make progress in science or belles lettres'.³¹ As the Maltese educational historian, Ronald Sultana, has stated, Pullicino was 'caught between respecting and believing in the old classicism - which, as a cleric, he had been brought up in - and responding, half-heartedly and cautiously, to the different mentality which the British, with their practical commitment to material progress, represented'.³²

These were times of important discourses and reforms in educational systems all over Europe, and some of the Maltese theoreticians and practitioners were quite abreast with ongoing developments. An anonymous pamphlet entitled *Informazioni intorno il liceo e l'università nel corrente novennio scolastico 1856-65*, published in 1865 and

²⁹ Pullicino 1853: 1.

³⁰ Ibid. Appendices B and C (unpaged).

³¹ Ibid. 1.

³² Sultana, R.G. 1992: 57.

containing information about the Lyceum and University, features a long essay on the subject discussing the Maltese scenario while citing several authorities and reports from continental countries.³³ With a degree of deprecation, the author notes that 'Before the arrival of the Royal Commissioners for Inquiry in 1837 ... the culture of the Latin Language formed exclusively the foundation of Education in our Institutes; consequently, much attention and concern was given to the teaching of that language'.³⁴ In support of his arguments criticizing the obsession with Latin and Greek in liberal education, the author refers to Johann Spurzheim (1776-1832), the German physician and proponent of phrenology, who in one of his works had a number of arguments for the study of ancient languages, such as the endowment of a 'powerful and philosophical mind', or the ability to express oneself in modern languages with better clarity, or the preferability of the study of classical languages to that of the mother tongue, or the benefits gained for better understanding of and writing in the mother tongue.³⁵ The author shows familiarity with the work of 17th to 18th century German reformers A.H. Franke and J.B. Basedow and the rise of civic schools aimed at students wishing to follow a commercial career, and teaching more 'utilitarian' subjects in preference to the exclusivity of Latin and Greek.³⁶ The author is also aware of the Clarendon Commission set up in 1861 in England to investigate nine English public schools and even quotes at some length from its Report published in 1864. He is particularly struck by the Clarendon Commissioners' conclusion that 'the average of classical knowledge among young men leaving school is low' and that of mathematics was not much better. He also refers to the advantages of classical learning and quotes the Commissioners' warning against reducing education to what is utilitarian.³⁷ The author is cognizant of the reforms in France through the Circular of M. Duruy published in 1863, whereby, following a common elementary and grammar stage, students

³³ Anon. 1865: 103-130.

³⁴ Ibid. 114.

³⁵ Ibid. 104-105.

³⁶ Ibid. 105-107.

³⁷ Ibid. 107-110. On the Clarendon Commission, see Shrosbree 1988.

had to opt between the 'enseignement classique' and the 'enseignement professionnel'.³⁸ He goes into detail to describe the developments in Italy since 1848 with, first, the creation of 'Corsi Speciali' distinct from 'Corsi Classici', and then, in 1859-1860, the 'Legge Casati' and the 'Legge Mamiani', which gradually established the 'Ginnasio' and the 'Liceo' for secondary instruction and the 'Istituto Tecnico' for subjects instructed therein.³⁹ It is only after this overview that the author feels ready to embark on an evaluation of the current Maltese system of secondary education.

4.3 The travails of Greek at the Lyceum

In the newly unified Italy, as part of the educational reforms passed in 1859 by Gabrio Casati, Minister of Public Instruction, the teaching of Greek would be included alongside that of Latin in the new 'ginnasio-liceo' setup.⁴⁰ The exemplar for this was the Humboldtian model of higher education in Germany.⁴¹

In Malta, utilitarianism was often taken into consideration with respect to the study of Greek, in the case of which the practical usefulness of the modern version of the language often outweighed the perceived benefits of the classical form. The commercial advantage in the study of Greek was emphasised in the Report of a Governmental Commission in 1850,⁴² which recommended that of the three lessons delivered daily by the Preceptor of Greek at the Lyceum, two should be given 'between the hours of one and two in the afternoon for the benefit of those pupils, who, being employed in mercantile pursuits, cannot attend at any hour of the

³⁸ Anon. 1865: 110-111.

³⁹ Ibid. 111-114.

⁴⁰ Benedetto 2013: 80-83.

⁴¹ On W. von Humboldt's reform of the educational system in Germany, see Knoll and Siebert 1967: 28-51.

⁴² Reproduced in Anon. 1871: 61-65, and dated 11/06/1850.

day'. The Report further observes that the current attendance was rather poor, but, with the change in timetable, it should increase significantly.⁴³ As indicated previously,⁴⁴ during the preceptorship of Archimandrite Gerasimos Solomos (1860-1875) Greek at the Lyceum lost some of the popularity that it had enjoyed under the preceptorship of Nicolò Ziongo, although there must have been other reasons besides Solomos' ineffective teaching.⁴⁵ In the Storke Report of 1865 the Royal Commissioners, as regards the teaching of Greek at the Lyceum, recommended that:

the Greek language (ancient and modern) should not be considered obligatory. The Lyceum, under present circumstances, being essentially *Italian*, there are very few students in this branch, and of these none pursue a regular course with the intention of becoming Classical Scholars. Still, a special hour being assigned for this lesson in the time table, unconnected with the other engagements of the respective Classes, it is hoped that the students will not fail eventually to appreciate the importance of this branch of a liberal education. A majority of the Commission is also of opinion, that neither French nor Arabic should be considered obligatory.⁴⁶

In 1875 there were 26 students studying Ancient (7) and Modern Greek (19).⁴⁷ The difference is striking and noteworthy.

With the retirement of Solomos in 1876 the future of Greek at the Lyceum must have looked uncertain.⁴⁸ Things took an optimistic turn, however, when two years later Cyprus fell under the administration of Great Britain, and the large island soon began to look like an ideal migratory destination for many of the Maltese destitute. A Maltese deputation, headed by no less a dignitary than the Crown Advocate, Sir Adrian

⁴³ Ibid. 61.

⁴⁴ See 3.6.

⁴⁵ Further research could investigate whether Solomos was related to the Greek poet Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857).

⁴⁶ *MGG*, 08/07/1865, 238 (see n. 4).

⁴⁷ Anon. 1876a: 11.

⁴⁸ NAM, GOV 2/1/73: official dispatch, dated 11/07/1876, showing that Solomos retired in 1876 with a pension of £17.10 per annum.

Dingli, was hurriedly sent to Cyprus to enquire on the nature of the country and its adequateness for Maltese settlement.⁴⁹ Sir Garnet Wolseley, the first British High Commissioner of Cyprus, was exceedingly favourable to the scheme, being aware also of the 'unquestionable advantages that would accrue to Malta if many thousands of its superabundant population could be induced to settle here [Cyprus]'.⁵⁰ Wolseley was also conscious of the language hurdle that could prove disadvantageous to the Maltese migrants: 'I think that at first until the emigrants had learnt something of the language common in Cyprus ... it would be better if the first batch of emigrants were all located together, and came here under the charge of an Agent of the Malta Government who should be conversant with Greek or Turkish.'⁵¹ The revival of Greek at the Lyceum unexpectedly became an urgent issue of national import.⁵² There were only two obstacles that prevented immediate action. One was the lack of an adequate teacher readily available. The second was the Report on Education by Royal Commissioner Patrick J. Keenan,⁵³ which was still in the process of compilation. The expectation of its completion rendered premature any action taken on education.

The situation was considered important enough to be raised at a sitting of the Council of Government in December 1878.⁵⁴ According to Sigismondo Savona there were many young Maltese at the time who wanted to learn Greek with a view of obtaining employment in Cyprus. Knowledge of Greek was 'a sure way to promotion and to a lucrative career in the East', he asserted.⁵⁵ Since there was no way of foretelling

⁴⁹ Cf. Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.49.

⁵⁰ NAM, GOV 2/1/75, Wolseley to The Marquess of Salisbury, Secretary for State for Foreign Affairs, 30/11/1878.

⁵¹ NAM, GOV 2/1/75, Wolseley to The Marquess of Salisbury, Secretary for State for Foreign Affairs, 19/11/1878.

⁵² Cf. Vella, J.P. 1953: unpagged, n. 145, which shows that Greek in early 1880s also featured in the curriculum taught at St Ignatius College, which the Jesuit Fathers had opened in 1877.

⁵³ See 4.5.

⁵⁴ *CG*, 18/12/1878, 'Preceptorship of Ancient and Modern Greek in the Lyceum', 56-61.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 60.

when Keenan's Report would be made available, Savona proposed that the preceptorship of Ancient and Modern Greek in the Lyceum of Valletta should be filled up by public competition at the earliest possible date. The Crown Advocate, Sir Adrian Dingli, supported Savona's proposition, but raised an interesting point:

I am told that some people hold it to be necessary to learn the ancient language, before passing to the modern. But if it is not necessary, let the Teacher in the Lyceum teach modern Greek only - and let those who wish to learn ancient Greek go and study it elsewhere; so that our young men may learn modern Greek in as short a time as possible.⁵⁶

Another member of the Council, Dr Alfredo Naudi, expressed some misgiving about the prospect of reintroducing Ancient Greek by reminding his fellow members of the great difference in the past between the number of students frequenting the respective classes of Ancient and Modern Greek: 'the number of students in the latter class was three times as large'. To strengthen his case for the greater utility of the modern language, he cited the example of the Maltese Dr Luigi Mizzi (1847-1935) who, on the strength of his knowledge of Modern Greek, which he had learnt in Malta 'from some friends of his', was at the time making a great legal career in Greece.⁵⁷ Savona, on his part, saw reason enough to argue in favour of both versions of Greek:

The Greek language is deeply studied in England and on the Continent; and Maltese young men wishing to continue their studies in some English or Continental University would derive great advantage from the Greek that they may have previously learnt in schools of the island. Therefore, I think that it would be proper, if opportunities were afforded to our young men to learn ancient Greek.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid. 58.

⁵⁷ On Luigi Mizzi, politician Fortunato Mizzi's brother, see Schiavone 2009: 2.1198-1199.

⁵⁸ *CG*, 18/12/1878, 59-60.

Savona informed the Council that he was aware of two potential teachers of Greek residing at the time in Malta, mentioning a certain Mr. George Vaffiadachy who had presented a petition to Government asking to be appointed Teacher of Greek in the Lyceum, and a Jesuit priest hailing 'from the South of Italy (the ancient Magna Grecia) where Greek is spoken'.⁵⁹ Recommending that the teacher should be a native of Greece, Savona finally suggested that the government should attempt to obtain a teacher from Athens 'in which case no competition would, of course, be necessary'.

Governor Barton wrote to Sir Michael Hicks Beach, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to explain the situation and to say he had written to Athens. Barton asked Hicks Beach to formally request the necessary approval of Keenan and ask him whether, 'in his opinion, it should include both Ancient and Modern Greek, or only the latter, a good Teacher of which, without the other, may be obtained more easily, and at a cheaper rate'.⁶⁰ Keenan replied from Dublin saying that he would prefer to postpone making suggestions upon the organisation of the Lyceum until the completion of his Report. 'But a Professor of Greek', he concludes, 'can never be a redundancy in a Lyceum, and I therefore have no hesitation in stating that the proposed appointment has my hearty approbation.'⁶¹ Since Keenan omitted to include his view as to whether Ancient Greek should be included, Hicks Beach had to offer his own interpretation in his next dispatch to Governor Burton: 'it is clear that if the teaching of ancient Greek can be combined with that of Modern Greek without much additional charge, it would be desirable to include it.'⁶²

⁵⁹ In a later sitting, the Jesuit is identified as Revd 'Corradi' or 'DeCorradi', a Sicilian residing in the Jesuit convent at Santa Venera, Malta; see *CG*, 03/12/1879, 10-11.

⁶⁰ NAM, GOV 1/3/15, Barton to Hicks Beach, 19/12/1878.

⁶¹ NAM, GOV 2/1/76, Keenan to Hicks Beach, 09/01/1879.

⁶² NAM, GOV 2/1/76, Hicks Bicks to Barton, 18/01/1879.

When Keenan's Report was eventually published in 1880, it included a strong recommendation to reinstate Greek as part of the Lyceum's curriculum and a fitting reference to Cyprus:

Neither in the University nor in the Lyceum is any instruction given in the Greek language. Since I left Malta, the Government has resolved to remedy this extraordinary defect - at all events to do so in the Lyceum, where Greek (ancient and modern) had formerly been cultivated. In view of the new exigencies of the new colony of Cyprus, to which, it is naturally anticipated, many young Maltese of enterprise and ability will emigrate, this proposal of the Government to revive Greek studies, even in the Lyceum, is exceedingly commendable.⁶³

The British Embassy in Athens managed to find an Athenian teacher of Greek, but the salary he demanded of £15 a month was 'a rate above all paid even in the University'.⁶⁴ A native teacher of Greek was finally employed in October 1879 in the person of Athanase Teofani, at a salary of £70 per annum.⁶⁵ Two years earlier, Teofani had taken the initiative himself by writing to Governor Charles van Straubenzee.⁶⁶ Addressing the Governor in French, Teofani requested to be considered for the appointment to 'La chaire de langue grecque' at the Lyceum, the post having been vacant for over a year since the retirement of 'Mr. l'Archimandrite G. Solomos'. He says that the studies he had pursued in his country, Greece, and at one of the Gymnasiums of Athens, provide him with the qualifications to fill the post satisfactorily. He would readily present a letter of reference from 'Mr. A. Papageorgiou Gymnasiarque de ce college' at the British Consulate upon request. Moreover, the Rector of the University of Malta would also vouch for his moral integrity 'au moins pour toute le temps que j'ai passé au Lycée d'ici, où j'ai fait une partie de mes études'. In fact, Teofani had studied at

⁶³ Keenan 1879: 53-54.

⁶⁴ *CG*, 21/05/1879, 872.

⁶⁵ *MBB* 1879, M118. *CG*, 03/12/1879, 11, where the Chief Secretary to the Governor stated that the certificates from educational authorities at Athens exhibited by Teofani had been judged 'very satisfactory'.

⁶⁶ UMHA, Miscellanea 1850-1879, letter dated 06/06/1877, bearing a Valletta address.

the Lyceum, where he did Greek with Solomos.⁶⁷ Following the course, he would have possibly maintained some communication with the Archimandrite. It appears Teofani taught Greek until 1881.⁶⁸

In spite of a considerable amount of groundwork that was put to it, the plan for a mass emigration to Cyprus came to nothing.⁶⁹ With the prospect of a Cypriot refuge fading away, the presence of Greek at the Lyceum must have now looked rather less valuable. In November 1883, a Jesuit, Father Burlò, was employed as a Teacher of Ancient and Modern Greek, on probation for one year.⁷⁰ By 1884, Savona himself, as Director of Education (since 1880), had given up hope, regretting that despite 'all the endeavours made to persuade the more advanced pupils of the Lyceum to study (Greek)' there were only 8 students at the time pursuing the language at the Lyceum.⁷¹ This figure was indeed a marked diminution of the number of students studying Ancient and Modern Greek twenty years earlier at the Lyceum, the total reaching a maximum of 39 students in 1865.⁷²

In consequence to Father Burlò's departure to Syria by 1893,⁷³ Greek was phased out of the curriculum. When, later that year, the University Senate discussed the vacancy created by Burlò's departure, Vice-Chancellor A.A. Caruana explained that the School of Greek at the Lyceum had been so poorly attended in the recent years that its abolition should be considered.⁷⁴ In 1895, the Senate discussed a petition 'by several Students of the University and the Lyceum' to appoint a Greek gentleman (unnamed in the minutes) as Teacher of Greek at the

⁶⁷ Anon. [1872b]: 6, where Teofani is listed as 'Meritevole di Premio' (i.e. third place) in that year's examination of the 'Greco Letterale' class taught by Solomos and consisting in all of seven students.

⁶⁸ His name does not appear in the editions of *MBB* after that year.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.49-50.

⁷⁰ *MGG*, 10/12/1883, 269. Cf. Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.126

⁷¹ Savona 1884: 25.

⁷² Anon. 1865: 25.

⁷³ *MBB* 1893, H72, where the position of 'Teacher of Ancient and Modern Greek' is marked 'Vacant'.

⁷⁴ Anon. 1893: 12 (sitting of 19/08/1893).

Lyceum, but the petition was unanimously rejected.⁷⁵ In the following year, the Senate discussed another request from an unidentified person to be recommended for appointment as teacher of Modern and Ancient Greek in the Lyceum; as the Vice-Chancellor remarked that it was very unlikely that a School of Greek would at the time be attended by a sufficient number of students, the Senate agreed not to take any steps in the matter.⁷⁶ No Greek was ever taught again at the Lyceum in the subsequent history of that institution.

4.4 Latin pique in Maltese culture

Latin in Malta was always associated with the Catholic Church, making it quite impossible to divorce a study of the history of Latin, in any of its aspects, from the Church. The Churches' monopoly of Latin disallowed the language from ever becoming the prerogative of scholars and students. The liturgy of the mass offered the unlettered populace a daily encounter with Latin and a sense of mysticism that the language could evoke.⁷⁷ A special oration at church, even when delivered in the vernacular, demanded a string of quotes in Latin.⁷⁸ The language received still greater prominence during exceptional occasions in the ecclesiastical calendar.

The death of Pope Pius IX on 7 February 1878 threw the whole island into such a state of solemn grief that the British Governor had to declare a day (16 February) of national mourning.⁷⁹ The demise of the longest-reigning pontiff inspired a ferment of devotional activity in churches and educational establishments of Malta and Gozo, and the decision of

⁷⁵ Anon. 1898: 126-127, 209 (sitting of 22/10/1895).

⁷⁶ Anon. 1898: 243 (sitting of 28/09/1896).

⁷⁷ On Church Latin and mysticism, see Waquet 2001: 47-50, 237-238.

⁷⁸ E.g. Portelli 1895(?): an eleven-page funerary oration in Maltese by Revd A. Portelli, delivered in 1895 at the Msida Church, featuring fifteen different Latin quotations, one of which, 'Ubi est thesaurus tuus ibi est et cor tuum' (Matthew 6.21), being a leitmotif repeated no less than seven times.

⁷⁹ Ferres 1878: 50.

Achilles Ferres, a Maltese historian, to collect the (mostly temporary) inscriptions, hymns, key orations, and obituaries dedicated to the Pope's sanctified memory resulted in a hefty 550-page publication.⁸⁰ The compilation is fascinating if only for the mixture of languages (predominately Italian and Latin, but also Maltese and English) in which these eulogies were composed. Soon, however, an anonymous pamphlet appeared entitled *Sillabo di taluni errorruzzi* (Syllabus of some blunders) which mocked several of the Latin inscriptions recorded in Ferres' book.⁸¹ It took its name from the notorious *Syllabus Errorum* that Pius IX had issued in 1864 condemning a number of errors or heresies.⁸²

Infused with a spirit of scathing wit, our anonymous *Sillabo* finds fault with several Latin inscriptions for a number of reasons, ranging from unnecessary length to obscure conciseness, from grammatical mix-ups to lexical impropriety, from errors of Catholic dogma to the profanity of quotations from classical authors. Although several scholars had contributed at least one inscription - because, as the author observes, the extraordinary bereavement witnessed Maltese epigraphists 'sprouting up in our land like so many microscopic mushrooms'⁸³ - the author is evidently at his mordant best when he directs his attack against distinguished clerical academics. Consequently, the Professor of Latin Literature at the University, Revd Antonio Albanese, his predecessor in the Chair and the current Professor of Moral Theology, Revd Salvatore Caruana, and the Preceptor of Latin at the Lyceum and future Professor of Latin, Revd Francesco Sceberras, all suffer at the author's hands, with Caruana receiving the worst berating of the three.⁸⁴ Caruana is criticised for adopting verses in his inscriptions from Ovid, Propertius, and Perseus, verses certainly not originally intended for sacred edification: could not the Professor of Moral Theology have lifted sublime phrases

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Anon. 1878.

⁸² On the Syllabus, see Sandoni 2012: 7-22.

⁸³ Anon. 1878: 14. The Parish Church at Senglea alone could boast 27 inscriptions.

⁸⁴ For relative biographies, see Chapter 6.

from the Holy Bible instead?⁸⁵ The high-ranking ecclesiast who seems to be this censor's favourite butt, however, was Revd Professor Dr Francesco Saverio Vassallo, the Vice Rector of the Archievescoval Seminary. Vassallo had composed all the inscriptions for the obsequies performed at the Cathedral of Mdina.

Over the main door, on the outside, towered a very long inscription of 42 verses. Good heavens! Certainly no one read it from beginning to end, or rather if someone hard-headed would have wanted to read it in full, certainly it would have caused him a stiff neck. It seems to some that if the inscription is not long, then it cannot be beautiful. They are mistaken. The long-winded man, that is to say the talkative man, is rarely wise. Here we have the same situation. Such long bibliographic inscriptions are in the habit of being written on parchment and, enclosed in a lead pipe, buried together with the dead body. Oh how much better it would be to bury this one too, leaving it to sleep in peace!⁸⁶

The author explains that this misguided verbosity drove Vassallo to 'vomit a heretical blasphemy' in what he alleges and expounds to be a wrong use of the verb 'inerro'.⁸⁷ He also censures Vassallo for using, in another inscription, the archaic 'duit' instead of 'donet' simply 'to add to his porridge some flavour of the ancient Roman'. Whereas Virgil had read Ennius to pick up the gold in the mud, Vassallo has abandoned the gems to grovel in the mud.⁸⁸ The *Sillabo* goes on in this strain to the last page, until the author finally seems to have had enough of it, exclaiming virtually in mid-sentence 'Oh let's be done with it! Wishing to teach the professors of grammar is really too impudent'.⁸⁹

The publication of this scathing critique must have sent shockwaves across the echelons of Maltese academic and ecclesiastical institutions.

⁸⁵ Anon. 1878: 7. Cf. Vella, H.C.R. 2008: 101-156, where, in the 35 Latin inscriptions found at the small Church of Our Lady of Portu Salvu in Senglea, echoes of no less than thirteen Latin classical authors are identified, ranging from Plautus to Quintilian. Nineteen borrowings are cited from Cicero alone.

⁸⁶ Anon. 1878: 4.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 4-5.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 5.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 15.

Suffice it to say that two of the priests whose linguistic expertise had been challenged thought it vital to their reputation to publish an *apologia*.⁹⁰ The two apologists, F.S. Vassallo and F.M. Sceberras, both do their best to expunge the criticism received in the *Sillabo*. However, what is most interesting is that both point an accusing finger at the famed Abate Giuseppe Zammit, otherwise known as 'Brighella', as the culprit responsible for the anonymous work. The most eminent 19th-century Maltese Latinist,⁹¹ Zammit was also an irreverent satiric journalist embittered by all forms of hierarchical establishment. Whereas Sceberras' prudence gets the better of him and he accuses Zammit only indirectly (e.g. by defending himself through examples from inscriptions of 'il chiarissimo sacerdote Dr Giuseppe Zammit'), Vassallo is rather brusque:

We appeal to an undoubtedly most competent authority, without doubt the anonymous author of the *Sillabo* - and it is of the celebrated *Abate* Zammit - to whom the praises awarded in the said *Sillabo* would appear much more honourable and dear, had he received them from someone else's pen.⁹²

There are indeed a number of hints in the *Sillabo* that suggest Zammit as its author. As Vassallo states in the excerpt above, the inscriptions contributed by Zammit are among the very few that receive unreserved praise by the *Sillabo*. The *Sillabo* even considers Zammit as deserving of the Latin legend found on the monument to Machiavelli at the Church of Santa Croce in Florence, 'Tanto nomini nullum par elogium'. In the same passage, the author is careful to note that, in one of Zammit's inscriptions recorded in Ferres' book, the word 'Christus' had been left out, an observation that indicates a closer familiarity with the inscription than Ferres inaccurately provides.⁹³ Over and above these intimations, there is the delightful blend of learned discussion and biting satire that

⁹⁰ Sceberras 1879 (?); Vassallo, F.S. 1879.

⁹¹ On Zammit, see 6.3.

⁹² Vassallo, F.S. 1879: 3.

⁹³ Anon. 1878: 14.

altogether strengthen the assumption that Zammit was the author of the pamphlet.

4.5 Keenan's Report and the classics

The Royal Commission of 1878, already mentioned above, was composed of two British civil servants, Penrose G. Julyan and Patrick J. Keenan.⁹⁴ The former officer's task was to investigate the civil establishment and finances of the island. It was Keenan's assignment, however, which bears the more relevant significance to the present study. A resident commissioner of the National Education Board of Ireland, Keenan was charged to inspect the situation of education in Malta. After visiting schools, Lyceum and University, Keenan set about writing his extensive Report, which was eventually published in 1879. Keenan's Report, even more than Julyan's,⁹⁵ was to exercise a profound and wide-ranging effect far beyond the educational framework. Its effect on the political and cultural development of the island can hardly be overestimated.

There can be little doubt that a major agenda behind the inquiry was the establishment of English as a medium of education rather than Italian.⁹⁶ In spite of many decades of direct British rule, Italian had retained its hold on Maltese education, not to mention its continual dominion at the law courts.⁹⁷ The Fundamental Statute, for example, stipulated that admission to the Lyceum was granted to a candidate who passed a test in Italian reading and writing (from dictation) and in Arithmetic.⁹⁸ Lessons

⁹⁴ See 3.6 and 4.1.

⁹⁵ Julyan 1879.

⁹⁶ NAM, GOV 1/3/15, Barton to Hicks Beach, 29/07/1878, which makes it highly apparent that the underlying purpose of the Royal Commission was that of Anglicization and the removing of Italian.

⁹⁷ Cf. Julyan 1879: 57, where reference is made to the Census of 1861 that had revealed that 'only about one person in nine professed to speak [English] and only one in ten to be able to write it'.

⁹⁸ Anon. 1838: 26 (Art. 66).

of English at the Lyceum were given in Italian, as was all lectures at the University (including a substantial portion of the lectures in the subject of English).⁹⁹ Before he had set foot in Malta, Keenan was given clear instructions as to where he was to lay the major stress of his inquiry: a memorandum drawn up by a Revd Mr Bishop had been made available to Keenan by the Governor of Malta, Arthur Borton. Returning from a formal inspection of government schools in India, Bishop had investigated Maltese schools, stressing 'the advisability of setting aside the Italian language altogether as a medium, and leaving it only to be learnt as a classical language, and making the vernacular and English, the two practical languages of the Maltese people, on the Indian system'.¹⁰⁰ In his Report, Keenan argued for the use of English as the language of instruction.¹⁰¹ This measure was considered by many as part of the movement towards enforced Anglicization of the island.¹⁰² On his part, Penrose Julyan also advocated strongly the adoption of the English language at the Law Courts and the prohibition of Italian in the public service and legislature. Describing as 'a great error' Austin and Lewis's recommendation forty years previously that Italian should be retained in preference to English, Julyan went so far as to warn that there were 'political agitators' in Malta campaigning for Italian irredentism.¹⁰³

Keenan found that, at the time of his visit, there were in all 373 students enrolled at the Lyceum.¹⁰⁴ The Lyceum comprised twelve schools of general instruction, one of which was the Latin School.¹⁰⁵ Keenan is critical not only of the fact that schools were totally independent of each

⁹⁹ Keenan 1879: 74

¹⁰⁰ NAM, GOV 1/3/15, Barton to Hicks Beach, 29/7/1878. Frendo (2013: 10) suggests Bishop to be 'the liturgiologist-historian Edmund Bishop who was at the Education Office [of the Privy Council] in 1864-1865'.

¹⁰¹ Keenan 1879: 105-106, and *passim*.

¹⁰² In Cyprus, native leaders generally interpreted Revd J. Spencer's zealous promotion of the English language in the early 1880s as a proof 'of the British aim to dehellenize the people'; cf. Persianis, 1978, 23-24, 159-162. Spencer was Cyprus' first Director of Education after Britain took over the island in 1878.

¹⁰³ Julyan 1879: 57, 56.

¹⁰⁴ Keenan 1879: 69. The number of students at the Lyceum is later (p. 71) given as 356. Sixty-three more students attended the Lyceum's evening classes learning technical subjects.

¹⁰⁵ For full discussion on the Valletta Lyceum, Keenan 1879: 68-84.

other, but also because there was not any defined programme to be found and every student, being 'his own master of study', had a free choice of what subjects to pursue.¹⁰⁶ In evidence, Keenan furnished a whole list of statistics showing the very wide range of 121 different subject-groupings that students were following, with many of these subject-groups having only one student attached to them.¹⁰⁷ He described this classification as 'an educational chaos unparalleled ... in the British Dominions', a confusion which must have encouraged that which Keenan believed to be the other great 'stigma on the operation of the Lyceum', namely, the extremely irregular attendance of students.¹⁰⁸ The Latin School was under the charge of Revd Dr Albanese, who, between 1877 and 1885, also occupied the Chair of Latin at the University.¹⁰⁹ Albanese was assisted by Revd Dr Paolo Vella, the latter being, according to Keenan, the only one of all the teachers then employed at the Lyceum who had obtained the post by competition.¹¹⁰ Of the 92 students attending the Latin School, four were exclusively studying Latin, while 87 were also taking Italian. Keenan calculated that the average cost per head of the Latin school was £1 9s.10d.,¹¹¹ which was considerably more expensive than the Italian School, with a cost of 18s.10d. per head, but far less pricey than the less popular Arabic School, which was costing the Government £5 16s.8d. per head.¹¹²

Keenan also paid a visit to the Lyceum of the Three Cities which was situated in Vittoriosa across the Grand Harbour from Valletta.¹¹³ It had been founded in 1867 during the government of Sir Henry Storks to cater for the education of the population of the area. Keenan found that 43 students attended this Lyceum, 17 of whom were studying Latin under

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 70.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 71-73.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 73, 74.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Thomas Hewitt Key (1799-1875), Professor of Latin, then of Comparative Grammar, at University College London, and also Headmaster of University College School: see Stray 2004.

¹¹⁰ Keenan 1879: 73.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 76.

¹¹² Ibid. 76, 77.

¹¹³ Ibid. 84-85.

Revd F.M. Sceberras, who was later to succeed Albanese in the Chair of Latin. Five of these students were young ecclesiastical students.¹¹⁴ The system of enrolment and the freedom of choice as regards fields of study was very similar to that of the Lyceum of Valletta, although the variety of subjects was restricted. Keenan was appalled to discover that there were seven different 'courses' of study. In the same way as at the Valletta Lyceum, the lack of proper organization led to great irregularity of attendance and truancy. Although he considered it the 'only important development' since the promulgation of the Fundamental Statute of 1838,¹¹⁵ Keenan observed a great disproportion between the running cost of the institution and its ultimate benefits, and thus recommended its closure.

Keenan proposed a complete overhaul of the Lyceum of Valletta by the establishment of:

- (a) A Preparatory School: a course of three years teaching English, Spelling and Dictation, Grammar, Arithmetic, Writing, and Geography; with Italian and the rudiments of Latin, as optional extra branches.
- (b) A Commercial School: a course of four years comprising of English, Arithmetic, Mensuration, History and Geography, Penmanship, and Book-keeping; with Italian, French, Arabic, the Physical Sciences, and Drawing, as optional subjects.
- (c) A Classical School: a course of four years, embracing Latin, Greek, English, Geometry, Algebra, History, and Geography; with Italian, French, and Drawing, as optional subjects.¹¹⁶

It is pertinent to note how Keenan's recommendations reduced Italian to an optional study (as Bishop had suggested), as well as his inclusion of Ancient Greek among the compulsory subjects at the Classical School.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 85.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 51.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 82, 110.

A side-note Keenan made about the legitimacy of the title 'Lyceum' is interesting as it gives an indication not so much of the respect that the learned Maltese paid to classical culture as of the finicky superficiality they loved to lend to such highbrow arguments. Some had criticized the title 'Lyceum' as inappropriate for a teaching establishment where no Aristotelian philosophy was taught.¹¹⁷ Keenan makes the following irritated remark:

'Lyceum', 'Gymnasium', 'Academy', 'School' are all very elastic terms; and if some of the critics of the Lyceum of Valletta find fault with this designation because Aristotelian Philosophy may not be cultivated in it, other critics, on grounds quite as classical, might object to its being called an Academy because Platonic Philosophy is not taught in it; and others might, for various learned reasons, object to the title Gymnasium, whilst the term "School" itself might be objected to by votaries of hard work who look to its literal Greek derivation. The institution, in point of fact, has long been known as the Lyceum. Even if some eminent man came from the spot where Aristotle himself taught, near the banks of the Ilissus, to question the appropriateness of the designation, I could see no sufficient reason for altering it.¹¹⁸

During the time Keenan was inspecting the University, there were 168 students distributed among the four faculties, i.e. Philosophy and Arts, Theology, Law, and Medicine.¹¹⁹ Admission to the several faculties took place, as a rule, every three years. Of the student population attending the University, 108 followed courses of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts in the various schools, namely, Latin, Italian, English, Mathematics and Physics, Intellectual and Moral Philosophy and Logic, Political Economy, Botany, and Inorganic Chemistry. This Faculty, whose average student cost per head Keenan estimated to be £6 per annum, received the brunt of the Royal Commissioner's critique with respect to

¹¹⁷ See e.g. Flores 1898: 33-35.

¹¹⁸ Keenan 1879: 82.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 51-68, for full discussion on the University.

the whole University setup. Not only had the Council of the Faculty not met once in the preceding three years, but ever since the promulgation of the Fundamental Statute in 1838 no student had obtained the degree of MA, the only degree that the Faculty at the time could confer.¹²⁰ Such a level of disorganization was, in Keenan's opinion, endangering the whole existence of the University: 'The Faculty of Arts is a mere medley of schools, without symmetry or purpose - without any systematic amalgamation of cognate branches of knowledge; it does not even aim at any ideal of a University course of education.' Of the 108 students enrolled in the Arts Faculty, 50 were engaged upon the study of one subject solely.¹²¹ Two of these 50 students were learning nothing but Latin at the University.¹²² Keenan in fact envisaged that the whole survival of the University depended upon a thorough reorganization of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy.¹²³ He recommended a clearly defined Oxbridge-style curriculum running over three years, with the study of Latin and Greek (Ancient or Modern) featuring during the whole duration of the course. His more important recommendation was the establishment of a Matriculation Examination 'to be held in an appointed course of Latin, English, Italian, Geography, History, and Mathematics'.¹²⁴

We have already seen how Keenan combined his endorsement of the reintroduction of Greek at the Lyceum with the attractions of new migratory opportunities to Cyprus.¹²⁵ In his Report, which specified that both Ancient and Modern Greek should be taught, he also urged the reform should extend to the University,¹²⁶ where the only form of the language that had ever been taught was New Testament Greek.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Ibid. 53.

¹²¹ Ibid. 66.

¹²² Ibid. 54. In all, the class of Latin under Professor Albanese comprised 22 students.

¹²³ Ibid. 66.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 108.

¹²⁵ See 4.3.

¹²⁶ Keenan 1879: 54.

¹²⁷ Cf. Savona (1883: 35): '... Greek and Arabic, which have never been taught in the University'.

Keenan was particularly shocked that Greek (like Hebrew) did not form part of the programme of studies in the Faculty of Theology.¹²⁸ Greek was not even taught at the Archiepiscopal Seminary. A Chair of Greek had been established there in the early 1750s, with the appointment of Revd Franciscus Rizardoppoli,¹²⁹ to be abandoned in the course of the years. However, an authority much closer to the sensibilities of Roman Catholic Malta than the British Royal Commissioner could ever hope to be would soon be urging the study of Greek upon Theology students. In 1885 Pope Leo XIII, in an epistle known from its first words as *Plane quidem intelligis*, advised his Vicar ‘ut in in sacro Seminario Nostro Romano certae destinataeque scholae adolescentibus aperiantur acrioris ingenii diligentiaeque: qui emenso, ut assolet, italicarum, latinarum, graecarumque curriculo litterarum, possint sub idoneis magistris limatius quiddam in illo triplici genere perfectiusque contingere’.¹³⁰ In his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* of 1893,¹³¹ the same Pope would warn that ‘Quamvis enim, ad summam rei quod spectat, ex dictionibus Vulgatae hebraea et graeca bene eluceat sententia, attamen si quid ambigue, si quid minus accurate inibi elatum sit, “inspectio praecedentis linguae” suasore Augustino, proficiet’, echoing what the Maltese Salvatore Cumbo had written half a century earlier.¹³²

It is ironical that when the Royal Commissioner was advocating the teaching of Greek in Malta, the fifty-year debate over Compulsory Greek had already commenced in England.¹³³ This was partially triggered by the expansion of the British Empire which corresponded to an intriguing cultural shift suffusing discourses on empire. Important British

¹²⁸ Keenan 1879: 63.

¹²⁹ On Rizardoppoli (1757-1788), the son of a Greek from Cephalonia and a Maltese woman, see Chetta-Schirò 1920: 184-186, and Bonnici 2003: 87-88.

¹³⁰ Cited by Mir 1958: 7.

¹³¹ The official title of the encyclical was *De studiis scripturae sacrae*.

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/la/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus.html> (accessed 09/03/2018).

¹³² See 3.6.

¹³³ According to Stray (1986: 83), the fifty-year long ‘Compulsory Greek’ debate commenced around 1870. For its development, see Stray 1998: 265-270.

policymakers were seeing Rome much more fitting than Greece as the natural paradigm of, and justification for, British imperialistic ambitions.¹³⁴ This came to a head in 1877 when Queen Victoria was proclaimed the Empress of India.¹³⁵ The increasing concern to legitimize imperialistic growth by the Roman model contributed to a decline of Greek in the curricula at British public schools and top Universities.¹³⁶ It was a rather protracted decline. A University degree in Classics (both Latin and Greek) remained the preferred qualification for lucrative posts in the Empire, such as employment with the Indian Civil Service.¹³⁷ Greek continued to be an entry requirement to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge until after World War I.¹³⁸ By 1920, however, when Eric Shepherd felt so reassured at the sight of a Greek inscription on the University of Malta's gateway, Greek was no longer compulsory for entry to either Oxford or Cambridge.¹³⁹

4.6 Establishment of the Matriculation Examination

Keenan's Report was expected in Malta with great anticipation.¹⁴⁰ Upon its completion and publication, it was the task of Sigismondo Savona, who in 1880 succeeded Can Paolo Pullicino as the Director of Education, to embark on the implementation of the recommendations contained therein.¹⁴¹

An Anglophile and patriot, Savona had successfully followed a two-year regimental schoolmaster course at the normal school of the Royal

¹³⁴ Vance 1997: 222-246.

¹³⁵ Vasunia 2005: 48-49.

¹³⁶ Stray 1998a: 227-229, 265-270.

¹³⁷ Vasunia 2013: 193-235.

¹³⁸ Stray 1998a: 1.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 269.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. e.g. *CG*, 18/12/1878, 'Preceptorship of Ancient and Modern Greek in the Lyceum', 56-61 (discussed in 4.3).

¹⁴¹ Frendo 2013: 17-22.

Military Asylum in Chelsea. During his years in England, he had also made the acquaintance of T.B. Macaulay, the poet of *The Lays of Ancient Rome*.¹⁴² Upon his return to Malta in 1865, Savona initiated the best English language teaching school on the island and entered the political scene soon to become a leading political figure. By virtue of the reforms in the University Statute in the wake of the publication of Keenan's Report, Savona's appointment made him also the virtual Rector of the University, a 'university rector who had never been to university'.¹⁴³ In 1883 he published a comprehensive Report with a full account of the reforms in the educational system exercised in the first years of his term,¹⁴⁴ supported by comparative examples from the systems of a wide array of European countries: 'What is done in England? What is done in Prussia, Austria, Holland and Italy?', is the spirit imbuing his analysis.¹⁴⁵

Immediately upon his appointment, Savona set about reorganizing the Lyceum by the establishment of three Departments according to Keenan's suggestions. A student admitted to the Lyceum would now start by following a three-year preliminary course at the Preparatory Department, at the completion of which he would follow either the course at the Classical Department or that at the Modern Department. While the former Department prepared students for admission to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the latter catered for students aiming for a career in the Civil Service, the Army or Navy, or in commerce. The Preparatory Department provided basic instruction required by both other Departments.¹⁴⁶ In Savona's organization, Latin was the subject that mainly distinguished the Classical from the Modern Department, by being compulsory at one but missing from the other. Ancient Greek was optional at the Classical Department, as 'it was not taught advisable to aggravate pupils with the [obligatory] study of Greek' which Keenan had

¹⁴² Ibid. 17.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 36.

¹⁴⁴ Savona 1883.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 16-17.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 15.

recommended.¹⁴⁷ Modern Greek was offered as an optional at the Modern Department. Those students intending to join the Classical Department also studied Latin at the Preparatory Department. As for Keenan's crucial recommendation to change the language of instruction at the Lyceum and University from Italian to English, Savona gives reasons why this was not entirely practical. Italian continued to be an obligatory subject for all students attending the Lyceum and University. However, English was adopted as the medium of communication 'whenever it could be done without detriment to the true interests of education'.¹⁴⁸

By restricting Latin to the Classical Department, Savona was fulfilling an idea he had already voiced nearly twenty years previously, when, in a lecture delivered in 1865 with the title of *On the necessity of educating the people*, he had signalled the study of the classical languages as one of the dispensable subjects for students not 'destined for the learned professions'. For, Savona asked, 'What is a government or a commercial clerk, or a civil engineer, to do with Greek and Latin?'.¹⁴⁹ Latin was indeed one of the optional subjects in the Maltese Civil Service Examination, the only two obligatory subjects being English and Italian.¹⁵⁰ For those seeking a professional career, however, Savona considers Latin an 'important subject' and in his Report urges the three teachers of Latin at the Lyceum to improve their method of instruction, as the Professor of Latin at the University had complained that 'the students sent to the University were not adequately prepared to pursue their studies in the Arts Faculty'. At the time of the writing of his Report, 61 students were studying Latin in the Classical Department and 68 in

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 24.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 19-20.

¹⁴⁹ Savona 1870: 21.

¹⁵⁰ Keenan 1879: 93. Latin continued to be one of the optional examination papers for particular governmental posts until at least the early 1970s. Cf. Interview: Vella, B. Cf. also ASCD, Dun Karm Psaila Papers, which reveal that Revd Karm Psaila, Malta's national poet, was appointed as Examiner of Latin in the examination for the 'Third Class of the Clerical Establishment of the Malta Civil Service' for the examination of 1928, 1933, and 1935.

the Preparatory Department.¹⁵¹ In the case of Greek, the very low number of 8 students pursuing the language in 1882, in spite of the language's having 'acquired increased value and importance for those who might wish to emigrate to Turkey',¹⁵² was a discouraging sign to Savona, although he adds that the results of the examination show that the language was being taught well.¹⁵³ He regretfully considers the introduction of Greek at the University 'impractical'.¹⁵⁴

Instigated by Keenan's adverse criticism of the whole setup of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts at the University, the indefatigable Savona lost no time in putting into effect a number of important reforms at that Faculty. He drew up a full scheme whereby students joining the Faculty were to follow an obligatory three-year course in Latin, English, and Italian Literatures, and, at a fixed time during these three years, set courses in Mathematics, Physics, and Philosophy. Only successful performance in examinations could ensure students' graduation in Arts or their admittance to the higher Faculties of Law, Medicine, and Theology.

To ensure adequate grounding for academic studies, Savona also implemented another of Keenan's recommendations, namely, the institution of a Matriculation Examination, which all students seeking admission into the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts were required to pass.¹⁵⁵ This was to be one of the most enduring and important of Savona's reforms, with the Lyceum and other establishments of secondary education needing to bring their courses into line in order to prepare students for Matriculation. Since the three-year academic course of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts was a prerequisite to the

¹⁵¹ Savona 1883: 24-25. One of the three Latin teachers at the Lyceum was the Professor of Latin himself (p. 30).

¹⁵² Cf. Julyan 1879: 57, who stated that in 1877 the value of Malta's commercial relations with Turkey was 'nearly eleven times as great' as that with Italy.

¹⁵³ Savona 1883: 25. One student at the annual examination of Ancient Greek in 1881 scored full-marks (p. 27). The teacher in 1881 was Teofani Atanasio (see 4.3).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 35.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 32.

pursuit of higher studies within the Faculties of Law, Medicine and Theology, a pass in the Matriculation Examination was considered to be an imperative step towards the building of one's professional or vocational career.

The first edition of this examination took place in September 1882 in the University, before the Special Council of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and consisted of six papers, including one in 'Latin language and the History of Rome'. Only twenty-three candidates presented themselves at the first sitting, the suddenness of the novelty discouraging many others from the attempt. Besides, some of the subjects in the programme were not currently taught at the Lyceum, including the History of Rome (and the Histories of England and Italy, added to the respective languages). The Latin paper registered the highest number of failures, thirteen, from all the subjects.¹⁵⁶ Among the candidates who failed the first Matriculation examination was (Sir) Themistocles Zammit, later Rector of the University and a distinguished scholar and archaeologist. For Latin, he obtained only 24 marks out of 100 in 1882 (having also been examined orally). He failed again in the supplementary Matriculation Latin exam in April 1883, scoring 18 marks, and again in October 1883 with 19 marks. Meanwhile, Zammit obtained exemption to start the University Literature Course in 1882, failed his first sitting of the annual examination in Latin Literature in October 1883 but was finally successful in the examinations held in October 1884 with 46 marks.¹⁵⁷

Since the Course of Arts and Philosophy commenced once every three years, and since failing the Matriculation Examination could thus cause the candidate a delay of many years before entering University, the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 35. Six candidates failed in English, nine in Italian.

¹⁵⁷ UMHA, Special Council Arts and Sciences 1881-1889, 28/09/1882, 13/04/1883, 08/10/1883, and 21/10/1884. Cf. *ibid.*, 21/10/1885, which shows Zammit's Latin performance improved considerably in the written exams for admission to the Faculty of Medicine in 1885, for which he scored 64 marks, and thus higher than English (62 marks) or Italian (53 marks). Cf. Ellul-Micallef 2013: 1.221 and n., who states that Zammit had not studied Latin at the Lyceum.

examination became an experience of great anxiety, one whose outcome involved, according to Gerald Strickland, at the time Secretary General to Government, 'the difference between success and failure in life'.¹⁵⁸ Although the introduction of other 'chances' for failing candidates subsequent to each sitting of the exam somehow mitigated the anxiety, the entire organization was from the beginning considered to be in need of considerable improvement. The standard of the Matriculation syllabus itself was considered from the beginning rather too exacting, indeed higher 'than the average of Matriculation requirements of either Oxford, Cambridge, or Dublin Universities'.¹⁵⁹ In 1887, a Committee was appointed by the British Government to consider, and to make recommendations with reference to the whole system of the Matriculation examination, and also the examinations in the Arts Faculty, including such issues as the framing of syllabi and exam papers, the manner in which the examinations were conducted, and the appointment of examiners. The members forming the Committee included Sigismondo Savona, who resigned as Director of Education midway through the sittings of this Committee, the incoming Director of Education, A.A. Caruana, and his eventual successor Napoleon Tagliaferro.¹⁶⁰ A Report, incorporating a full account of the proceedings and the minutes of the twenty-eight sittings of the Committee held between May and June of 1887, was published later in the same year.¹⁶¹ One of the tasks that the Committee took upon itself to accomplish was the drawing up of 'model syllabi' for all subjects forming part of the Matriculation examination, after the necessary consultation had taken place with the professor or professors in the respective field. It was agreed to model these syllabi largely on those of the London University Calendar for 1885.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Strickland 1898: 2.

¹⁵⁹ Anon. 1887: 2.

¹⁶⁰ *MGG*, 21/02/1887, 53.

¹⁶¹ Anon. 1887.

¹⁶² Anon. 1887: xxvi.

An appropriate educational attainment could gain the Maltese youth access to certain job markets in the British Empire. In the mid 1850s, Sir William Reid, Governor of Malta (1851-1858), had expressed doubt this could ever be attained, describing to British economist Nassau William Senior the reaction of some Maltese University students when they saw the examination papers of the East India Company: 'they turned from them in despair. "No Maltese," they said, "could answer such questions."' ¹⁶³ By the end of the century, Gerald Strickland, ¹⁶⁴ at the time serving as Chief Secretary to the Government of Malta, would speak of the great advantage for the rising Maltese generation should the Matriculation Examination be assimilated as much as possible to the examinations required for the admissions of officers in the Royal Malta Artillery, the Imperial Army and Navy, the Indian Civil Service, ¹⁶⁵ and the Civil Service of Malta. This, argued Strickland, would enable young men educationally trained for the University, and on the basis of that same education, to consider other opportunities for their future.

¹⁶³ Senior 1882: 2.254. The East India Company was the English trading company that controlled the Indian subcontinent from the early 18th century to the mid-19th century, when the rule was taken over by the Crown.

¹⁶⁴ Strickland 1898: 6-7.

¹⁶⁵ UMHA, Miscellanea 1919 (1), 1919 (2), 1920 (3), for Indian Civil Service examinations' regulations 1919 to 1921. UMHA, Miscellanea 1903, for an official letter from the University of Oxford to N. Tagliaferro, Director of Education, dated 03/02/1903, informing him that the Convocation of the University of Oxford had passed a decree admitting the UM to the privileges of the Statute on Colonial and Indian Universities. In his letter of reply, dated 15/05/1903, Tagliaferro thanked the University of Oxford but concluded that 'no senior students could presently avail themselves' of the privileges. Examinations for the Civil Service of India, usually held in London, were announced on *MGG* (e.g. issue of 14/03/1896). On these examinations and their classical dimension, see Vasunia 2013: 193-235.

CHAPTER 5 – AGAINST THE ODDS (1900-1979)

5.1 Historical preamble

The early years of the new century brought not only more amendments to the University's Fundamental Statute until its republication in 1907, but some evident signs of general progress and modernisation.¹ Under the rectorship of Edoardo Magro (1904-1920) many important changes were effected with the ultimate aim, according to a contemporary assessment, of 'bringing the University into line with the up-to-date Universities in Great Britain and in the Continent of Europe'.² In 1915, the number of Faculties was raised from four to six, the Faculty of Literature and Science having been split into two independent ones, one of Literature and one of Science, and Engineering and Architecture, which had formed part of the Faculty of Literature and Science, having been placed under a specially created Faculty of Engineering and Architecture.

The outbreak of World War I hampered the work of a Commission appointed by the Governor in 1916, and it was not until 1921 that a new Statute was promulgated.³ This Statute restored the General Council the power to frame and amend statutes, subject to the approval of the Rector. The General Council was to be chaired by the Rector, and consisted of six professors each elected by and from each Faculty, and of three members of the Convocation.⁴ Members were to serve three years at the end of which they were not eligible to stand again for office for twelve months.

¹ Vella, A.P. 1969: 86-89.

² Reynolds 1913. John Reynolds was at the time the Assistant Rector.

³ Vella, A.P. 1969: 93. The Statute was published in *MGG*, 29/04/1921, on the eve of Self-Government granted to Malta.

⁴ Vella, A.P. 1969: 94. The Convocation consisted mainly in all members, past or present, of the General Council and of the Special Councils, and all graduates of the University.

An escalation of economic difficulties triggered the 'Sette Giugno' riots in Valletta on 7 June 1919.⁵ As a result, in 1921, Malta was for the first time granted self-government under British rule, consisting of an elective Legislative Assembly and a Senate. The first general election was won by the Unione Politica Maltese, and Joseph Howard was appointed the first Prime Minister of Malta. In the 1927 election, the Constitutional Party won a sharply contested campaign against the Nationalist Party (a merging in 1926 of Unione Politica Maltese and Partito Democratico Nazionale), but the Prime Minister, Count Gerald Strickland, fell into conflict with the Church, forcing the colonial government to suspend the 1930 general election and the constitution. A Royal Commission was established in 1931 to examine the constitutional problems of Malta. The constitution was restored in 1932 and the Nationalist Party won a large majority at the ensuing election. The Nationalists' attempt to reinstate the position of the Italian language in education brought about the collapse of self-government and the return of direct British rule in 1933. The amendment of the Constitution in 1934 made Maltese the language of the law courts and ranked it as an official language alongside English.⁶

At the University, the composition of a new Statute promulgated in 1935 altered the composition of the General Council, increasing the number of members to twelve, six elected by the Faculties and six nominated by the Governor. The power to make, alter or amend the Statute, which previously was exercised by the General Council, was now vested in the Governor, restricting the General Council to a virtually consultative role. The Statute determined that, except for Theology (now taught in Latin)⁷ and the modern languages, all teaching must be in English or Maltese. In 1937, King George VI granted the University the title *Royal*, thus making its designation *The Royal University of Malta*.⁸ Although

⁵ Blouet 2017: 185-186.

⁶ Ibid. 185-190.

⁷ *MGG*, 05/10/1836, 946: 'In the Faculty of Theology, Latin shall be the medium of instruction in all the subjects which by Ecclesiastical Dispositions are to be taught through Latin ... In the Preparatory Course for admission to the Faculty of Theology, Philosophy shall be taught through Latin.'

⁸ Vella, A.P. 1969: 101-103.

University life somehow persisted during World War II, lectures often had to be abandoned during air raid attacks on Valletta and the harbour area by Italian and German bombers between 1940 and 1942.⁹ 'How awfully sad does our University look! All the glass has been smashed to atoms', bemoans one Maltese professor to another.¹⁰

In the years following the War, the publication of the Asquith Report,¹¹ recommending *inter alia* improvement of universities in British Colonies, revived the question of the autonomy of the University. Ordinance XXXII of 1947 was enacted by the Council of Government, securing for the University an autonomous status.¹² Ten years later a Joint Government-University Committee, known by the name of its chairman, Sir Hector Hetherington, made several proposals for the development of the University including its transfer to a new site. Through the work of another Commission, appointed in 1958 and chaired by Sir Ivor Jennings, full-time staff were appointed in Arts and Science, which made it possible to admit students in Arts and Science courses every year instead of every fourth year as was previously the rule.¹³ In 1961, the supreme authority of the University was passed again to a General Council, aided by a Senate.¹⁴ As part of Malta's Independence celebrations in 1964, the foundation stone of the University was laid on the new site at Msida, where, after its move five years later, and having been considerably enlarged since then, the main part of the institution is situated to the present day.

Thorough reforms in tertiary education were carried out by the Labour Government under Prime Minister Dom Mintoff in the late 1970s. In a bid

⁹ Blouet 2017: 212-241.

¹⁰ ASCD, Gużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 15/05/1941.

¹¹ *Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies*, presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1945, known thereafter by the name of the Commission's chairperson, Judge Cyril Asquith. For its effect on Malta, cf. Anon. 1947.

¹² This was partially in response to an attempt, in 1946, to subject the University to the Board of Education: see [Zarb] 1946 and 1947.

¹³ [Zarb] 1958.

¹⁴ Vella, A.P. 1969: 104-105.

to retain only 'functional' degree courses, Act XXI of the Education Act converted the University into two Universities, with such subjects as accountancy, business management, medicine, pharmacy, education and related branches of learning being assigned to the 'New' University; and sciences, the humanities, and law being assigned to the 'Old' University. The Faculties of Theology and of Arts were abolished. The setting up of a student-worker sponsorship scheme was meant to ensure that a student was already in employment before embarking on a University course relevant to the job.¹⁵ These reforms, however, were described as 'a wanton destruction of the University of Malta - the oldest in the Commonwealth outside the United Kingdom'.¹⁶

After some years of these policies, a change of government, following the election of the Nationalist Party in 1987, restored the University to its previous setup and reinstated the Faculty of Arts and that of Theology.¹⁷

5.2 The Language Question and Latin

The issue of language in Malta had been rearing its head intermittently since the early years of British administration. Nevertheless, it only became a real cause of friction and dissent in the aftermath of the publication of Keenan's Report. Keenan's controversial sanctions on language in 1879 generated two distinct ideologies among the Maltese, the traditionalist pro-Italian and the progressive pro-British. This division sparked the formation of the first political parties in Malta.¹⁸ For the next sixty years, the 'Language Question' increasingly pervaded and infiltrated every aspect of Maltese society, 'from persons to parties, from economy to politics, underlying practically every significant movement, glazed into every façade'.¹⁹ With the rise of Fascism in Italy in the early

¹⁵ Act XXI of 1978, which became law in July 1978. See Mayo 2012.

¹⁶ Anon. 1978.

¹⁷ Mifsud Bonnici, U. 2015: 265-273.

¹⁸ Frendo 2013: 15-60.

¹⁹ Frendo 2012: 39.

1920s and the accession of Benito Mussolini, the Language Question in Malta developed into a full-scale political battle. Mussolini's annexation of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania in North Africa in 1934 revived alarming fears of Italian irredentist ambitions to annex Malta.²⁰

That Italian was the national language of the Maltese was a notion that went back to a long time before Italy became a unified nation in 1861, but by the early 20th century *Italianità* in Malta had gained 'a quasi-religious cult'.²¹ The pro-Italian lobbyists were never taken in by British attempts to raise the profile of the Maltese language, interpreting this as a contemptible stratagem to oust Italian. They adhered to the idea that Maltese was a Semitic dialect good enough for popular parlance but inadequate to express literary and complex thoughts.²² The politician Fortunato Mizzi, the main representative of the Italophile movement, had in 1883 stated at the Council of Government that Maltese should only be studied for its linguistic value, 'as an ancient language such as Greek and Latin'.²³ Less than two years later, however, during a heated argument at the same Council, Mizzi had gone so far as to declare Maltese the 'maledizione del paese', a statement which drew a shocked reaction not only from his political opponent, Sigismondo Savona (then Director of Education), but even from the Lieutenant Governor himself, W.F. Hely-Hutchinson.²⁴ Mizzi's followers later hailed him 'Padre della Patria'.²⁵

By the turn of the century, British patience started to run short. Government officials often found themselves in an embarrassing situation because of the pervasive use of Italian in the island's highest civil and political institutions, such as the law courts, or the Legislative

²⁰ Ibid. 447-493.

²¹ Hull 1993: 12.

²² Frendo 2013: 34-36.

²³ *CG*, 21/11/1883, 140.

²⁴ *CG*, 13/05/1885, 958-967.

²⁵ Cf. Magri 1937; Tencajoli 1932: 25. Mizzi's brother, Emanuele Mizzi (1857-1934), was a successful translator in Italian of Juvenal (1903) and Martial (1924), both published in Italy; see Tencajoli 1932: 24-41, including excerpts. For Mizzi's other brother, Luigi Mizzi, see 4.3.

Assembly, where members were still allowed to speak in either English or Italian. When Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, delivered a speech in 1902 in the House of Commons on the use of the English Language in Malta, he hailed Latin as 'the official language of Malta' under the Knights and not Italian: 'latin [sic] was actually in use in the Courts - in the decisions of the Courts - and in many of the deeds and documents registered in the Courts, down to 1815, fifteen years after the British occupation. The use of Italian is absolutely modern'.²⁶ Far from seeing this as a threat to their cause, the Italophiles used it to their advantage. The learned Antonio Cini, a staunch Italophile who for a time taught Latin and Italian at the Seminary in Gozo and, later, at the Jesuit College of St Ignatius in Malta,²⁷ provided learned evidence for his argument that the language spoken by the Maltese during the time of Cicero was the colloquial idiom spoken simultaneously in the city of Rome.²⁸ This was the seed ('seme') of the Italian language, if not the Italian language itself. He corroborated this point by quoting a passage from *Lectures on the Science of Language* by Max Müller where the eminent philologist and orientalist had asserted in 1861 that 'Italian is Latin in a new form. Italian is modern Latin, or Latin ancient Italian. The names mother and daughter only mark different periods in the growth of a language substantially the same.'²⁹

As the mother language of Italian, as the language of theology and of the Roman liturgy, as a compulsory study leading to the professions, Latin invariably became, at least to the Maltese elite and educated classes, entrenched in the consciousness of *Italianità*. The continual usage of Italian in the social, civil, and educational establishment, together with the living presence of Latin at church and in instruction, were felt to be among the main factors legitimizing Malta's claim for Latin civilization. When, in 1899, Chamberlain ordered the abolition of Italian

²⁶ *MGG*, 08/02/1902, Supplement, vi. Chamberlain's statement was refuted by Maltese Italophiles: e.g. by Cini 1902.

²⁷ Mercieca 1904: 14, 19.

²⁸ Cini 1903: 8-12

²⁹ Quoted by Cini 1903: 66.

in the Maltese courts and its replacement by English, fear of the islanders' loss of Latin civilization was one of the points raised in the memorandum compiled by the Members of the Legal Profession in defence of Italian: 'The material interest that the population has of maintaining [Italian] is evident on account of the geographical position of Malta, surrounded as it is on all sides by Latin races and in view of its secular history which has filled its archives with documents written in Latin and Italian'.³⁰ The order was withdrawn and Italian prevailed as the language of the law courts for the next thirty years.

By the 1920s the language banner polarized the two main political antagonists. The pro-Italian side was represented by the Nationalist Party led by Enrico Mizzi (1885-1950), the son of Fortunato Mizzi and his Italian wife. The pro-British side was represented by the Constitutional Party led by the Anglo-Maltese Count Gerald Strickland (1861-1940). The son of a British naval officer and a member of the old Maltese nobility, Strickland had studied at Trinity College, Cambridge.³¹ He had held the position of Chief Secretary to the Government of Malta, and later, a number of governing posts in different locations of the British Empire. After his return to Malta in 1917, Strickland took on the leadership of the Constitutional Party. Both leaders would have their spell as Prime Minister: Strickland between 1927 and 1932, while death cut short Enrico Mizzi's term a few months after his election in 1950.

In the thick of the political battle, the Italophiles often brought up the connection between Italian and Latin. 'The Italian language, successor of the Latin, is our true national language', declared in 1931 one of the articles in *Malta*, a journal edited by Enrico Mizzi.³² Testifying before the Royal Commission of 1931, Mgr Enrico Dandria, former Minister of

³⁰ Quoted by Hull 1993: 42.

³¹ Strickland's brother, the Jesuit Giuseppe Strickland (1864-1917), had an interest in classical scholarship. He was the author of a learned pamphlet on the Homeric Question published in Italy in 1893.

³² Scicluna Sorge 1931: 92, reproducing the front-page article 'Quei certi fratelli saraceni' which appeared in *Malta* of 03/06/1931. Peresso (2015: 233) attributes the article to Giuseppe Donati.

Public Instruction (1924-1927),³³ hailed Italian culture as that which identified Maltese as Europeans; stripped of their *Latinità* and *Italianità*, the Maltese might 'become almost an African nation ... a non-European nation to whom the English language comes as the language of the Empire'.³⁴ Another witness in 1931 was Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici who, as we have already seen,³⁵ gave the Commissioners a rather straightforward definition of the criteria employed by Maltese literati when it came to the choice between Italian and Latin.³⁶ In response, the advocates of the British resuscitated with self-assured conviction the hypothesis that the origin of Maltese was Punic, hence a mother tongue more ancient than Latin.³⁷ They revived the claim, made by some foreign men of letters in the 16th century, that a Maltese person could understand the lines uttered in Punic by Hanno in Plautus' comedy *Poenulus*.³⁸ They cited *Acts'* description of the Maltese as *βάρβαροι*, in the lengthy account of Paul's shipwreck on the island, as an irrefutable proof that Punic was still the language spoken by the Maltese notwithstanding two and a half centuries of Roman rule. 'We were a nation and had our language before Rome was built, and before Greece had a civilization. I am proud of the fact that our race has retained its characteristics, racial, linguistic and religious,' declared Sir Augustus Bartolo, a leading member of Strickland's party, who also averred that 'even under the Romans the Maltese language was spoken and written'.³⁹ In a strongly Christian culture, *Acts'* description was always a thorn in the side of the

³³ Galea 1987: 17.

³⁴ Anon. 1931: 344.

³⁵ See 3.2.

³⁶ Anon. 1931: 79.

³⁷ According to Brincat (2011: 27-28) the hypothesis was first mentioned by Jean Quintin d'Autun in 1536 (cf. Vella, H.C.R., 1980). For Gerald Strickland's championing of the Phoenician origin, see Strickland, G. 1925. Cf. Vella, N.C. and Gilkes 2001.

³⁸ Plaut. *Poen.* 930-9, 940-9. Cf. Brincat 2011: 241-242. First attested by Quintin d'Autun, the notion continues to find currency even among later writers: e.g. by Wilson 1839: 99-100.

³⁹ Anon. 1931: 43. On Augustus Bartolo (1883-1937), see Schiavone 2009: 1.184-185. Sir Ronald Storrs, Governor of Cyprus (1926-1932), observed how local Cypriote orators often evoked the names of Ancient Greek poets as a proof of superior Cypriote culture 'at a time when the ancestors of their present "enslavers" wore wolf-skins and woad'; cited by Persians 1978: 186.

Italophiles who struggled to explain the meaning of *βάρβαροι*, sometimes with arguments bordering on the whimsical.⁴⁰

The indelible link between Italian and Latin in the consciousness of Italian Fascist ideology found expression in the writings of the great Italian antifascist Giuseppe Donati. An exile from the Fascist government in Italy, Donati lived in Malta between October 1930 and July 1931 and, in one of the paradoxes of history, was employed by Gerald Strickland to teach Italian at the Maltese politician's school, St Edward's College.⁴¹ Through a series of (anonymous) articles published in *Malta*, Donati became a forceful champion of the pro-Italian side. A genuinely devout man, Donati gained political mileage by highlighting the religious aspect of the fight for Italian as a new crusade for Christendom. For him, Anglicization was tantamount to a general Maltese conversion to Protestantism, warning, in one of his articles, that 'the linguistic question in Malta could be and in effect is a religious question too'. In eliciting the benefits of proficiency in Italian for the Maltese, Donati does not fail to articulate one advantage which many Maltese commentators seemed to take for granted:

One final word, which concerns the relationship between the Italian language and the study of Latin. The ability to speak Italian incalculably facilitates the study and the assimilation of Latin, which is the mother-language of Italian. Latin is the language of the Catholic Church and of the disciplines of History and Law.⁴²

⁴⁰ E.g. Scicluna Sorge 1931: 94, who reproduces the front-page article 'Pseudo-Erudizione a Coda di Serpente', which had appeared in *Malta* of 05/06/1931 and stated that, had the Maltese been Punic, Luke would have described them as 'idolatori' rather than 'barbari'. Peresso (2015: 233) attributes the article to Giuseppe Donati.

⁴¹ Peresso 2015: 43-74.

⁴² Scicluna Sorge 1931: 30, 32, who reproduces the front-page article 'Malta ai Maltesi e la questione linguistica' that appeared in *Malta* of 07/05/1931. Peresso (2015: 233) attributes the article to Giuseppe Donati. Cf. Scicluna Sorge 1940: 72-73.

5.3 Italian Latinists in Malta and the Rosa Melitensis

In 1914 the connection of Italian and Latin received fresh recognition within academia when the two languages were, for the first time since 1864, merged under the same University Chair. This could have been a political move to encourage Italian nationals to apply for the post. In fact, the scholar who acceded to the Chair in 1914 was the Italian Latinist, Alfredo Bartoli, who was appointed Professor of Latin and Italian Literatures. Bartoli was the first secular occupant of the Chair of Latin after its sixty-year long dominion by the Maltese clergy. Following Bartoli's resignation in 1923, however, 'the Government decided to separate [again] the two posts' of Latin and Italian Literatures.⁴³ Three Italian scholars succeeded to the Chair of Latin, starting with Vincenzo Laurenza (as acting Professor for the years 1923-1924, 1928-1933, and 1936-1939), Nello Martinelli (1924-1927), and Umberto Moricca (1933-1936).

Bartoli had been living and teaching in Malta for a number of years. He spared no energy to make his mark on the island and propagate the influence of Italian culture. One way of doing this was by bringing to prominence the erudition of certain Maltese literary figures of old, thus provoking the nationalistic sensibilities of contemporary Maltese. One of Bartoli's earliest lectures, delivered in 1907 at Flores College, was 'Umanisti vecchi e nuovi'. Towards the end of his long glorification of great Italian figures such as Poliziano, Pontano, and Foscolo, Bartoli imagined the spirit of the Maltese Latinist Giuseppe Zammit 'Brighella' wafting through the aisle and urged the audience to follow his example and rise to its feet: 'Maltesi, leviamoci in piedi: passa Giuseppe Zammit'.⁴⁴ The rightful recognition of Zammit, which Bartoli specifically advocated in the published version of this lecture,⁴⁵ was taken up by Vincenzo Frendo Azopardi, a Maltese poet and teacher of Latin and

⁴³ *ARU* 1923-24, iv.

⁴⁴ Bartoli 1907: 114. On 'Brighella', see 6.3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 114 n. 2.

Italian at the Lyceum,⁴⁶ who in the 1920s and 1930s published a number of articles on Zammit 'Brighella', preventing in this way the memory of the poet from fading away from national (and Italianate) consciousness: 'The figure of Giuseppe Zammit (Brighella), the refined Latin poet of the last century, emerges from the pages of Azopardi, living and breathing with fine and subtle irony', commented an Italian contemporary critic.⁴⁷ This was probably the first time that a Maltese scholar embarked on a serious scholarly appraisal of the achievements of a Maltese neo-Latin poet.

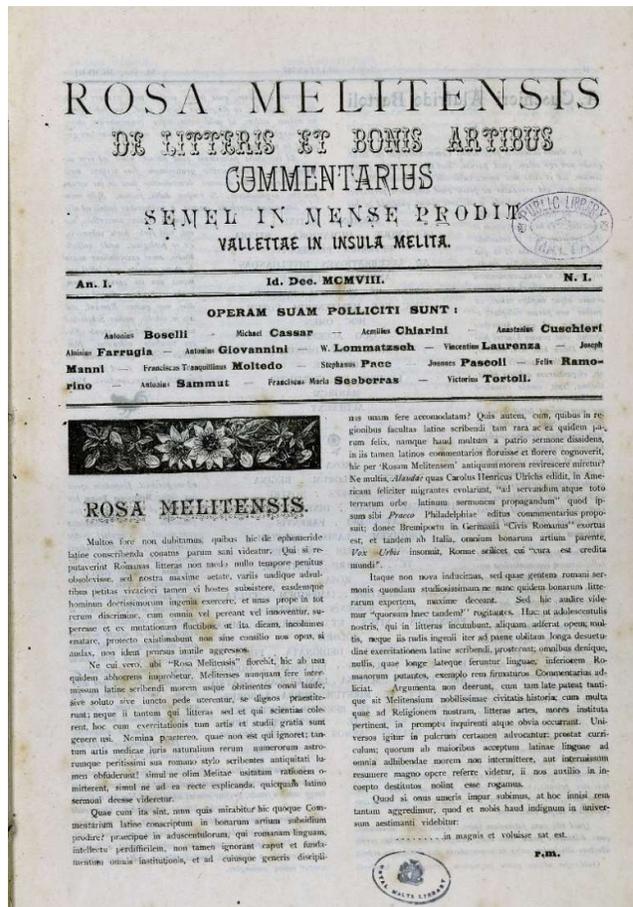


Figure 5 - *Rosa Melitensis*, front-page of the first edition

Bartoli's lasting accomplishment in the field of published Latin and classical diffusion in Malta was *Rosa Melitensis - de litteris et bonis artibus commentarius*, a monthly journal in Latin, which he started to edit and publish in October 1908 (Fig. 5). Notwithstanding its ephemeral lifetime (published, more or less regularly, until September 1910),⁴⁸

⁴⁶ For Frendo Azopardi, see Tencajoli 1932: 174-187.

⁴⁷ Tencajoli 1932: 175-176.

⁴⁸ The NL in Valletta possesses 15 issues bound in one volume, the last being the edition of September 1910. It is not possible to determine whether this volume misses other issues published after September 1910. Some of the later issues, comprising a greater number of pages than the previous ones, are doubled (e.g. the eleventh issue, of December 1909, is marked as Number 11-12), which tends to complicate matters.

the very fact that such a journal was published in Malta is already remarkable. Bartoli probably borrowed the title from Giovanni Pascoli's ode of 1902, 'Ad sodales melitenses', with its introductory question 'Priscamne fragrans fert Melite rosam?'.⁴⁹ The reproduction of this poem, highly patriotic with some recognizably irredentist lines, was to receive full-page prominence in one of the later issues of the *Rosa*, in large print and conspicuous framing (Fig. 6).⁵⁰ Pascoli himself had famously read his own Italian translation of this poem to members of the *Circolo 'la Giovine Malta'*, an Italophile youth organization under the aegis of the Nationalist Party, who had met him on their visit to Italy in 1902.⁵¹ But nothing overtly political was to be the objective of the paper, which Bartoli expounds on the front page of the initial edition. In providing such a platform for Maltese writers in Latin, he reveals why he is optimistic that appropriate themes will not be found lacking:

Argumenta non deerunt, cum tam late pateat tantique sit Melitensium nobilissimae civitatis historia; cum multa quae ad Religionem nostrum, litteras artes, mores instituta pertinerent, in promptu inquirenti atque obvia occurrant.⁵²

⁴⁹ Brincat 2011: 274.

⁵⁰ *Rosa*, 13-14, 13/02/1910, iv.

⁵¹ Hull 1993: 44.

⁵² [Bartoli] 1908a.

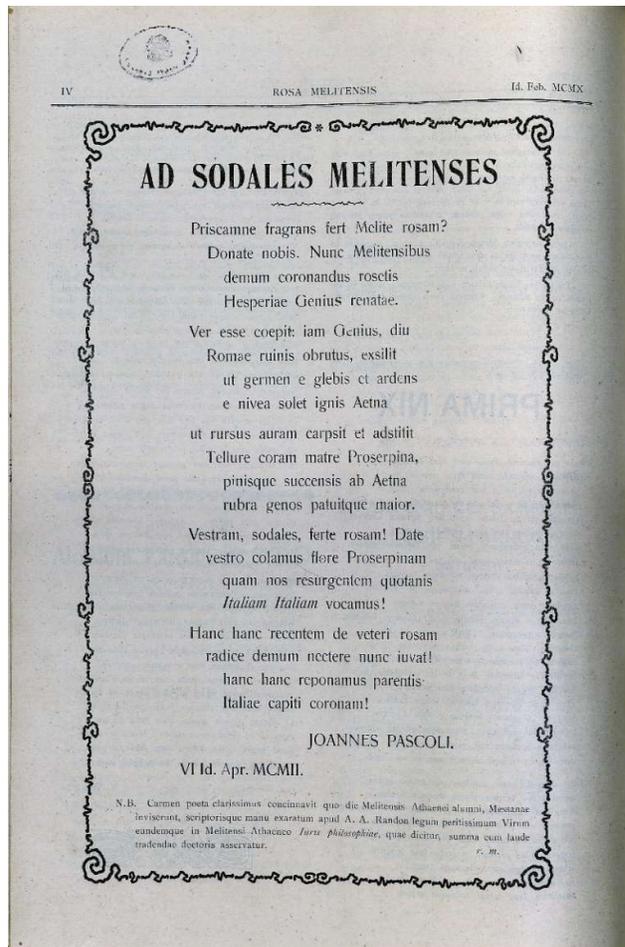


Figure 6 - *Rosa Melitensis*, Giovanni Pascoli 'Ad Sodales Melitensis'

That the *Rosa Melitensis* was the first Latin journal in the Maltese islands is confirmed by Revd Anastasio Cuschieri, Professor of Philosophy, as well as a notable poet in Maltese, who in a congratulatory letter, published in the first *Rosa Melitensis*, was happy to state that 'nunc primum, ni me forte fallo, latine commentarium melitenses salutamus, tale nihil umquam extitisse censeo.' Cuschieri

is cautious to add that Latin composition was never lacking in Malta: 'Nolim te existimare propterea hoc contigisse, quod defuerint hic antea viri, qui latinatam egregie callerent: res se longe aliter habet.'⁵³ Cuschieri's letter frames two epigrams both lauding Bartoli's endeavour, one by the then Professor of Latin, Revd F.M. Sceberras, the other by the famed epigrammist, Revd Luigi Farrugia.⁵⁴ Bartoli is careful in his first issue to show that Malta and Maltese Latinity are to hold centre-stage in his journal: he follows his article on Latin composition in Italy with another one entitled 'De Melita insula apud Romanos scriptores',

⁵³ Cuschieri 1908.

⁵⁴ On Sceberras and Farrugia, see 6.9 and 6.10 respectively.

and next, an article on the life and work of Luigi Rigord,⁵⁵ which would have earned the proud appreciation of Maltese literati.⁵⁶ In a way, this was prefiguring M. Sammut's articles 'De quibusdam melitensibus scriptoribus' spread over several issues.⁵⁷

In spite of its brief history, *Rosa Melitensis* enjoyed a respectable reputation both during and after its lifetime, in Malta and beyond. By the second issue, Bartoli could already boast that the the first *Rosa*, besides promotion in local journals, had received praise in foreign journals such as *L'Osservatore Romano* and *Il Fieramosca* in Italy, *Mnemosyne* in the Netherlands, and *Civis* in Germany.⁵⁸ It also appears that surviving copies of the *Rosa Melitensis* are a rarity. In 1979 the Italian neo-Latin poet Giuseppe Morabito, Bartoli's friend and promoter, lamented that he had never seen a copy.⁵⁹

5.4 The Chair of Latin in the thick of the fray

Just how much Latin was implicated in the language crisis can be seen in the debate at the Legislative Assembly on the appointment of the successor of Professor Alfredo Bartoli following the latter's resignation in 1923. The real cause behind Bartoli's downfall remains obscure. However, several months later, Augustus Bartolo' published indictment of Italian penetration of Malta embroiled Bartoli as a major culprit:

⁵⁵ Bartoli 1908b. Bartoli includes a number of Rigord's epigrams, of which, he adds, 'non ulla excerptam ex codice manu scripto quod in publica Bibliotheca adservantur'.

⁵⁶ Cf. Levanzin 1909. In this newspaper article on Rigord, Augusto Levanzin writes of the honour done to Rigord's memory when Bartoli, 'one of the best Latinists in the world today', published a biography in the *Rosa*.

⁵⁷ Sammut 1908-1909.

⁵⁸ *Rosa*, 2, 01/02/ 1909, vii. Bartoli also includes 'l'Indepedente qui Julae Caesaris in Africa prodit', and cites *Malta, Il Patriota, Malta Letteraria*, and *In-Naħla* among the Maltese journals who had promoted the *Rosa*.

⁵⁹ Morabito 1979: 321. Cf. ACM, Congress of Latin Studies 1973 (2), Morabito to Colerio, 09/12/1973, where Morabito states, 'Eppure venire a Malta mi darebbe l'opportunità di vedere ROSA MELITENSIS ... non ho visto mai quella rivista, per quanto abbia cercato da noi.'

It explains the fact that the last occupant of the Chairs [sic] of Latin and Italian Literatures at our University was an Italian professor whose exceptionally brilliant literary qualifications would have graced the foremost seat of learning in Italy, and it also accounts for his frequent trips to Italy which that arch-champion of pro-Italian propaganda in Malta made during his long tenure of office in the Island.⁶⁰

The Italian Vincenzo Laurenza (already mentioned above) was temporarily relieved from his teaching duties of Italian at the Lyceum to act as Professor of Latin until a new scholar was appointed. The Government had decided to split again the professorship into two, one of Latin and another one of Italian.

A University notice was published in the Government Gazette calling for applications for the two vacant posts.⁶¹ The call did not specify any restrictions to the nationality of the applicant. An intense polemic arose at the Legislative Assembly as to whether the person to fill the vacancy should be Italian or Maltese. The pro-Italian side, currently the majority at the Assembly, were pushing for an Italian successor.⁶² This was what the Anglophiles wanted to avoid. Resorting to a patriotic argument, they contended that the new professor should be Maltese, chosen from the several Maltese ecclesiastics who were accomplished Latin scholars.⁶³ Although Revd Enrico Dandria, Minister of Public Instruction, reassured the Assembly that, while fifteen copies of the call for applications for the Italian Chair had been sent to Rome, as regards that for Latin, 'government had not seen the need to follow the same pathway because there are good Latinists in Malta who could present themselves as candidates for that Chair',⁶⁴ University archives actually reveal that

⁶⁰ Bartolo 1924: 3.

⁶¹ *MGG*, 14/12/1923, 965 (Italian post), and 21/12/1923, 984 (Latin post).

⁶² *LA*, 07/01/1924, 520.

⁶³ *LA*, 18/02/1924, 1007. Cf. UMHA, Miscellenea 1923 (2), Mgr Can Giovanni Gauci's letter to Rector Zammit, dated 17/10/1923, in which he offers to teach Latin in the absence of Bartoli.

⁶⁴ *LA*, 07/01/1924, 520.

Italian scholars were let in on the Latin vacancy, since some still submitted their application for the post.⁶⁵

The issue came to a head at the sitting of 31 March 1924, when the general elections were only a few months away. A long debate pitted the major Maltese politicians of the time in an oftentimes-learned contest about the sort of credentials required for the Latin job.⁶⁶ Minister Dandria started by stating the official application figures of the applications, which were eleven applicants for the Professorship of Latin Literature, and forty for that of Italian.⁶⁷ In reply, Count Strickland delivered a long speech invoking what he described as his own outstanding Latin education to support his right to speak on the topic. He had studied the language not only in Malta but also at the Jesuit College in Mondragone at Frascati near Rome and in Cambridge, different scholarly experiences which, he explains, had constrained him to learn both Latin and Greek in two different pronunciations. 'I think I may say I have read more than one Latin classic from cover to cover. I have certainly read three of them', he claims.⁶⁸ As a rival member of the Assembly later taunts him (see below), Strickland could cite Latin authors 'con frequenza meravigliosa' during his political speeches. He now embarks on an impassionate appeal to what he calls the 'vested right of the people of Malta, of the students and teachers and professors of Latin in Malta that Latin should be taught by a Maltese' as had indeed been the case for many decades before the last occupancy of the Chair.⁶⁹ If Latin was to be taught to the Maltese, stresses Strickland, the teacher should know Maltese and be able to give 'the Maltese equivalent, the Maltese mentality, the Maltese phraseology; this is the only way in which Latin can be thoroughly taught

⁶⁵ UMHA, Miscellanea 1924 (1), letters from Martino Martini from Chieti (20/05/1924) and Prospero Varese from Arezzo (08/07/1924), two applicants.

⁶⁶ *LA*, 31/03/1924, 'Vacant Professor of Italian and Latin Literatures in the University', 1414-1428.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 1415.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 1417. Strickland later (1422) identifies Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* and *De Bello Civili*, as well as Sallust, as works he read from 'cover to cover'. He also recalls the many times he had to recite Latin verses from memory, and the two occasions when he recited 500 lines from Virgil without pause or mistakes.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 1416.

to the Maltese'.⁷⁰ For even Zammit 'Brighella' used to explain his Latin poetry in Maltese, to those who asked him, while 'Maltese was the language of his thoughts, and Maltese was the origin of the translation of his Latin'. Strickland assures the Assembly that no foreign Latinist could ever hope to equal Zammit 'Brighella'.⁷¹

Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, from the Italophile faction, takes it upon himself to rebutt Strickland's arguments, making a strong case for a foreign (and so, Italian) academic.

Count Strickland, who has had the fortune to study this subject in a foreign University, knows that to be a professor of Latin and more so of Greek, two dead languages, exactly as he has said, it is not enough to compose a few verses in Latin or in Greek, but one needs to possess an uncommon philological baggage, something for which we are especially indebted to German scholars. It is pointless to try to claim that in Malta there are such persons; and I would be the first to desire that in the Chair of Latin there shall be a Maltese, a compatriot. There are some excellent compatriots that can write beautiful literary essays in Latin, and there are some excellent writers of inscriptions; but is there anyone - I conscientiously ask Count Strickland who says that he is an expert in this matter and I believe that he is, because he cites Latin with a marvelous frequency (*con frequenza meravigliosa*) - is there anyone who has all that is necessary to be a professor, the Professor of Latin at the University?⁷²

In response, Strickland attempts to downgrade Italian classical scholarship by drawing a distinction between the study of Classics in Italian Universities, where according to him Latin and Greek were taught 'quantum sufficit' for a career, and that in Oxford and Cambridge where the languages were studied in much profounder detail as a specialization, not 'to earn a living but for fame'.⁷³ It is a slight clearly directed against his main adversary, Enrico Mizzi, who, after reading

⁷⁰ Ibid. 1417.

⁷¹ Ibid. 1417-1418.

⁷² Ibid. 1421.

⁷³ Ibid. 1421.

Arts and Sciences at the University of Malta, had taken a degree in Laws from the University of Urbino in 1912.⁷⁴ Mizzi retorts by furiously dismissing these claims as 'sciocchezze', and goes on to state that Strickland's motive, far from being his alleged 'true patriotism', was in fact 'opportunism of the lowest kind'. Mizzi cites for evidence the fact that Strickland had on a recent occasion opposed his proposal that teachers of English at elementary schools should be Maltese.⁷⁵

Quoting Virgil's 'auri sacra fames',⁷⁶ Strickland puts aside his patriotic line of argument to declare that the importation of a foreign scholar to fill the post would be the result of human greed. In an earlier sitting, he had already warned the Assembly of 'the danger of an importation of some undesirable political anti-British propagandist in view of the high value in paper 'lire' of the salary and allowances offered'.⁷⁷ This was a clear allusion to a growing fear that the Italian state was encouraging Italian nationals to take employment in Malta through underhand financial supplements. In a matter of weeks this would be publically exposed by Strickland's aide, Augustus Bartolo, in the newspaper denunciation already referred to above.⁷⁸ Bartolo, for now, contents himself with the warning that the salary being offered for the Latin post, i.e. £175, was too low to attract a foreign scholar unless he happened to be someone unworthy. Strickland rounds up with a strong admonition, a clever fusion of his two arguments: if such a 'slur' as having a foreigner be brought to Malta to teach Latin were to occur, in the upcoming general election there would be 'such an outcry as would send anybody responsible to the bottom of the poll'.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Frendo 2012: 74, 80.

⁷⁵ *LA*, 31/03/1924, 1419.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 1417. Strickland's full quote is recorded as 'auri sacra fames et scelerata sitis'. While the first part is Verg. *Aen.* 3.57, the second part seems to have been borrowed from Claudian *In Rufinum* 2. 220. (Abbreviations of classical authors and titles of works generally follow Hornblower *et al.* 2012: xxvii-liii.)

⁷⁷ *LA*, 18/02/1924, 1007. Cf. *MBB* 1922, 'Civil Establishment', 11, where Bartoli's last salary is given as £290 per annum; Eric Shepherd's salary in 1922 was £320.

⁷⁸ *LA*, 31/03/1924, 1419. Cf. Vella, A.P. 1969: 100, Fenech 2005: 189-191.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 1416.

By the next sitting, however, and to the incredulity of Strickland, word had gone round that, after all, it was an Italian who was to receive the appointment.⁸⁰ The appointment of Nello Martinelli would be officially announced nearly three months later, during which sitting Minister Dandria read the full *curriculum vitae* of the Italian. Another Italian, Giovanni Calabritto, was appointed teacher of Italian at the Lyceum.⁸¹ Martinelli's occupancy of the Chair lasted only a few years.

Following Martinelli's resignation, Laurenza again acted as Professor of Latin. Laurenza, who had been awarded the Chair of Italian in 1924,⁸² was to continue lecturing also in Latin for six successive academic years (1928-1933). In 1933 the Italian scholar Umberto Moricca was elected to the Chair. The competition for the post was a keen one, but Moricca was the favourite of the *Ministero di Affari Esteri* in Rome, whose main concern was excluding Umberto Calosso from competing for it; Calosso was the anti-fascist and successor of Giuseppe Donati as teacher of Italian at St Edward's College.⁸³ These were times when the relationship between Britain and Fascist Italy became increasingly precarious. In Malta, the Nationalist Party won the elections in 1932, but a year later the British authorities suspended the government. There were a number of reasons for this, but the straw that broke the camel's back was the Nationalist government insisting on forming evening classes in the Italian language.⁸⁴ In 1936 Moricca was accused of fascist propaganda and expelled from Malta along with other Italians, such as Giovanni Calabritto. Laurenza was asked to fill in again.

Some, like Revd Peter Paul Saydon, Professor of Holy Scripture and Hebrew, nurtured a hope that the next occupier would be once again a

⁸⁰ *LA*, 03/04/1924, 1443.

⁸¹ *LA*, 28/07/1924, 531.

⁸² Vella, A.P. 1969: 100.

⁸³ Ardizzone 2011: 50, who mentions Cosimo Mariano and 'Prof. Zuccoli' as applicants.

⁸⁴ Frendo 2012: 447-493, for a full account. Among the regulations issued by the British, Religion and Latin henceforth were to be taught in English and no longer in Italian (p. 453).

Maltese Catholic priest, in the person of Coleiro, the promising young Latinist who was then studying in England.⁸⁵ Finally, however, the appointed scholar was neither Maltese nor Italian. 'The Professor of Latin is to be appointed, but in all likelihood it will be an Englishman. The correspondence was done in secret, and now only a few formalities remain', wrote Professor Saydon to Joseph Aquilina when the Professor of Maltese and Oriental Languages was studying in Oxford.⁸⁶ Arthur Hilary Armstrong (1909-1997), who would later become an internationally recognised Plotinus scholar and translator of the *Enneads*,⁸⁷ had graduated with first-class Honours in Classics from Cambridge University in 1932 and later spent a few years as Assistant Lecturer in Classics at the University College of Swansea. On 7 October 1939,⁸⁸ 'the day of his arrival in Malta',⁸⁹ Armstrong took up his appointment as Professor of Latin Literature and Classical Greek. This was the first time in the history of the University that Ancient Greek was officially recognized as part of the remit of the Chair of Latin.

5.5 The appearance of Greek at the University

Although the teaching of Greek had disappeared from the Lyceum since the early 1890s,⁹⁰ there was never a shortage of allusions, among the cultured circles, to the beauty of the language and its importance. One such allusion came from Luigi Abello, a Professor from the University of Turin, who for a while taught Italian at the secondary Flores College, one of the best private educational establishments on the island.⁹¹ In 1893 he delivered a speech at the College entitled 'Alcune idee sull'antichità

⁸⁵ ASCD, Ġużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 13/12/1937, where Saydon promises, 'I will do my best not to have the call [Professor of Latin] published for the time being', so as to give Coleiro time to finish his studies.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 09/03/1939.

⁸⁷ Armstrong 1966-1988.

⁸⁸ UMHA, Reports of the University 1933-47, Report on the Working of the Royal University of Malta for the period 1st October, 1939, to 30th September', 1940, 5.

⁸⁹ *ARU* 1938-1939, iv.

⁹⁰ See 4.3

⁹¹ Cassar, G. 2000: 65-66.

classica', in which he stressed the importance of not neglecting, in the pursuit of Latin and classical culture, the study of Greek, a language which 'in its every part is accomplished and complete, and its literature marvellously great and beautiful'.⁹²

However, the teaching of the language made little headway, and scholarly journals which published the occasional article on some Greek subject, often penned by some Italian intellectual, would have found little local readership for it, especially if it included a lot of Greek text. Very few Maltese readers would have been able to read and understand the Greek verses on the Siege of Malta by the Cretan poet Achelis in a paper published by *Malta Letteraria* in 1911 entitled 'La parafrasi di un episodio ariostesco in un poema greco sull'assedio di Malta', whose author, the Parma-born Antonio Boselli, was the Professor of Italian Literature between 1906 and 1911.⁹³ When the design of the first coat-of-arms for the University was under discussion at the Legislative Assembly in 1923, Gerald Strickland, blatantly proud of his thorough classical education, suggested the 'very beautiful and expressive' Greek motto on the University gateway should appear on it, even though he had his doubts whether any professor of the same university 'could parse it'.⁹⁴ In 1931, Giuseppe Donati, defending through philological implications Luke's *βάρβαροι* to describe the Maltese in *Acts*, could tease his Maltese Anglophile antagonists by addressing 'those who know how to read the very limpid Greek of Saint Luke's text', knowing well that hardly anyone of them could.⁹⁵

Biblical Greek reappeared at the University when Mgr Michael Gonzi (1885-1984), later Archbishop, started to teach Hebrew and Biblical

⁹² Albello 1893: 18.

⁹³ Boselli 1911.

⁹⁴ *LA*, 11/06/1923, 1779, where, interestingly, the transliteration of the motto is transcribed in its Modern Greek pronunciation, '*Probileon tis timis i Mathesis*', which Strickland translates as 'the source of honour is education'. See also 1.1

⁹⁵ Scicluna Sorge 1931: 67, reproducing the front-page article 'Come Bartolo falsifica la storia' that appeared in *Malta* of 26/05/1931. Peresso (2015: 233) attributes the article to Giuseppe Donati.

Greek in 1915, after returning from his scriptural studies in Rome, occupying until 1924 the newly established Chair of Holy Scriptures and Hebrew within the Faculty of Theology.⁹⁶ Subsequently, Professor Peter Paul Saydon acceded to the Chair.⁹⁷ The languages only became a formal part of Theology studies in 1937 with the enactment of statutory modifications to bring the Faculty of Theology into line with the Apostolic Constitutions *Scientiarum Dominus* issued under the signature of Pope Pius XI in 1931.⁹⁸ In 1938, we find Saydon confessing a need to 'give a brush to my Greek' in order to prepare a programme for the following two years, while complaining that 'I am not so familiar with Greek as I am with Hebrew'.⁹⁹ Saydon's plan to hold a conference on Greek for October 1939¹⁰⁰ must have been disrupted by a number of causes, not least a looming war, but also some 'crushing circumstances' in his personal life. A severe teaching load did not help: 'I have 10 lectures a week, upon different subjects: Old and New Testaments, Hebrew and Greek, in three different languages, Latin, English and Maltese. I wonder whether the History of Universities can afford a parallel to myself!'.¹⁰¹

Between 1916 and 1920 Alfredo Bartoli, the Professor of Latin and Italian Literatures, taught an extra class in Ancient Greek (Language and Literature).¹⁰² There was an attempt to formalize this course, as the following official announcement from 1921 reveals:

It is hereby notified that a special Three Years' course of Ancient

⁹⁶ *MBB* 1915-1916, H72. Cf. Tonna and Galea 1981: 34-37, where it is stated that Revd A. Cuschieri, Professor of Philosophy, had advised Gonzi against teaching Hebrew at the University for fear his knowledge of the language would be deemed inferior to that of learned English clergyman residing in Malta.

⁹⁷ In 1931; cf. *MBB* 1931, Civil Establishment, University, 13. Saydon (1895-1971) translated the Bible into Maltese.

⁹⁸ *MGG*, 29/12/1936, 1208-1210, enacting that Classical Greek, along with Latin, shall be studied by students in the Faculty of Literature preparing for admission to the Faculty of Theology, while students following the Course of Theology shall read Biblical Greek for an hour a week during three of the five years constituting the Course. Cf. Borg 1995: 402. See also 4.5.

⁹⁹ ASCD, Ġużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 31/10/1938. On 14/06/1938, Saydon had written to Aquilina about his appointment as examiner of Greek.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 15/01/1939.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 08/10/1939.

¹⁰² *MBB* 1916 to 1920, Civil Establishment, University.

Greek Language and Literature is to be given at the University by Professor Alfredo Bartoli. The course will be a purely voluntary one and open to all Matriculated students. Lectures of one hour each will be held twice a week. The fees payable will be those prescribed for students in the Faculty of Literature. A yearly examination will be held and at the end of the Course successful candidates will, on payment of the prescribed fee, be awarded a Pass certificate or one of Proficiency as the case may be.¹⁰³

However, Bartoli's resignation precluded the continuation of this initiative. One of the likely students who benefitted from Bartoli's lessons of Greek was the young Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, later a successful politician.¹⁰⁴ In 1924, Mifsud Bonnici, addressing the Legislative Assembly, found occasion to insist on a solid knowledge of Greek required by a professor of Latin. During the heated discussion on the credentials, or rather, the nationality of the future occupier of the Chair of Latin Literature,¹⁰⁵ Mifsud Bonnici's avowal that a university professor of Latin in the contemporary academic world needed more than a basic knowledge of Greek provoked protestations from the Assembly. Mifsud Bonnici attempted to clarify his statement:

It is not enough to cry 'No', or else 'Oh! Oh!'. These are facts that come from scientific Academies. We are all aware of the influence that Greek had over Latin and, for this reason, instead of saying 'We are Maltese and want a Maltese to occupy the Chair of Latin', instead of saying that, we should say: 'We want an Italian, an Englishman, a Frenchman, a German, whoever, but someone who owns all the qualities necessary for the language that he must teach, so that our young men can truly emerge knowing something about it.'¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ UMHA, Miscellenea 1921 (4), notice issued by University Secretary, 07/10/1921.

¹⁰⁴ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici, who recalled his father's (born 1897) Greek exercise books with pencil-notes in his father's hand. He was one of the few Maltese to earn the unmitigated respect of Eric Shepherd; cf. Shepherd 1926: 91-94.

¹⁰⁵ See 5.4.

¹⁰⁶ LA, 31/03/1924, 1421.

In the next decade, Professor Umberto Moricca requested to start a voluntary class in Greek but was flatly refused.¹⁰⁷ Symptomatic of the escalating political tensions of the times, it is unsurprising that the next class of Ancient Greek at the University would be conducted by an Englishman. This was Edward J. Kealy, who was the Latin and Art Master at St Edward's College.¹⁰⁸ The editions of the University Annual Report for the years 1936 to 1938 actually describe Kealy as 'acting Professor of Greek'.¹⁰⁹ In a letter to the Rector Robert Galea, Kealy enclosed a syllabus of the course for February to June based on his experience, adding that he hoped 'to begin reading a Greek author with this class next term'.¹¹⁰ In a later letter we discover that the class was meeting for an hour three times a week, which shows a real commitment both from the teacher (who, we learn, had to drive from the College in Vittoriosa to Valletta each time) and the participating students.¹¹¹

Kealy's commitment naturally terminated with A.H. Armstrong's appointment as Professor of Latin and Greek in 1939.¹¹² During the first year of his stay, Armstrong, who was accompanied by his family, 'had a lively social life' in Malta, and later even wrote an article for the *Downside Review* on the fauna and flora of the island.¹¹³ However, with the outbreak of the war and the heavy Axis bombardment of Malta between 1940 and 1942, it is highly unlikely that Armstrong did much lecturing.¹¹⁴ In August 1943, Armstrong, following a long sick leave, relinquished his appointment, and he and his family were evacuated to Britain by military plane.¹¹⁵ The teaching of Latin and Greek was entrusted to Edward

¹⁰⁷ UMHA, Miscellanea 1934, File 82/33-34 'Permission to hold a free class in GREEK at the University'. Moricca ends his request by a reference to Bartoli: 'Non credo del tutto inopportuno far notare che alcuni anni or sono la stessee proposta, fatta dal Prof. Bartoli, vienne favorevolmente accolta'. His request was refused during the General Council meeting of 24/01/1934.

¹⁰⁸ Micallef Eynaud 2004: 8. On St Edward's College, see 5.6.

¹⁰⁹ *RGD* 1936-1937, 408; *RGD* 1937-1938, 464. Kealy is described as 'M. A. (Lond.)'.

¹¹⁰ UMHA, Miscellanea 1937 (1), 19/04/1937. Syllabus is missing.

¹¹¹ UMHA, Miscellanea 1937 (2), 04/10/1937.

¹¹² See 5.4.

¹¹³ Long 2003: 5.

¹¹⁴ See 5.1.

¹¹⁵ Long 2003: 5.

Coleiro who, as lecturer, had for some time already taken over in Armstrong's absence 'pending the filling of the vacant post as soon as circumstances will permit'.¹¹⁶

Another classically trained English scholar whose academic career in Malta was also nipped in the bud was Bryan Ward-Perkins, later Director of the British School at Rome for many years. During the late 1930s the British Council sought to increase its presence on the island, finally establishing a British Institute in Valletta in 1939.¹¹⁷ One of its projects was to make a grant of £500 a year to provide the Royal University of Malta with a Chair of Archaeology. The honour fell to Ward-Perkins, who had studied at the University of Oxford where he graduated with a first class in *Literae Humaniores* in 1934.¹¹⁸ He had only been six months in Malta when in 1939 he 'was released for duties in the Army on the outbreak of the war'. During his short time in Malta he still managed to give a series of three public lectures entitled 'The Beginnings of Human Civilization'.¹¹⁹

5.6 Classical culture in the post-war period

The great spirit of revival and reconstruction that followed the end of the war corresponded to a rise in interest in classical culture, particularly at the University where 'an invasion of the classical spirit' was witnessed.¹²⁰ In his weekly column on the *Times of Malta* under the pseudonym of 'Aurelius Christianus', Joseph Aquilina, the first official Professor of Maltese at the University, often celebrated the universality of ancient knowledge and the timeless significance of classical literature.

¹¹⁶ UMHA, Reports of the University 1933-47, Report on the Working of the Royal University of Malta for the period 1st October, 1942, to the 30th September, 1943, Staff, (unpaged).

¹¹⁷ Manduca 2004: 213, 335.

¹¹⁸ Ling 2004.

¹¹⁹ *ARU* 1938-39, iv-v.

¹²⁰ Anon. 1947.

This great body of knowledge was really, for his readers, 'a neglected possession which is their safest castle from the buffetings of life'.¹²¹ Espousing the merits of liberal learning, Aquilina exposed the disadvantages of a professional person who lacked the foundation of classical erudition. Such a deficiency was already being felt among specialists, warned Aquilina, at times leading to manifestations of misguided frustration: 'The most sinister attack I heard on the value of Latin Literature was from a medical man who is certainly most competent in his profession, a man to whom I would willingly entrust the body of my child but certainly not his mind'.¹²² At a more popular level, Aquilina brought to many listeners on Rediffusion (the cable radio relay service in Malta which started in 1935) their first acquaintance with ancient literature and the principles of classical literary criticism during a number of broadcasts he conducted in the 1940s.¹²³ Here, his appreciation of contemporary Maltese poets often deployed the literary concepts of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*.¹²⁴

The post-war classical revival was especially embodied by the work of the Malta branch of the Virgil Society, which in its ephemeral existence was not only responsible for the issue of a journal and a number of public lectures on classical subjects, but also for the pioneering work in the staging of classical theatre. The Malta Branch of the Virgil Society was to a large extent the initiative of two University students, the Valletta-born brothers Frank and George Mifsud Montanaro, both intellectually precocious.¹²⁵ They had spent their adolescence as boarding students at St Edward's College. Founded in 1929 by Lady Margaret Strickland (Sir Gerald's second wife) to be conducted along the lines of an English Public School,¹²⁶ the College employed a number of excellent teachers

¹²¹ Aquilina 1947b: 6.

¹²² Aquilina 1947a: 6.

¹²³ This was a particularly rich period for classically themed programmes broadcast by BBC Radio: see Wrigley 2015.

¹²⁴ Sant 2016: 138-140.

¹²⁵ De Marco 2007: 36.

¹²⁶ Scicluna 2004: 1-5, for a history of the College's inception, described as the 'Maltese Eton' in *The Guardian's* obituary on Francis Berry (issue of 31/10/2006).

who would leave an indelible influence on many of their students. One such teacher was the Master of Latin, Revd Gerald Seaston, a Cambridge graduate, who imbued the Mifsud Montanaro brothers and their peers with a deep love for Virgil and classical literature. Seaston would later move to the University as a lecturer in, and eventually the Professor of, Greek.¹²⁷ Other highly inspirational teachers were the Italian Umberto Calosso, the teacher of Italian, anti-Fascist, socialist, and pro-British, 'a rare specimen of Italian manhood' with a 'well developed sense of humour',¹²⁸ and the English teacher Francis Berry, a 'genius' who knew 'all Shakespeare's plays by heart'.¹²⁹ Both Calosso and Berry involved themselves in the theatrical activities of the College, each writing original plays to be staged by the students.¹³⁰

Berry arrived at St Edward's in 1943, at the time when his close friend in England, W.F. Jackson Knight, was putting his creative force behind the founding of the Virgil Society, later becoming its Honorary Secretary for the first few years (T.S. Eliot was the first President).¹³¹ Berry was instrumental in putting the Maltese brothers in touch with Jackson Knight 'who was not just supportive of, but enthusiastic at, the initiative',¹³² although this was the cause of some chagrin with his co-secretary Wilfred Woollen.¹³³ The Malta Branch of the Virgil Society was inaugurated in 1946 at the University where by then the Mifsud Montanaro brothers had started the course in Law, which included, for its obligatory part, the study of Latin under Revd Edward Coleiro. Having acceded to the Chair of Latin in 1947, the honour to serve as the first

¹²⁷ See 5.7 and 8.3.

¹²⁸ Micallef Eynaud 2004: 13. On Calosso at St Edward's College, see Peresso 2015: 97-124.

¹²⁹ Camilleri 2004: 192.

¹³⁰ On theatre at St Edward's College, see Vella Bonavita 2004. For Calosso's productions, Peresso 2015: 103-104, 113-114; for Berry's, particularly his Shakesporean scenes for inmates of a mental hospital, Camilleri 2004: 192-193.

¹³¹ Knight 1975: 267-279. On the history of the Virgil Society, see Blandford 1993. On Jackson Knight, see particularly Wiseman 1992: 171-209.

¹³² F. Mifsud Montanaro's personal communication with his brother, dated 21/01/2015. I am grateful to Mgr G. Mifsud Montanaro for providing me with a copy.

¹³³ Knight 1975: 274.

President of the Society fell on Coleiro,¹³⁴ who appropriately also took charge of the first activity of the Society, the reading of his paper 'Malta in Latin Literature'.¹³⁵

In the previous decade, an attempt had already been made to initiate a classical association at the University. The person behind it was a young Anton Buttigieg, a university contemporary of Edward Coleiro, who would many years later become Malta's second President of the Republic. In 1932 Buttigieg wrote a letter to the University's Secretary requesting the Rector's permission to form a 'Società di Letteratura Latina', whose objective would be to facilitate closer encounters with classical thought for its body of members consisting of current students and graduates.¹³⁶ This 'Società' never took off, as Buttigieg reveals in his memoirs: 'We met a couple of times, but then it faded away because few were the students who loved Latin'.¹³⁷

The Virgil Society was more of a success story, one reason being that although it was based in the University, the membership was open to wider society and its aim was the widespread diffusion of the Virgilian and classical legacy. This was highlighted in the editorial of the Society's first issue of its organ, *The Classical Journal*: 'The main aim of the Society is not exclusively academic and ... some of us have little Latin and less Greek'.¹³⁸ The desire to reach out beyond academic parameters must have contributed to the placing of the 'production of classical plays' first on the list of the Society's plans, followed by play-readings, lectures, and the reading of papers.¹³⁹ In this regard, the lively

¹³⁴ See *TCJ* 1, 1947, inside cover, for a list of the first committee members. Rector Professor R. Galea served as the first Honorary President.

¹³⁵ Coleiro 1947. During the evening of 26/03/1946, two other papers were read after Coleiro's, one by Dr J. Zammit and one by W. Gulia; see *TCJ* 1947, 84.

¹³⁶ UMHA, Miscellanea 1932 (1), 19/6/1932.

¹³⁷ Buttigieg 1980: 67. Cf. Ellul Mercer 1983: 21, where the young protagonist of *Leli ta' Ħaż-Żgħir*, a novel published in 1938, confesses a love for Latin unshared by his classmates.

¹³⁸ Borg Cardona 1947a: 2. F. Mifsud Montanaro stressed the Society's democratic objective when the present author visited him at his residence in Rome on 10/11/2016.

¹³⁹ Borg Cardona 1947b: 83. For contemporary plays in Latin at the Seminary, see 8.1.

theatrical life at St Edward's stood the Mifsud Montanaro brothers in good stead. The first production was Plautus' *Captivi* in February 1947, followed only a month later by Euripides' *Orestes* (Fig. 7), a representation hailed as 'the first performance of a Greek play in the island's history'.¹⁴⁰ The third and last production was Euripides' *Hippolytus* in 1948. The *Orestes* and *Hippolytus* were directed by Frank Mifsud Montanaro, and his brother had an acting role in all the three plays. All the plays were given in English. A highly distinguished patronage followed the activities of the Society, including the British Governor.¹⁴¹



Figure 7 - Publicity photograph for the Virgil Society's production of Euripides' *Orestes* in 1947 (George Mifsud Montanaro is second from right)

George Mifsud Montanaro also landed important roles in two contemporaneous classical productions staged to great success by the B.I. Players, the theatrical group of the British Institute in Malta. This

¹⁴⁰ [Mifsud Montanaro] 1948: 2-3. For an overview of the Society's theatre productions and their critical reception, see Serracino 2016.

¹⁴¹ The programme-note for *Orestes* shows that the British Governor, Francis Douglas, and the Archbishop of Malta, Michael Gonzi, were both expected to attend. The programme-note for *Hippolytus* reveals that, while the Governor was expected, the Archbishop had not been invited; cf. Serracino 2016: 294-295. I am grateful to F. Mifsud Montanaro for providing me with these programme-notes.

indeed must have been one of the effects of the Virgil Society: Maltese theatregoers were suddenly athirst for the classical stage. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1948) and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (1950) were both produced and directed by the retired Major Alec Cathcart Bruce, then the Director of the British Institute, and Helen Laybourne.¹⁴² In preparing *Agamemnon*, Cathcart Bruce corresponded with the translator, Professor Gilbert Murray, with regard to some costume details which required the great Hellenist's advice.¹⁴³

The Classical Journal was also described as the 'first of its kind in Malta',¹⁴⁴ perhaps an unfair claim (an unwitting one in all likelihood) given Bartoli and his Latin periodical *Rosa Melitensis* of some 30 years earlier.¹⁴⁵ That it was the first journal to be started by the Virgil Society anywhere was confirmed by W.F. Jackson Knight himself in his short contribution on Virgil's *Allecto*.¹⁴⁶ Although the medium was English, the journal occasionally featured Latin verse (by the likes of Zammit 'Brighella' and the contemporary Revd Joseph Schembri) and prose. Six issues of *The Classical Journal* were to see the light of day between 1947 and 1956,¹⁴⁷ with articles on a range of subjects, from standard classical ones to others with a more modern ring (e.g. 'Newman and the Classics'¹⁴⁸), from more locally oriented pieces to peculiar topics from the outer reaches of the classical legacy (e.g. Ovidian influence on heraldic coats-of arms¹⁴⁹). 'In my view', wrote Guido De Marco, '*The Classical Journal* remains one of the best student publications ever'.¹⁵⁰

Contemporary with the Malta Branch of the Virgil Society but rather less active, another organization was engaged in the promotion of classical

¹⁴² Ibid. 296-298.

¹⁴³ Serracino 2017.

¹⁴⁴ Borg Cardona 1947a: 1.

¹⁴⁵ See 5.3

¹⁴⁶ Jackson Knight 1948.

¹⁴⁷ October 1947, May 1948, Christmas 1948, March 1950, December 1952, and 1956. Blandford (2003: 66) remarks on the unavailability of copies outside Malta.

¹⁴⁸ Seaston 1948a.

¹⁴⁹ Huxley 1948.

¹⁵⁰ De Marco 2007: 36. On De Marco and Latin, see 11.3.

studies. The 'Royal University Classical Society' was formally University-based, and its activities were more specifically intended for university students and academics. The Classical Society 'was Carmelo Muscat's domain. His knowledge of Greek and Latin was superb'.¹⁵¹ The fact that 'members' names were to be found on the enrolment forms of both Societies'¹⁵² must have led to some general confusion about the two, to an extent that the Classical Society was sometimes referred to as 'a branch of the Virgil Society'.¹⁵³ In any case, the two organisations officially amalgamated in 1951,¹⁵⁴ and the last two issues of *The Classical Journal* clearly stated on their front cover that they were publications of the 'Royal Malta University Branch of the Virgil Society', rather than the 'Organ of the Virgil Society (Malta Branch)' as previously.

The amalgamation appears to have been largely ineffective. With Frank Mifsud Montanaro proceeding to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in 1948, followed by his brother George two years later,¹⁵⁵ the Virgil Society had already lost much of its steam. The last issue of *The Classical Journal*, published in 1956, no less than four years after its predecessor, numbered only 32 pages as opposed to the 84 pages comprising the original, and longest, instalment. With the brothers away from the islands, local enthusiasm for the classical stage faded out and was only revived in 1968 by the University Players.¹⁵⁶ And yet, there was a serious attempt to introduce young people to classical theatre overseas. In the mid-fifties Joseph Demanuele, a teacher of English and the editor of the schoolchildren magazine *Children's Own*, organized a number of children's two-day cultural tours to the annual festival of Greek theatre

¹⁵¹ De Marco 2007: 36. Revd Carmelo Muscat (1926-2009), later Professor of Moral Theology, was remembered for his Latin speaking ability; cf. Interview: Mifsud Bonnici.

¹⁵² *TCJ* 5, 1952, 1 ('Editorial').

¹⁵³ 'Thespis' 1947. Frank and George Mifsud Montanaro, in their various reminiscences with the author, both expressed a hazy recollection of the existence of such an organization as 'The Classical Society'.

¹⁵⁴ *TCJ* 5, 1952, 1 ('Editorial'). Cf. Aquilina 1952: 67, who refers to the merging of the two Societies.

¹⁵⁵ Interview: Mifsud Montanaro.

¹⁵⁶ See 5.9.

in Syracuse.¹⁵⁷ During the Open Day ceremony at the University in 1954, Professor Coleiro praised the initiative which had attracted a 'wide response among boys and girls of some Secondary schools', as an example of the 'success that might attend the right approach towards the Classics'.¹⁵⁸ However, with the demise of the Virgil Society, classical culture in Malta became a largely restricted academic affair once again.¹⁵⁹ The Virgil Society fizzled out and no one seemed to have noticed it.

5.7 Coleiro and his times

Classics in Malta, from the end of World War I to the termination of British authority over the islands, was dominated by the personality of Revd Edward Coleiro, the indefatigable and ambitious priest and scholar. By 1960s, Coleiro had become 'synonymous with Latin, even on a national level'.¹⁶⁰

Soon after Coleiro received his full appointment to the Chair of Latin in 1947, following A.H. Armstrong's resignation, he went to King's College, London, to read for a PhD in Classics. Writing from London to his friend Joseph Aquilina, Professor of Maltese, Coleiro defines the programme that he had in mind to implement upon his return to Malta: 'to elevate the standard of Latin and the whole course of Literature to equal that which is given here, in London, Oxford, and Cambridge.'¹⁶¹ This obviously implied the necessity of elevating Greek to a more respectable level vis-

¹⁵⁷ *Children's Own* was first published in 1940. I am indebted to John M. Demanuele and Rosaire D'Ugo for the information on their father Joseph Demanuele. Cf. Interview: Xuereb, where Cecilia Xuereb recalls how, aged 14, she had been one of the *Children's Own* participants attending *Prometheus Bound* in Syracuse with Vittorio Gassman in the title-role; cf. *Prometeo Incatenato* (1954), <<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/962>> (accessed 18/10 /2017).

¹⁵⁸ Coleiro 1954: 7.

¹⁵⁹ From late 1950s to early 1960s, however, Coleiro organised film fora at the Catholic Institute, among which, films set in the ancient world (e.g. of Robert Rossen's *Alexander the Great*), while Seaston opened to the public his Saturday morning lectures on Greek culture; cf. Interviews: Attard; Vassallo.

¹⁶⁰ Interview: Borg, V. (2).

¹⁶¹ NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, Coleiro to Aquilina, 09/05/1948.

à-vis Latin. However, the language was outside Coleiro's comfort zone.¹⁶² He would remedy this difficulty by the creation of a lectureship post in Greek.¹⁶³ An ideal candidate was Revd Gerald Seaston, formerly the Latin master at St Edward's College, who, after the war, had been lured back to Malta to replace Coleiro during his years in London. His well-known proficiency in Greek made him the natural choice for the lectureship.¹⁶⁴ This was of course not coincidental with the University's imposition, as from 1954, of Latin and Greek, or Latin-with-Greek, at the Matriculation or equivalent examination as a necessary subject for students joining the Theology course.¹⁶⁵ Seaston also started to teach Greek at the Minor Seminary in 1951, the return of the language to that institution after an absence of 200 years. Seminarians could now boast that 'theirs [was] the only secondary school in the Island' which was teaching the language.¹⁶⁶ Greek proved to be a real challenge to its first students at the Minor Seminary, with the Prefect of Studies complaining in his yearly report that 'the results in Greek, which has been introduced from class III since last year, have been far from satisfactory, the reason most probably being that the students have not realised its importance'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Coleiro appears as 'acting professor of Classical Greek' in the editions of *UC* between 1944 and 1948. Unfortunately, UMHA has a gap in these Calendars; the next one available (1953-1954) cites Seaston as 'a lecturer in Greek'. Cf. Interview: Mifsud Bonnici, who recalls Coleiro had attempted to introduce his class to very rudimentary Greek.

¹⁶³ UMHA, RUM Council Enclosures 1949-50, enclosure No. 8, which refers to the Senate's agreement on the separation, taken on 07/11/1949.

¹⁶⁴ NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, Coleiro to Aquilina 15/11/1948, where Coleiro states, 'If you only knew how I wish that, once I start next October, God willing, [Seaston] does not remain outside'. Cf. 8.3 and 11.4.

¹⁶⁵ [Lupi] 1952: 38. Cf. *UC* 1953-1954, 254.

¹⁶⁶ Borg 1951. Cf. Interview: Vella, B.

¹⁶⁷ [Lupi] 1954: 30.



Figure 8 - Professor Edward Coleiro with BA Latin graduates in 1958

Once Coleiro returned from London, Latin became firmly established as his realm, while Seaston was happy to be left in charge of Greek. From the 1950s, Latin was one of the compulsory subject of the two-year Intermediate Course, a general cultural basis programme to be taken by all students (with some exceptions) aiming to follow Arts, Law, and Theology. Students reading for BA (General) could then opt for Latin as one of their three specialisations, or seek Honours in Latin Studies (Fig. 8).¹⁶⁸ By the mid 1950s Greek was also in an assured position of importance in the curriculum of the Faculty of Arts. In the Intermediate Course it was compulsory for all who intended to study Theology, and in the Final Course it was an optional principal subject for BA General and a compulsory subsidiary for Honours in Latin Studies. Writing to the Vice-Chancellors and Rector in 1956, Revd Seaston claimed he 'had laboured for the past nine years to raise the standard of work' and that he was satisfied that it was then 'equivalent at least to that of the

¹⁶⁸ UC 1953-1954, 221-227.

provincial universities in the United Kingdom'.¹⁶⁹ Seaston was careful to add that the four-year course for the BA embraced not only language and literature but also ancient history and the history of Greek philosophy, and that, as regards numbers, about 'twenty-five or thirty students in every Intermediate Course' were studying Greek, and 'an average of at least six in the Final. (I have eight in the current Final Course)'.¹⁷⁰

During the next decade the Department was further strengthened with the full-time employment of two other Maltese priests, both former students of Coleiro and Seaston, in the persons of Joseph Busuttil and Nicholas Debono Montebello. Both had also pursued doctoral studies in Classics at King's College London. Clearly, this marked a return of clerical dominion in the field of Classics at the University,¹⁷⁰ which was transformed into a 'Department of Classics' for the first time. The only lay classicist to receive full-time appointment at the time was Joseph David Frendo, who stayed for four years (1965-1969) lecturing in Greek before moving to the University of Cork, having in the meanwhile obtained his PhD from University College London.¹⁷¹

Both the BA General and the BA Honours courses in Classics were considered tough, with final examinations of the latter at times consisting of as many as twelve papers and an oral test.¹⁷² W.S. Maguiness, from

¹⁶⁹ UMHA, RUM Council 1956-1957, 30/10/1956. The reference to 'nine years' seems an overestimation, but Seaston was well-known for his absentmindedness; cf. Manduca 2004: 42-43.

¹⁷⁰ Interview: Apap, who states that 'Coleiro belonged to a clerical fascist mentality that was strong at the University in those days'. Cf. NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, letter Coleiro to Aquilina, 09/05/1948, where Coleiro warns, 'Mind that we always strengthen our group, the group consisting of the good, of the *optimates* as Cicero used to call them, of those who want to increase the prestige of the University, advance our Course, and to elevate it to a height that it will not be inferior to the courses that exist here [in England]'.

¹⁷¹ Interview: Frendo. Frendo's UCL supervisor was the Byzantinist Robert Browning. Frendo later established himself as a Byzantinist, publishing considerably in the field: cf. Frendo, Joseph David C. < http://opac.regesta-imperii.de/lang_en/autoren.php?name=Frendo%2C+Joseph+David+C > (accessed 18/10/ 2017).

¹⁷² UMHA, Special Council, Faculty Board of Arts - Minutes 1954-1960, 10/07/1959, Syllabus for the Honours Course in Classics 1959-1961.

King's College London, who for many years served as external examiner for Latin and Greek, was expressly happy with the performance of the three students who took their BA General examinations in 1963:

The candidates whose work I read, and to whom I gave an oral examination along with my Maltese colleagues, were three candidates for BA General in Latin. I am happy to say that they were deservedly successful, one of them being awarded Class I and the other two Class II, A. I was impressed with their written work, and then was impressed even more with the knowledge, intelligence, and quickness of wit which they revealed in the orals. I understand that these BA General candidates are carefully selected, and therefore do not at all resemble our London BA General candidates, who are generally those incapable of attempting the Honours course. Much of the written work and oral exercise of these candidates was of what I should call Honours standard and if they are comparably good in their other subjects, they must be very well equipped for whatever career they pursue.

Maguiness voices a concern that the General syllabus was too arduous and suggests undersizing the Honours syllabus:

The syllabus itself is rather more severe than the corresponding one in London, especially as they take four papers as compared with our three, and are required to show proficiency in Roman History, which has a small part in our examination, and in the theory of Latin style and rhetoric, which has no place in our syllabus. I have no criticism to make or alterations to suggest ... A point I wish to make, however, is this: that in London we have a growing suspicion that eleven papers in Classical or Latin Honours taken simultaneously at the end of three years is too severe a test. ... Your Department might consider whether it should also consider the question, although I realise that where all candidates, unlike those in London, are members of one College, and are examined by their own teachers in close contact with an External Examiner long familiar with the University, there is less likelihood of hardship than in a University where students are largely examined by strangers.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ UMHA, Faculty Board Agendas and Enclosures 1963/64, letter to the Vice-Chancellor, 29/07/1963. Seemingly a common assessment by British external examiners of BA (Gen) and BA (Hons) syllabi at UM: F.W. Bateson, from Oxford University, who acted as an external examiner of English in the mid-60s, warned

In spite of the great number of examination papers, the course was still considered by some as deficient in giving a comprehensive classical cultural outlook, and its historical dimension mainly restricted to Roman military history and imperial expansion (this area being one of Coleiro's fortes¹⁷⁴). The Revd Nicholas Aquilina recalls that, fresh from his Latin final examinations as a BA General student around 1962, he still could not account for the meaning of 'civis Romanus sum'.¹⁷⁵ This seems to echo the views expressed by Nicholas Debono Montebello, who followed the Honours course in the 1950s:

We were taught texts such as *Cena Trimalchionis* to give us an idea of the spoken language, of the Latin of the *vulgus*, only to compare - unfavourably - such usage with the language of Golden Age authors. Yet vulgar Latin has to be considered for what it is; an aspect of the Latin language as a whole.¹⁷⁶

5.8 Classics in Malta and Vatican Council II

Across the Catholic world, the importance of Latin in education suffered a major decline when the Vatican Council II debated the language of the liturgy in 1962. In the following year Pope John XXIII promulgated the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, whose Article 36 stipulated that although Latin would be retained, the use of the vernacular language in the administration of the sacraments and in the liturgy 'can often be very useful to the people'.¹⁷⁷ According to Pierre Grimal, the distinguished French Latinist and Sorbonne professor who was one of the contributors at the international Latin conference in Malta in 1973,¹⁷⁸ the Church's

rather dramatically in an undated Report that 'the intellectual endurance test imposed in the General Final Examination ... imposes an unjust nervous strain which can at times lead to a breakdown or even suicide.'

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Colerio 1970b.

¹⁷⁵ Interview: Aquilina.

¹⁷⁶ Interview: Debono Montebello.

¹⁷⁷ Waquet 2001: 70-74.

¹⁷⁸ See 5.9.

abandonment of Latin was ‘the most grievous blow’ dealt to the ancient language.¹⁷⁹

Revd F.X. Schembri opined that in Malta priests were the first to start putting Latin aside. Schembri, who for some years taught Latin at the Archiepiscopal Seminary, recalled that:

Soon after the Council all of us [Maltese priests] were gathered with the Archbishop [Gonzi] at the ‘Caravaggio’ Oratorium in St John’s Cathedral for the annual three-day adoration of the Eucharist. I was standing next to Archbishop Gonzi when he announced the intonation of the ‘Tantum ergo’. The Master of Ceremonies, Dun Karm Bonavia, who had nothing personally against Latin, started to sing in Maltese: ‘Dal-misteru għarkupptejna, ejjew immela ħa naduraw...’. Gonzi muttered, ‘Kmieni nsieh il-Latin’ (‘already giving up on Latin!’). Gonzi was not pleased, neither was I. Priests immediately abandoned Latin. The first chance they had to sing as a collective body of clerics after the Council they did it in Maltese!¹⁸⁰

Schembri also spoke about theological inaccuracies committed by lay translators engaged by the Church to translate Latin liturgical text and hymns into Maltese. In any case, Latin in Malta ‘took a real nose-dive after Vatican Council II’, he asserted.¹⁸¹

Evidence of this started to show at the Faculty of Arts. In 1965, the Faculty Board of Arts decided to delete Latin altogether as a compulsory subject for admission into the Faculty of Arts and to re-introduce it in specific cases, namely:

- i. At Matriculation or GCE O Level, whenever Latin is being taken in the Preliminary Arts or BA (Part I)¹⁸²;
- ii. At Matriculation or GCE O Level prior to admission into BA (Part II) (but not necessarily at admission to Part I) for candidates who

¹⁷⁹ Waquet 2001: 77.

¹⁸⁰ Interview: Schembri. Cf. Interview: Seychel.

¹⁸¹ Interview: Schembri.

¹⁸² The BA (General) Course consisted at the time in two parts, Part I and Part II.

are reading French or Italian or Philosophy (Honours Course) at BA (Part II).

- iii. Enacting that Latin at Preliminary Arts or BA (Part I) be a compulsory subject in the case of Theology, Laws, and wherever Latin is taken at BA Part II;
- iv. Enacting that a one-year Course in Classical Culture be compulsory for students who are not taking Latin in Preliminary Arts or BA (Part I) and that the examination be held at the end of the second year.¹⁸³

The dwindling number of students was a blow to the pride of the hallowed subject. When Classics tutorials were assigned to rooms where other lecturers were working, the ire of Coleiro knew no bounds: 'Do we mean to do genuine teaching or are we a mere sham? ... Or is it that the teaching of Classics has no importance?'.¹⁸⁴ The question was how to keep Latin and Greek afloat in the storm. One stratagem was to ensure the continuation of obligatory study for Theology and Law students. At the time, courses in Philosophy for Theology students were given in Latin. When the question arose whether Latin should remain compulsory for students reading for BA Honours in Philosophy, Coleiro insisted that Latin should be compulsory even for students reading Philosophy for a General degree:

for the simple reason that whosoever takes a degree General or Honours in any subject should be able to read the *fontes* in their own language and all the modern philosophers down to Marks [sic] included wrote in Latin. Leibnitz indeed has not yet been translated from his original Latin. As yet no student of philosophy in any university of the world has ever needed to read Leibnitz in translation!.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ UMHA, Faculty Board Minutes 1965/66, 11/10/1965 and 08/11/1965.

¹⁸⁴ NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, handwritten note to Prof. J. Aquilina, undated (probably 1965).

¹⁸⁵ NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, handwritten note to Prof. J. Aquilina, 03/11/1965.

Nevertheless, Classics in translation would soon appear the only plausible solution to the crisis.

When Dr Joseph D. Frendo took up his appointment at the University of Cork in 1969,¹⁸⁶ there was an imminent peril that the vacant lectureship would be suppressed. Coleiro immediately expressed his vexation in an incensed memorandum to his old friend Professor Joseph Aquilina,¹⁸⁷ then Dean of Arts, where he described the problems that would assail his Department if one lectureship were lost. He also warned Aquilina of the unwanted precedent that such a suppression would create, with severe repercussions to the general administration of the University, 'for reasons political or personal ... to the detriment of the academic life of the University: 'Qui stat, videat ne cadat!'¹⁸⁸ Coleiro goes on to provide a full list of the teaching ramifications of his Department, at the time consisting of himself in the Chair and two lecturers:

- (a) the Greek and Roman parts of the Mediterranean Civilisation Course¹⁸⁹, also given separately to students following the evening version of the course;
- (b) Greek and Latin as languages and literature for students who take these in the BA Part I Course;
- (c) Greek and Latin for Final BA General Course;
- (d) Greek and Latin for Final BA Honours Course in Classics;
- (e) the MA Course in Classics.

A wide range in student numbers existed at the time attending these courses, from 41 for the Mediterranean Civilisation Day Course and 75 for the Mediterranean Civilisation Evening Course, to only one student reading for the MA in Classics. Coleiro, however, was not concerned with numbers: 'my department is not interested in mass production but

¹⁸⁶ UMHA, Faculty Board Minutes 1969/70, 29/9/1969, where the official date of Frendo's resignation is given as 01/10/1969.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Felice Pace 2008.

¹⁸⁸ The Latin proverb recalls 1 Cor. 10:12.

¹⁸⁹ This was a course of general Mediterranean history and culture compulsory for all students following the BA (General) Course.

in producing a small number of really good teachers in Latin and Greek. At present, most (almost all) of the Latin and Greek teachers in the Lyceum and other Government Secondary Schools, at the Archbishopal Seminary and St Aloysius College, as well at the University are BA graduates of my Classics Department.’ Coleiro contended that such a teaching load could not be carried by two persons only, as ‘they are not beasts of burden’. At all events, they would not do so without having to discontinue their scholarly research.¹⁹⁰

Latin received the *coup de grâce* when the language was removed as a compulsory subject for the study of Law at the University. Until the late 1960s entry to Law was open only to those who had passed in the Preliminary Arts Examination in Latin (and other subjects) or were in possession of an A Level school examination in Latin. By the early 1970s, an A Level, with at least Grade C, in Latin or Italian or French was required.¹⁹¹ A few years later one could join the course with an O Level in either French or Latin, besides the compulsory one in Italian.¹⁹² When news broke out that Latin was no longer obligatory, Dtt. Biagio Vella’s Latin O Level class at the Higher Secondary in Valletta suffered an overnight slump. Vella found that his class had shrunk from about fifty students to only three!¹⁹³

These were hard times for Coleiro, who was elected Dean of Arts for 1969-1972.¹⁹⁴ Among the decisions taken during this period was the one that the Lectureship in Classics and the Lectureship in Archaeology be combined.¹⁹⁵ Coleiro was here paving the way for the career of Anthony Bonanno, at the time a student of Classics and later an eminent archaeologist and distinguished scholar.¹⁹⁶ Through an agreement with

¹⁹⁰ NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, Colerio to Aquilina, titled “2nd Lectureship in Classics”, undated, but clearly 1968 or early 1969.

¹⁹¹ UC 1970-1971, 240.

¹⁹² UC 1976-1977, 150.

¹⁹³ Interview: Vella, B. Cf. Interview: Zammit Salinos. Lambert (2010: 56-57) describes a very similar scenario taking place in South Africa in 1994.

¹⁹⁴ UMHA, Faculty Board Minutes 1969/70, 29/09/1969.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 01/12/1969.

¹⁹⁶ Vella, N. *et al.* (forthcoming).

the University of Palermo, Coleiro engaged Dott.sa Rita Virzi to undertake selective archaeological excavations and also conduct lectures for the Department and the 'History of Mediterranean Civilization' course, and arranged for Bonanno to study classical archaeology at the University of Palermo, where he graduated *Dottore in Lettere* in 1971.¹⁹⁷ Another decision was to introduce a new subject that involved Classics in translation.¹⁹⁸ As Professor Peter Vassallo reminisced, 'Coleiro fought a terrific battle in Senate to persuade his colleagues that Latin has to be read in the original. It was a lost cause and he had to concede that Latin could be studied in translation'.¹⁹⁹ The 'Classical Culture and Civilization' course was seen at some quarters as Colerio's admission that his subject was in its swan song. However, Nicholas Debono Montebello, who taught the subject for many years until his own retirement in 1995, saw the opportunities that such a course had in store:

We started paying attention to a field which had hitherto been rather ignored. Although the study of the language had declined across the globe, it was different with the literature - of course in translation. Literature is a human legacy, a timeless possession belonging to all humanity. That was the first concept underlying the Course. The second concept was the importance of the legacy of classical culture to modern-day cultures and languages. I was never tired of stressing how classical themes and perspectives continue to reappear and to be transformed in the history of culture and civilization ... To all intents and purposes, the Classical Culture and Civilization Course was a course in Comparative Literature.²⁰⁰

Meanwhile, in the area of postgraduate studies at the University of Malta, Latin, and particularly poetry in Latin by Maltese writers, seemed to be experiencing an unforeseen surge in interest. Three unpublished MA

¹⁹⁷ Interview: Bonanno.

¹⁹⁸ UMHA, Faculty Board Minutes 1969/70, 19/01/1970.

¹⁹⁹ Interview: Vassallo. Other Universities by this time had had to reach a similar compromise, e.g., in West African countries such as Ghana and Sierra Leone; cf. Goff 2012: 189.

²⁰⁰ Interview: Debono Montebello. '...and Classical Reception', he might have added.

dissertations were submitted within the range of a few years, each dealing with a Maltese neo-Latin poet. This marked a reawakening of curiosity in this fecund field which had lain untilled since the work of Frenzo Azopardi in the 1930s. Two of the dissertations were in Italian and were submitted to the Department of Italian under the supervision of the Italian academic Franco Lanza, Professor of Italian, while a third, supervised by Coleiro, was written in English and submitted to the Department of Classics. Frederick Borg's 'L'Abate Luigi Rigord e la poesia lirica a Malta nel settecento' covered the life and works of the Maltese Latinist.²⁰¹ It treated Rigord's work in Latin and Italian with equal importance, while the cultural and historical dimensions prevailing at the times, so important for the appreciation of Rigord's work, were never out of sight. In compiling Rigord's poetry for the first time, a considerable portion of which was still up to that time in manuscript form, Borg, who had studied Latin at the Lyceum, was effectively doing the work of an editor.²⁰² The same level of quality was to be found in Mario Debono's dissertation on Zammit 'Brighella', 'Don Giuseppe Zammit detto "Brighella"',²⁰³ which although not neglecting Zammit's published poetry in Latin, was in large part directly concerned with Zammit's journalistic activities in Italian which constituted a major portion of the poet's *oeuvre*. Debono's thesis is nonetheless still of fundamental importance to any future studies of Zammit's Latin poetry, reflecting also the erudition of Debono's supervisor. It appears there might have been propagandistic objectives behind Lanza's selection of MA topics for his students, particularly here in the choice of the satiric, oftentimes anti-British, Zammit 'Brighella'. Debono recalled Professor Lanza's rhetorical question during one of his lectures: 'The British took away Italian from you. But what did they give you in return?', a rather startling statement which left his students speechless.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Borg, F.G. 1972. Cf. 6.2.

²⁰² Interview: Borg, F.G.

²⁰³ Debono 1978. Cf. 6.3.

²⁰⁴ Interview: Debono. On Lanza's views on the decline of Italian in Malta, see Hull 1993: 107-109.

Possibly as a reaction to the dissertation on the Latin poet Rigord in the Department of Italian and its possible intimations of foreign incursion into his own field, Coleiro started to exhibit an interest in Maltese neo-Latin writers as an exercise worthy for MA study.²⁰⁵ There must have also been some instigation from Jozef IJsewijn who had participated at the International Latin Congress held in Malta in 1973²⁰⁶ and who in 1977 was to publish the first edition of his classic *Companion to Neo-Latin studies*, observing that 'Unfortunately little is known of the Latin works written by Maltese authors ... A comprehensive study of Maltese Latin would be very welcome'.²⁰⁷ At any rate, Coleiro suggested the poetry of Revd Joseph Schembri as a worthy subject for an MA dissertation when Louis Borg, a BA graduate in Classics who at the time was also giving the Classics Department a helping hand as a part-time lecturer, consulted him about a subject to work on for his MA.²⁰⁸ In his 'An edition of Mgr. Joseph Schembri's Latin poems',²⁰⁹ Borg worked on the Latin poetry of Schembri by collecting poems which had been published in various journals and newspapers, and including some still in manuscript form discovered after the poet's death.²¹⁰ Being a dissertation in Classics, Borg's work was to a certain extent licensed to focus on a thorough, if slightly pedantic, philological and metrical commentary on a selection of the poems, while generally overlooking the important social and cultural backgrounds to the poems.²¹¹ In 1975, Borg was the first student to graduate MA in Classics in the history of the University.²¹²

²⁰⁵ Interview: Borg, L. Cf. Aquilina (1985), where N. Debono Montebello spoke of his plan, instigated by IJsewijn's comment, 'of compiling an anthology of Maltese Latin'.

²⁰⁶ See 5.9.

²⁰⁷ IJsewijn 1977: 81. Cf. ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (2), for many letters exchanged between Coleiro and IJsewijn. In his second edition, IJsewijn (1990: 103) was to modify the last statement to 'remains an important desideratum in the field of Neo-Latin studies'.

²⁰⁸ Interview: Borg, L.

²⁰⁹ Borg, L. 1975.

²¹⁰ Cf. 8.1.

²¹¹ Interview: Borg, L., particularly as regards foreign examiner W.S. Maguiness' comments on pedantry.

²¹² Interview: Vella, H.C.R.

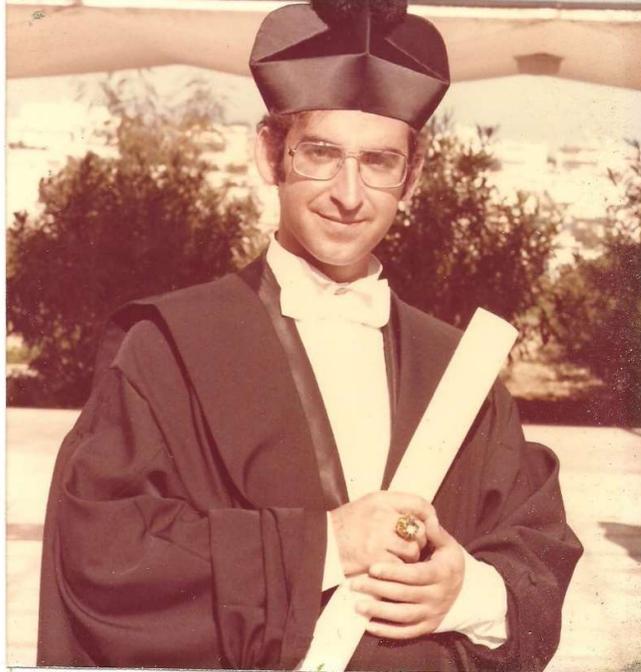


Figure 9 - H. C. R. Vella graduating PhD in Classics in 1979

The lack of students for the MA Degree must have hindered Coleiro's plan to cover other Maltese neo-Latinists. For his second MA student, Coleiro had perhaps a more interesting and ultimately important topic, namely, the French Hospitaller knight Jean Quintin d'Autun's

description of Malta of 1536. Horatio Vella in 1977 compiled a commentary on Quintin's Latin prose as part of his MA studies, having a few years previously produced its first translation into English for his BA Honours dissertation also under Coleiro's supervision.²¹³ At once, and again with Coleiro supervising, Vella embarked on a PhD thesis, which developed into 'Some aspects of Valerius Flaccus' art: enjambement and some metrical technicalities in the *Argonautica*'.²¹⁴ It was a race against time, not so much because Coleiro's retirement-age was drawing near, but especially since rumours were already about that drastic reforms were in store for the University.²¹⁵ Vella completed his thesis in eighteen months, graduating in late 1979 (Fig. 9). By that time, the controversial reforms had been put in place, and Vella had taken the post of a lecturer in Classics at the University of Harare in Zimbabwe (at the time, Rhodesia), where he stayed until 1989.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Vella 1979. See also, e.g., Vella 1982-1983, 1987a, and 1987b, for connected published works.

²¹⁵ See 5.1.

Vella's thesis was the first PhD in Classics at the University. The year, 1979, also marked Coleiro's retirement. The University would not have another Classics professor before 2006.²¹⁶

5.9 An international Congress of Latin Studies in Malta

With the study of Latin in steady decline since the mid-1960s, Malta's hosting of a six-day, all-in-Latin, international congress of Latin scholars in May 1973 seems like the defiant Coleiro's last stand in a desperate battle against extinction. The 'Third International Congress of Latin Studies' was a joint initiative between the Classics Department of the University of Malta and the 'Academia Latinitati Inter Omnes Gentes Fovendae' of the Institute of Roman Studies on the Aventine at Rome.²¹⁷ Coleiro was an active member of the Academia and had participated in the first two congresses, the first one at Rome in 1966, and the second at Bucharest in 1970, at the latter of which he also contributed a paper.²¹⁸

Coleiro formed and steered an organizational committee which, by the end of 1971, had already dispatched some 1,500 invitations to Universities, institutions, private professors, and academic journals.²¹⁹ Many months of intense work followed, and in March 1973 as many as 116 foreign Latinists finally made it to Malta for the Congress.²²⁰ Hailing from twenty different countries, the majority of participants were European, with a considerable presence of Latinists from Iron Curtain countries, while a handful of scholars crossed the Atlantic from the US

²¹⁶ H.C.R. Vella was appointed Associate Professor of Latin and Greek in late 2006 and Full Professor in 2014.

²¹⁷ ACM, Latin Congress 1973. This collection ('Papers of the Latin Congress 1973' in full) consists *inter alia* of hundreds of letters (in Latin, Italian, or English) exchanged between Coleiro and participating scholars in preparation to the Congress.

²¹⁸ Coleiro 1970a.

²¹⁹ ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (6/3), for a categorized list of recipients of the 'prima epistula'.

²²⁰ This is the official figure of foreign delegates given by *STM*, 02/09/1973, 28.

and Canada.²²¹ Some of these were prominent classicists of international standing, and others would eventually make a name for themselves, such as Pierre Grimal, Antonio Manzo, John Traupman, P.G. Walsh, Joseph IJsewijn, O.A.W. Dilke, Johannes Irmischer, W. Geoffrey Arnott, Reginald Foster, and W.S. Maguinness. In the case of the latter, as well as for A.H. Armstrong, Coleiro requested the University to pay traveling and other expenses ‘in view of the uninterrupted service ... for the past 22 years (since 1950) by serving us as external examiners, in our Finals BA in Latin and Greek respectively’, a request to which the University consented.²²² Armstrong had to decline the offer for family reasons.²²³



Figure 10 - Group-photograph of the Latin International Congress of 1973

Over fifty papers were delivered during the days of the Congress comprising a wide spectrum of classical matters. Evenings were reserved for cultural tours and events. One country which was strikingly

²²¹ ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (6/1), for lists of the attendees and their countries of origin.

²²² ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (8/ 'Congress of Latin Studies - Rector R.U.M. '), Coleiro to Rector Borg Costanzi, 07/12/1972 and 18/12/1972.

²²³ ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (1), Armstrong to Coleiro, undated.

under-represented in the list of papers was that of the hosting island itself: only one paper by the convener himself. At any rate, the proceedings were eventually published by the University of Malta as the *Acta omnium gentium ac nationum conventus Latinis Litteris Linguaeque fovendis*, a hefty 600-page volume in Latin edited by Coleiro which is a testimonial to the high level of scholarship that the Congress elicited.²²⁴ Letters from participants which Coleiro received subsequent to the Congress abounded in expressions of gratitude and commendation, attesting to the general success of this huge event and to its excellent organization.²²⁵ The number of such letters more than justified Coleiro's claim in the 'Praefatio' of the Proceedings and his explanation as to why their reproduction was left out of it:

Ea sane quae conventu peracto vel gratulatoriis epistulis ad nos missis vel doctis in ephemeridibus permulti, haud ingratis verbis, de ipso conventu scripserunt non inseruimus, non quod haud acceptissima exceperimus legerimusque, sed quod quam minimis impensis librum conficere - quae sane sint hodiernis diebus talia impensa neminem fallit - pretioque quam minimo legentibus offerre voluimus.²²⁶

During the Congress, Latin was also the main language of conversation between participants, making the young MA student Louis Borg feel he was 'in the company of Cicero and friends at the baths in Rome'.²²⁷ The only event not held in Latin was a full theatrical representation in Italian of Plautus' *Menaechmi* staged by the Compagnia Filodrammatica Carlo Goldoni.²²⁸ The piece was directed by a young Narcy Calamatta, still at the beginning of a long theatre career.²²⁹ Having never been a student of Latin, Calamatta could not resort to the *Latin For Today* volumes as a juvenile Lino Farrugia had done about a decade earlier at the Seminary when the latter came to direct his first play, a production of

²²⁴ Coleiro 1976.

²²⁵ ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (5), 'After Congress Photocopies'.

²²⁶ Coleiro 1976: 7.

²²⁷ Interview: Borg, L.

²²⁸ Interview: Calamatta.

²²⁹ For Calamatta (b. 1939), see Schiavone 2009: 1.388-389.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.²³⁰ Instead, for his inspiration Calamatta drew from the Hollywood epic films that, he admits, virtually constituted all that he knew about the Roman world.²³¹ A promotional press report still commented rather optimistically that 'Books were consulted, professors interviewed and teachers of Italian mobilized'.²³² The result was a racy, Hollywood-like adaptation of Plautus which clashed with Coleiro's conventional ideas of what a Roman comedy should look like but which delighted the audience of Latin scholars.²³³

A revival of classical theatre in Malta had some years previously been effected through the foresight and initiative of Alfred Sant, later Prime Minister of Malta (1996-1998), who endeavored to make the best of a lacuna he had observed in the current theatrical milieu of the island.²³⁴ Sant was the instigator of the University Players' 'Festival of Classical Theatre' in August 1968 which featured the early directorial contribution of Lino Farrugia and Albert Marshall. Both had studied Latin at the Seminary and later at the University under Coleiro (with Marshall at the time still reading for a BA in Classics), and both would go on to forge a distinguished career in theatre and TV.²³⁵ Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Aristophanes' *The Poet and the Women*, and Euripides' *Electra* were performed over three weekends at St Michael's College of Education. The last two plays were given in English, but the *Oedipus* was performed in a Maltese translation by Louis Azzopardi, in all probability the first time a Greek tragedy was enacted in the Maltese language.²³⁶ The success of the festival revived a degree of interest in classical drama which

²³⁰ Interview: Farrugia.

²³¹ Interview: Calamatta.

²³² Anon. 1973.

²³³ The play was restaged at the Manoel Theatre in October 1973, with a reviewer (Anon. 1973) criticising Calamatta's 'screamingly anachronistic or misplaced' addenda.

²³⁴ Interview: Sant.

²³⁵ For Farrugia and Marshall, see, respectively, Schiavone 2009, 1.779-780 and 2.1103-1104.

²³⁶ My gratitude to Dr A. Sant for providing me with a scan of the programme. The likelihood that this was the first-ever Greek tragedy staged in the Maltese language was corroborated by retired Judge Philip Sciberras in a discussion with the author on 07/11/2017; Sciberras was one of the organizers of the Festival. For Azzopardi, who did not translate from the Greek, see Schiavone 2009: 139-140.

became a fairly standard feature in the Maltese yearly theatre-calendar. Aristophanes' *The Birds* was given an irreverent treatment by director Albert Marshall in 1969 which shocked the sensibilities of many.²³⁷ Lino Farrugia followed with an English version of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* for the 'Malta Talent Artistes' in 1971, which however failed to attract the audience it deserved.²³⁸ Two years later, however, the production of a Maltese translation of Euripides' *Bacchae* (*Il-Bakkanti* by Teatru-Workshop) sparked a controversy on the aptness of Maltese rather than English for such a project and the value of staging a Greek tragedy in a translation not done from the original language. While the *Times of Malta* theatre-reviewer remarked that John Schranz's translation was 'workable',²³⁹ a Maltese reader, criticizing the choice of language, asked rather sarcastically whether 'the present translation was done from the original (as an English translation would be) or whether it is the translation of a translation?'.²⁴⁰ The *Bacchae* polemic reflected a growing reality that was just beginning to dawn on many, that the triumph of Anglicization in neo-bourgeois sectors of the Maltese population had also engendered the encroachment of English at civil, social, and education levels.²⁴¹ Clearly, as part of the struggle for national identification, the Language Question was still an unsolved issue.

Coleiro's commissioning of a production in Italian of the *Menaechmi* must have had something to do with the growing tendency for detachment from British subservience, as was his attempt to have Anthony Bonanno, appointed as Assistant Lecturer in Classics in 1971, move to Italy for a 'Specializzazione' instead of England to read for a doctoral degree. Bonanno's reasons for preferring England ultimately prevailed, leading him to pursue doctoral studies at the University of London.²⁴²

²³⁷ Xuereb 1969.

²³⁸ Anon. 1971.

²³⁹ Anon. 1973.

²⁴⁰ 'Thoughtful' 1973. See reactions on the same newspaper from Friggieri 1973; Licari 1973; 'Thoughtful' 1973b; Frendo 1973.

²⁴¹ Hull 1993: 104-107.

²⁴² Interview: Bonanno.

5.10 Suppression of the Faculty of Arts



Figure 11 - The Cicero plaque at Mdina

The Congress of Latin Studies of 1973 had a curious development six years later.²⁴³ One of the papers at the Congress had put forward strong arguments in favour of the historicity of Cicero's visit to Malta and argued for his actual stay at the house of a Maltese friend, Aulus Licinius Aristotelis Melitensis, mentioned by the orator in one of his letters.²⁴⁴ The author of this paper, entitled 'De Cicerone Melitae commorante atque commoraturus',²⁴⁵ was Jan Wikarjak

(1914-1983), Professor of Classical Philology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Wikarjak had ended his delivery with a plea that Malta should commemorate Cicero, and his friendship with Aulus Licinius Aristotelis, by a statue and inscription at Mdina, the island's old capital, where the Maltese host had in all probability resided. Through the efforts of Coleiro, a plaque bearing a bronze relief of Cicero's portrait and an inscription in Latin, followed by a translation in Maltese, was finally set up on the wall of the Cathedral Museum of Mdina and inaugurated in May 1979 by the President of the Republic, Anton Buttigieg (Fig. 11). The Latin inscription was very closely modelled on the text that Wikaryak had recommended in his paper.

²⁴³ Serracino (forthcoming) for a full account.

²⁴⁴ Cic. *Fam.* 13.52.1.

²⁴⁵ Coleiro 1976: 506-511.

Politically and economically, Malta at the time was undergoing highly significant changes. Since coming into power in 1971, the Labour Government under Dom Mintoff had been implementing bold reforms in many sectors of the island's economy and had changed its foreign policy.²⁴⁶ On Freedom Day, 31 March 1979, less than two months before he unveiled Cicero's memorial, President Buttigieg had ushered Malta into a state of full sovereignty for the first time in its history. This was a culmination of the progressive feeling in the air. However, in 1978, Prime Minister Mintoff had engineered drastic reforms in tertiary education, setting up a 'New University' to host subjects deemed currently expedient to the economy, while demoting unnecessary subjects to the outdated 'Old University'.²⁴⁷

An architect by profession, Mintoff had studied at the University of Malta where he took a BSc degree in 1937, and later was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford where he read Engineering Science at Hertford College.²⁴⁸ As a boy, Mintoff had received his secondary schooling at the Archbishopal Seminary where he studied Latin for a number of years.²⁴⁹ According to his brother, Revd Dionysus Mintoff OFM, Dom Mintoff was an outstanding Latinist whose expertise later on in life outshone even that of Professor Coleiro himself.²⁵⁰ Such a claim would be hard to uphold. Certainly, his yearly examination results at the Seminary do not suggest any special proficiency.²⁵¹ However, Mintoff was a voracious reader till the end of his long life (1916-2012), and his teenage study of Latin must have served him well in his extraordinary

²⁴⁶ Blouet 2017: 261-262.

²⁴⁷ See 5.1.

²⁴⁸ Frendo 2016.

²⁴⁹ ASM, Examination Results. Mintoff studied Latin from 1927 to 1929.

²⁵⁰ Interview: Mintoff.

²⁵¹ ASM, Examination Results. Mintoff did not sit for the Latin exam for Class I (1926-1927), but sat for Latin in Class II. In the December examinations of 1927, he scored 63% in Latin, placing third in a class of 17 pupils. In the exams of March 1928, he bettered his mark to 89%, placing fourth in a class of 15. In Class III annual examination of 1929, he scored 55 out of 80 in the written exam and 17 out of 20 in the oral exam, placing fourth in a class of 19 students. In the exams of December 1929, as a Class IV pupil, he was short of one mark to make the pass mark of 40%.

political career.²⁵² Indeed, even while lambasting the archaic curricula and teaching methodologies of the University in his Parliament speeches during the debates of the educational reforms in 1978, he occasionally boosted his interchanges with references to the ancient languages:

Hon. D. Mintoff	Are you saying 'arbitrary'?
Hon. U. Mifsud Bonnici	Arbitrary. And I will explain why. 'Arbitrary' not in the sense capricious. Arbitrary, I mean. Why arbitrary, Mr President? Because there are ...
Hon. D. Mintoff	If you take the Latin sense, you know, of umpire, arbitrary, of the <i>arbiter</i> ... ²⁵³

Whatever appreciation Mintoff had for Greek and Latin,²⁵⁴ the Education Act of 1978 suppressed the Faculty of Arts and abolished the Faculty of Theology. For the first time in the history of the University, the stately measure of the Latin language ceased to resound within its walls.²⁵⁵ It was only with a change in government, after the election of the Nationalist Party in 1987, that the study of Latin, and Greek, was restored as part of the full reinstatement of the Faculties of Art and Theology.

Of particular irony is the fact that these reforms took place in the last year of Professor Coleiro's long academic career. The aging Latinist, by then nationally recognized as the formidable personification of the ancient albeit outmoded language, must have relinquished his Chair in 1979 not

²⁵² Personal reminiscence of M.R. Zammit, Professor of Arabic and formerly Prime Minister Mintoff's private secretary, communicated to the author on 12/09/2017.

²⁵³ *KD*, 27/06/1978, 367.

²⁵⁴ For a highly Aristotelian rhetorical analysis of a public speech given by Mintoff in 1976, see Zammit, M.R. 2012.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Alfred Tennyson's 1882 poem 'To Virgil'; see Harrison, S. 2011.

without a degree of bitterness (Fig. 12). A sense of defeat would have diminished - unless it would not have actually intensified - with the publication in the same year of Coleiro's edition and commentary of Virgil's *Eclogues*.²⁵⁶ Many years in the making, this edition must be ranked as the first Maltese scholarly work since 1800 that could lay claim to being a major contribution in the field of international classical scholarship. Coleiro's *Eclogues* was meant to be the crown of his academic achievements in the eyes of the learned world.²⁵⁷ Closer to home, Coleiro was known as a steadfast Nationalist, hostile to Mintoff's socialist government, its anticlericalism, and increasingly rough political methods.²⁵⁸ His memorial plaque to Cicero, erected in 1979, would have been a subtle but incisive way to remind the nation, and especially the potentates in the political and academic spheres, of the classical legacy of a small Mediterranean island that had once, supposedly, hosted the great Roman statesman and martyr for political freedom.

²⁵⁶ Coleiro 1979.

²⁵⁷ See 8.2.

²⁵⁸ Interview: Felice. Cf. Friggieri 2008: 409.

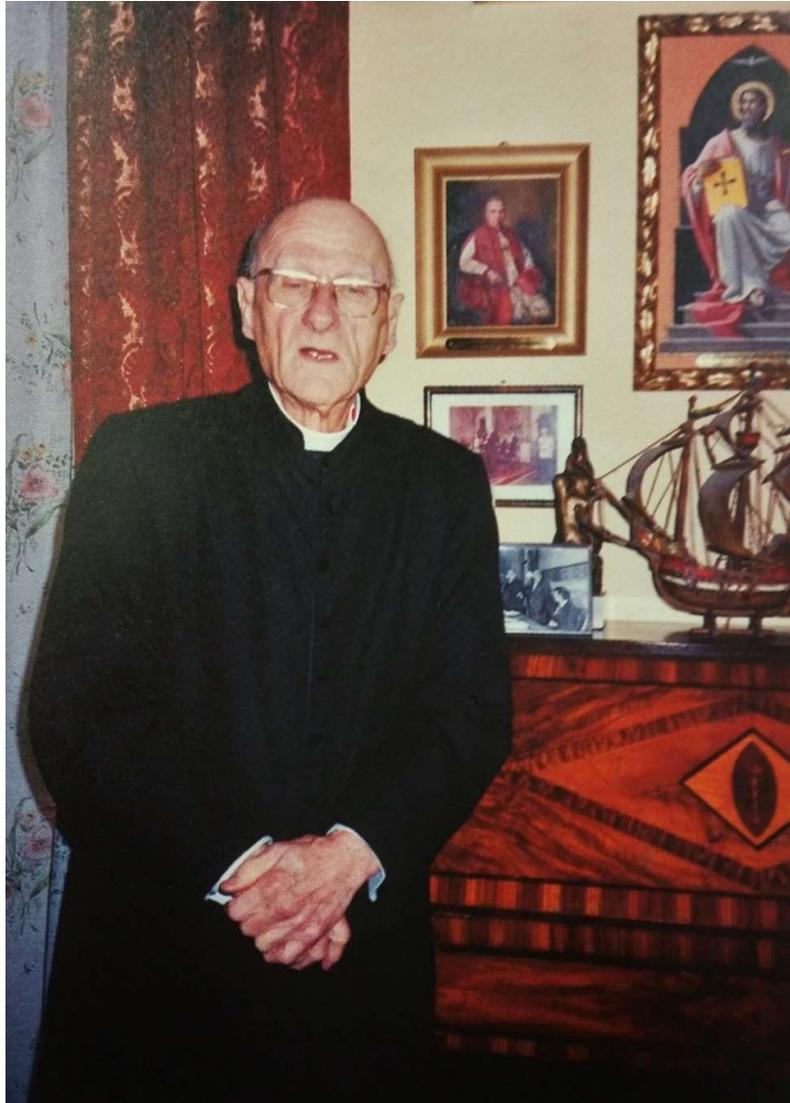


Figure 12 - Mgr Edward Coleiro at his home, February 1996

PART II - CLASSICISTS IN MALTA, THEIR CAREER AND WORKS

CHAPTER 6 – 19TH CENTURY CLERICAL DOMINATION

6.1 John Hookham Frere (1769-1846)

In 1821, the Right Honourable John Hookham Frere (Fig. 13) took up permanent residence in Malta owing to the precarious state of health of his wife, the Countess of Erroll. He continued to live in Malta till his death in 1846. His beautiful house overlooking Marsamxett Harbour soon became a mecca for British, Italian, and even Maltese literati.¹



Figure 13 - The Right Honourable John Hookham Frere

The house was also a haven for the poor folk who flocked there to receive alms. Frere had a charitable and affable nature, and showed a genuine concern for the Maltese.² Six thousand of them turned up for the funeral of Frere's wife in 1831.³ Comparatively few, however, would have been remotely aware of his literary calibre or his classical propensity. Nor would many of the Maltese have been aware of the brilliant array of friends

and acquaintances that this English recluse living in their midst enjoyed, ranging from literary personalities such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Sir Walter Scott, to major politicians such as George Canning, British

¹ Frere and Frere 1874: 1.238. For his Maltese friends, 264-266.

² E.g. in a deadly outbreak of cholera in 1837 (ibid. 1.278). Frere also promoted emigration of the Maltese destitute to North African cities, such as Tunis, Tripoli, and Alexandria 'where the Maltese Arabic is readily understood' (247); and to South America and the West Indies (260-261).

³ Ibid. 1.229.

Prime Minister in 1827 (and brilliant classicist in his student days). He earned the high esteem of many great men. It was Coleridge who, in his will written in 1829, described Frere as 'of all the men that I have had the means of knowing during my life, he appears to me eminently to deserve to be characterised as *ὁ καλοκᾶγαθος ὁ φιλοκαλός*'.⁴

Frere had studied at Eton College and later went to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he graduated BA in 1792 and MA in 1795. At college he won several prizes for classical composition. He was fellow of Gonville and Caius from 1793 to 1816, and in 1792 won the Members' Prize for the Latin essay.⁵ He later joined the Foreign Office, serving as under-Secretary of State, envoy extraordinary at Lisbon, and Minister Plenipotentiary in Madrid. As a reviewer of *The Edinburgh Review* had it in 1872, Frere 'belonged to a class of men of peculiar type, and thoroughly British - that of gentleman-scholars ... These were men whose appreciation of beauty in poetry, eloquence, art, was all fundamentally derived from classical sources.'⁶ Ever since his student days at Cambridge, Frere maintained a great passion for literature and the Classics.⁷ He translated four comedies by Aristophanes (*Acharians, Knights, Birds, and Frogs*), works of the elegiac poet Theognis, passages from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, poems by Catullus, and the Psalms of David.⁸

In Malta Frere took to the study of Hebrew with great determination, often to the detriment of his progress on Aristophanes.⁹ For many years, he read Hebrew with his Maltese friend, Revd Serafino Marmara, who was 'very learned in Hebrew, and all its cognate languages'.¹⁰ His faith in Marmara's scholarly accomplishment was such that when William Hodge

⁴ Ibid. 1.249.

⁵ For a biography, see Barker 2004. For a list of Members' Prize awardees, cf. Tanner 1917: 294-298.

⁶ Anon. 1872c: 474.

⁷ Cf. Sultana, D.E. 1988: 70-71.

⁸ These translations, and others, are reproduced in their entirety in Frere and Frere 1874 (vol. 3).

⁹ Ibid. I.237-238.

¹⁰ Ibid. I.266. Cf. Cassar, P. 1984: 54. On Marmara, see 3.5

Mill (1792-1853), formerly first principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta, and subsequently Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge, sent Frere a long list of books on the Hebrew language to acquire, he had Marmara go over each item on the list, relying completely on the Maltese's evaluation.¹¹ Frere had the notion of introducing the serious study of Hebrew at the University of Malta, believing that a Maltese student would find the mastery of the language easy on the strength of his native language being Semitic. About this he drew up a long memorandum entitled *Reflections on the Studies which may be cultivated in the University of Malta, respectfully submitted to the consideration of the Members of the Council*.¹² Here he also insisted on the paramount importance of schools teaching Maltese grammar, because 'a man should speak his own language correctly, and not merely as a parrot, or a barbarian'.¹³ Frere's interest in the Maltese language was behind the appointment of his Maltese friend Mikiel Anton Vassalli as first Professor of Maltese at the University in 1825, which continued at least up to 1827. The post was funded at Frere's own expense since it did not receive the official sanction of the University. Frere also financed Vassalli's funeral in 1829.¹⁴

Another of Frere's collaborative friendships in Malta was that with George Cornwall Lewis during the latter scholar's tenure as a Royal Commissioner in 1837.¹⁵ The two shared not only a thorough classical education but also a fine sense of British gentlemanly breeding.¹⁶ Lewis's society and encouragement induced Frere to return to his translations of Aristophanes. It was indeed Lewis who persuaded the older Englishman to publish his Aristophanes translations at the Government Printing Office in Malta by undertaking the superintendence of the work.¹⁷ Frere was somewhat let down by the limited resources of the local press, which

¹¹ Frere and Frere 1874: I.298-300

¹² Ibid. I.301-307.

¹³ Ibid. I.306. Barker 2004 states that Frere also learnt Maltese.

¹⁴ Ciappara 2014: 125-126, 140.

¹⁵ Frere and Frere 1874: 1.274.

¹⁶ Cf. Anon. 1872c: 474, 495-496.

¹⁷ Frere and Frere 1874: 1.276. Cf. Cassar, P. 1984: 52.

disallowed the inclusion of the marking of the dominant accents, or other indications of the rhythm, which he had contemplated as aids to a better understanding of the effect of the original. Lewis advised Frere that the strangeness of such markings could actually produce an adverse effect on the general reader, and Frere yielded to his advice.¹⁸ The work emerged in 1839, featuring a translation of *Acharnians*, *Knights*, and *Birds*.¹⁹ Lewis in 1844 wrote a very appreciative review of Frere's Aristophanes.²⁰ For many years Frere's translations of Aristophanes were the standard English versions of the plays, partly because Frere had presented them as performable playscripts with stage directions and notes on costumes.²¹ In 1842 Frere also published in Malta his translation of the fragments of Theognis of Megara, the Greek elegiac poet of the 6th century. Frere's *Theognis Restitutus: The personal history of the poet Theognis deduced from an analysis of his existing fragments* was thought chiefly remarkable 'for the curious pains which he bestowed in clothing dry bones with imaginary flesh and blood'.²²

One Maltese distinguished personality who befriended the aged Frere was the medical doctor Giuseppe Clinquant.²³ When the Englishman died in 1846, Clinquant published a short biography, which less than a month after Frere's passing was first delivered at the 'Società Medica D'Incoraggiamento di Malta', of which Frere had been a member.²⁴ Clinquant lauds Frere's literary achievements in the translation of the Greek of Aristophanes and Theognis, even alluding to reviews in the *Quarterly Review* in support of his commendation.²⁵ Clinquant also extols the merits of a work he would probably have been in a better position to value, namely, Frere's Latin public inscriptions in Malta, of which he

¹⁸ Frere and Frere 1874: 1.279-280.

¹⁹ Frere 1839.

²⁰ Lewis 1844; reproduced in Frere and Frere 1874: 1.280-282.

²¹ On the long reception history of Frere's Aristophanes, see Hall 2007: 77-79.

²² Anon. 1872c: 501.

²³ For Clinquant, see Schiavone 2009: 1.593-594.

²⁴ Cassar, P. 1984: 64.

²⁵ Clinquant (undated): 10-11.

reproduces two in their entirety.²⁶ Rather than celebrating Frere's literary aptitudes, however, Clinquant reserves the very last words to commemorate the great liberality that the Englishman had often bestowed so generously on the Maltese destitute:

And you, numerous Maltese, my compatriots, who still feel the beneficent hand of FRERE, who offered you refreshment and life in your misadventures; pray to Providence that it may give us a thousand similar benefactors, in this homeland of ours.²⁷

6.2 Luigi Rigord (1737-1823)

The most famous Maltese Latinist for the first quarter of our period was Abate Luigi Rigord (Fig. 14). Spending the best years of his adult life in Italy, Rigord returned to Malta in old age and nearly blind. His literary fame, however, was high enough to merit recognition and respect by Maltese and foreign intellectuals who continued to visit him until the end of his long life.²⁸

Rigord was born in Valletta and, after receiving a solid classical education

²⁶ Ibid. 11-13.

²⁷ Ibid. 15.

²⁸ Borg, F.G. 1972: 1-130, for a full biography.

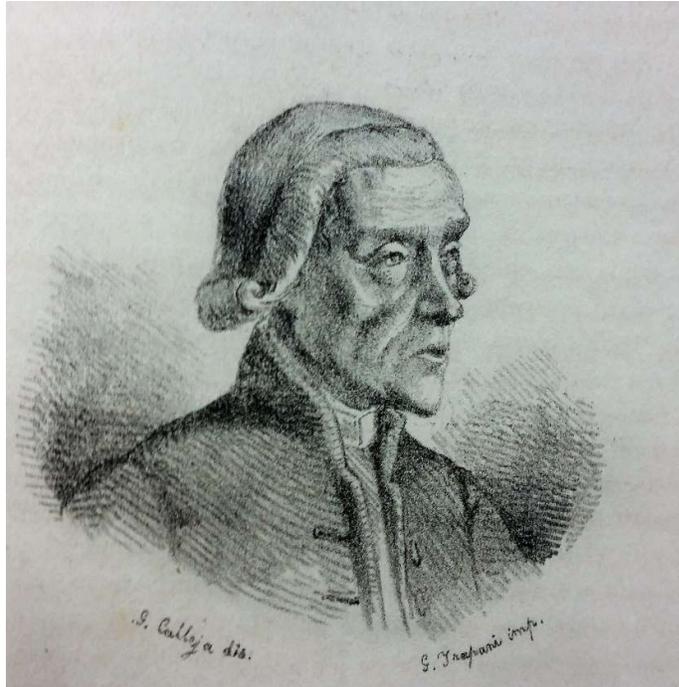


Figure 14 - Abate Luigi Rigord

at the Jesuit College, proceeded to Palermo to study Theology. His wish to join the Jesuit Order was frustrated by the anti-Jesuit controversy and the subsequent suppression of the Order,²⁹ a crisis which compelled him to move to

Rome in 1767 as a secular priest. In Rome Rigord, like other contemporary Maltese figures, became a member of the 'Academia Arcadum' literary movement, earning the official pseudonym of 'Ruidarpe Etolio'.³⁰ It was during one of the soirees of the academy that Rigord read his translation into Italian of Catullus' 'Coma Berenices'.³¹ The reaction was so favourable that he undertook to translate the rest of the poet's surviving work. Ruidarpe Etolio's expurgated and annotated translation of Catullus' oeuvre, with parallel original text, was published in Rome in 1774 under the auspices of the Arcadia.³²

The demanding life of Rome's literary society, and his encroaching blindness, must have been the causes behind the aging Rigord's return to his native island soon after the turn of the century. The Government

²⁹ For a brief account, see O'Malley 2014: 55-82.

³⁰ About 'Academia Arcadum', which was founded in Rome in 1690, see Dixon 2006. About the poetry in Latin composed by the Arcadians, IJsewijn (1990: 64) remarks that 'one finds both very good work and the deadliest dullness'. Cf. Borg, F.G. 1972: 53-58, for a background to the Arcadian Movement. For Maltese involvement in the Arcadia, cf. Laurenza 1934a: 16-17.

³¹ Catull. 66.

³² Rigord aka Ruidarpe Etolio 1774. For translations of Catullus in Britain in this period, see Stead 2016.

granted him a small pension and accommodation at the old Jesuit College, where he lived the rest of his semi-solitary life confined to a small room he called 'sepulchrum vitae',³³ solaced by the writing of poetry in Italian and Latin, and the regular visits by cultured friends. His loss of sight was a cause of some torment, somehow appeased by the memory of great blind poets of old, such as Homer and Milton.³⁴

Much of his poetry remained unpublished during his lifetime. However, Rigord's wide prestige in the island can be attested, as an example, from the fact that his poetry was recited during a literary event held at the Public Library in 1816 on the occasion of George III's birthday. In reporting this event, the *Gazzetta del Governo di Malta* reproduced some of Rigord's poems read during the event,³⁵ one of which merits some comment. Lord Nelson's victory and death at Trafalgar in 1805 had inspired Rigord to compose an elegiac distich:

Nelson vincentem Neptunus spectat in undis
Quem nisi Mors raperet, crederet esse Jovem.

In the *Gazzetta* this distich is preceded by the following lines:

Ad instar Distichi Ruidarpis Aetolii Melitensis
De Nelsone Divino apud Traphalgarium certante
In Ejus Mausoleo Londini aureis Characteribus insculpti
Cujus Tenor sequens

Notwithstanding the claim made by these extra lines of uncertain authorship, no such inscription is found, or was ever found, on Nelson's sarcophagus at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. F.G. Borg, on the other hand, locates the inscription on Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, where, according to him, one can still see it ('possiamo ancora leggere'); Borg also asserts, without any supporting evidence, that the choice of Rigord's distich came through a competition for the best Latin couplet to

³³ Bartoli 1908: vi.

³⁴ Borg, F.G. 1972: 66.

³⁵ *MGG*, 19/06/1816.

adorn Nelson's Column.³⁶ And yet, no such inscription is found on the Column, which was actually constructed between 1840 and 1843,³⁷ many years after Rigord's death. It is somewhat of a mystery how this legend came about, and that it did so in Rigord's own lifetime. One wonders whether this is a case of an attempt to invent tradition.³⁸

Be that as it may, with or without the Nelson connection, Rigord continued to attract foreign literary personalities passing through, or settling on, the island. Two such outstanding persons were Gabriele Rossetti and John Hookham Frere (see above), who both arrived in Malta in 1821 albeit for very different reasons.³⁹ The dashing Italian poet and revolutionary, himself a member of the Arcadia and at the time in flight for his life from Bourbon Italy, found particularly touching and uplifting the sight of the blind Arcadian poet in his lonely cell, to whom he also dedicated two of his poems (Rossetti, too, was to lose his eyesight in his final years).⁴⁰ An even stronger friendship was forged between Rigord and Frere, who exchanged a number of poems in Latin.⁴¹ In an elegiac distich, Rigord plays on the similarity between the Englishman's name and *frère* in French:

Si, Frer, nos fratres in primo nascimur Adam;
Frer, sic in Phoebos, nos decet, esse fratres.⁴²

In his reply, written in elegiac couplets, Frere affirms their poetic fraternity, saying that Rigord would be the senior brother not only in age

³⁶ Borg, F.G. 1972: 79-80; cf. Borg, F.G. (1980): 666.

³⁷ Designed by architect William Railton: see O'Donoghue 2004.

³⁸ Neither Vassallo, G.A. 1862, nor Levanzin 1909, make any mention of Nelson's memorial. Nor does Bartoli 1908. However, Azzopardi Sant (1931: 6) states that Rigord was the 'autore della breve iscrizione in latino posto sul monument eretto a Londra in memoria dello ammiraglio Nelson', and a similar assertion is made both by Mifsud Bonnici, R. 1960: 430, and Schembri, J. 2002. Buhagiar and Fiorini (1992:4) state that 'The Latin inscription on Trafalgar monument in London is ascribed to [Rigord]'. In his entry on Rigord, Schiavone (2010: 2.1356) refers to the poet's distich as the winner of 'a competition for the best inscription to be put on Nelson's monument in Trafalgar Square, in London'.

³⁹ Vassallo, P. 2012: 49-57.

⁴⁰ Borg, F.G. 1972: 70-74.

⁴¹ Ibid. 75-79; Cassar, P. 1984: 60.

⁴² Rigord 1839: 137.

but even in literary calibre ('Aetate quippe major et Scientia / Fratrem minorem respicis').

The poem by Frere was later reproduced in full in the new edition of Rigord's translation of Catullus published in Malta in 1839, which included a short biography of the late translator, but did away with the Latin text of the poems found in the original.⁴³ The publishers dedicated the edition to Frere as Rigord's 'amico ... affezionatissimo', testifying to the solid friendship that existed between the two, and possibly indicates financial backing by Frere of the enterprise. Rigord's introduction is worth a look especially with regard to the reasons he gives for the expurgation of the poems and the principles he adhered to in the process:

I have applied myself to produce it purged in this manner, so that the virtue of the readers may remain safe, especially the flower of tender youth for whom, more than the eloquence of speech and the ornaments of the language, it is easy to learn the flattering dictums of licentious and insinuating poetry. In so doing, it has been convenient for me to stick to the plan, where it was necessary to lessen something ('di scemar qualche cosa'), not to mutilate and render insufficient the genuine parts of the author so that a good part of the verses would perish; or divided, and truncated the particles of the same, would steal the strength of the emotion, leaving it deformed, graceless and without any wit. Some words were changed, in a manner however that does not render the surrogate voice misplaced.⁴⁴

A number of poems, however, required more editing, and these were relegated to an appendix. Such is the fate of Catullus 5, whose opening transforms into 'Bibamus, mea Lesbia, ac jocemur', and the later 'basia' into 'pocula' as in 'Da mihi pocula mille, deinde centum', which Rigord renders as 'Beviam, mia Lesbia, scherziam davvero ... Dammi di ciotole per mio contento / Mill'e poi cento'.⁴⁵

⁴³ Rigord 1839.

⁴⁴ Rigord 1839: vii. On expurgation of the Classics, see Harrison and Stray 2013. On similar Catullan expurgation elsewhere, see Trimble 2013 and Stead 2016.

⁴⁵ Rigord 1839: 119.

Rigord's own estimation of his translation was a modest average: 'Ella non è ottima sicuramente, e si contenta di stare tralle mezzane'.⁴⁶ Many years later, his Maltese compatriot, Gian Anton Vassallo, at the time Professor of Italian Literature and a notable poet himself, gave a more positive judgement: 'it seems to us that, on the whole, the work deserves a more favourable estimation and it is not inferior to that by Agostino Peruzzi'.⁴⁷ Vassallo also praised Rigord's annotations which testify to the translator's erudition in classical literature. Among these annotations one even comes across a number of citations of Greek poetry, which suggests that Rigord had a knowledge of Greek.

Although Rigord never committed himself to any formal teaching,⁴⁸ his presence at the Old College must have been an attraction to the brighter students at the Lyceum and the University, to some of whom we gather he gave free lessons in Rhetoric.⁴⁹ One student, only identified as 'Bertino', formed an endearing relationship with Rigord and receives occasional mention in the latter's verse. It was this Bertino who, after Rigord's demise, collated his scattered poetry into one volume.⁵⁰ Another young man who received Latin instruction from Rigord and who, as an adult, made a name for himself as an outstanding Latin poet, was Giuseppe Zammit, better known as 'Brighella'.

6.3 Giuseppe Zammit 'Brighella' (1802-1890)

After Rigord's death in 1823, the foremost Latin poet in nineteenth-century Malta was Giuseppe Zammit (Fig. 15).⁵¹ A striking similarity with his literary forebear and private instructor is the lack of a formal teaching

⁴⁶ Rigord 1839: ix.

⁴⁷ Vassallo, G.A. 1864: 4. Peruzzi (1764-1850) was an Italian poet and historian, among whose works was a translation of Catullus.

⁴⁸ But cf. UMHA, Acta I.17, where he is listed as 'Rev. D. Aloysius Rigord' among the members of the 'Collegium Theologicum' of the University for 1802.

⁴⁹ 'gratuite' according to Vassallo, G.A. 1864: 4.

⁵⁰ NL, Ms 805, as cited by Borg, F.G. 1972: 84-86.

⁵¹ Debono, M. 1978: 1-64, for full biographical details for Zammit.

career - apart, that is, from a very brief tenure of the Professorship of Literature at the Archiepiscopal Seminary, a post Zammit did not keep for long due to 'his readily satiric spirit'.⁵²



Figure 15 - Abate Giuseppe Zammit 'Brighella'

Zammit was born and raised in Valletta, which meant that Rigord was always within easy reach. While following the Course in Philosophy and Laws at the University, where he later obtained the degree of Doctor of Laws, the young Zammit must have stolen regular visits to Rigord's cell to learn 'i segreti del verso latino'.⁵³ His

legal practice was short-lived: he soon turned his attention to the priesthood and, after the prescribed course of studies, Zammit was ordained priest. In 1838 Zammit's satiric inclination found vent in the publication of a journal, which he entitled *Brighella*, a name which continued to be his nom de plume and by which he is still mostly remembered.⁵⁴ After only one year, Zammit discontinued the *Brighella*

⁵² Muscat 1947: 4.

⁵³ Frenzo Azopardi 1931: 1. Debono, M. (1978: 4) describes these lessons as 'lezioni private del gesuita'.

⁵⁴ Over thirty years after Zammit's death, Frenzo Azopardi (1923: 232) was still able to state 'Nessun nome di maltese ci è più familiare di *Brighella*'. The name 'Brighella' was taken from one of the characters of the *Commedia dell'arte*.

(which was to reappear many years later) and moved to Rome to join the (now revived) Jesuit Order,⁵⁵ but the experience was unsuccessful. He returned to Malta in 1841, culturally enriched, and still a secular priest with the title of 'Abate' (another point of resemblance with Rigord).⁵⁶ He resumed his journalistic activity by contributing to and editing many newspapers,⁵⁷ and dedicated much of the rest of his time to another passion, the composition of satiric verse in Latin and Italian.

Indeed, Zammit's first published poem, written in Latin Sapphic verse, had appeared as early as 1824.⁵⁸ His first two collections of poetry appeared in 1839, when Zammit was living in Rome,⁵⁹ both strangely bearing the title of *Carmina*. Of these two volumes, what appears to be the first published featured translations into Latin lyric verse of the odes and the fragments of Sappho,⁶⁰ which Zammit did from the Italian version of the Neapolitan Principe de Francavilla.⁶¹ Salvatore Cumbo, a steadfast promoter of Zammit through his journal *Il Filologo Maltese*, in his review remarked 'I would have wished he had taken up an original text to translate, rather than one which is already a translation, or an apocryphal poem known as *La Faoniade*'.⁶² And yet the collection included an original poem in sapphic stanzas, entitled *De morte Sapphus*.⁶³ The other set of *Carmina* published the same year was a collection of original Latin compositions.⁶⁴ Salvatore Cumbo praised some of these epigrams for their salty incisiveness in the manner of Martial, but others he considered

⁵⁵ In 1839, Cumbo (1839e: 7) lamented that Malta 'non riconobbe tale figlio, non mai lo degnò d'alcun onore. Il conobbe la colta Italia e lo rapì da questo suolo'.

⁵⁶ Mifsud Bonnici, R. 1960: 554.

⁵⁷ For Zammit's journalistic activity in Italian, see Fiorentini 1982, and Debono, M. 1978: 174-204. For his writing in Maltese-language newspapers, see Formosa 1997.

⁵⁸ Debono, M. 1978: 10.

⁵⁹ Cumbo 1840: 18, where we learn that Zammit was then 'sul Quirinale novizio fra' padri gesuiti'.

⁶⁰ Zammit, G. 1839a.

⁶¹ *La Faoniade: Inni ed odi di Saffo, tradotti dal testo Greco in metro Italiano da S.I.P.A.*, of various editions. S.I.P.A. is the acronym of 'Sosare Itomeio, pastore arcado', the pseudonym of Vincenzo Imperiali, Principe de Francavilla. According to Anon. 1837: 4.1666, 'The translator (Vinc. Imperiali) has here made up five hymns and five odes out of some fragments of Sappho after his manner'.

⁶² Cumbo 1840: 9.

⁶³ Zammit, G. 1839a: 144-152.

⁶⁴ Zammit, G. 1839b.

‘privi di tal sale’; Cumbo wished that Zammit had been more wary in his selection.⁶⁵

A compilation of a hundred satiric sonnets in Italian appeared in 1846;⁶⁶ the majority of these sonnets are headed by a Latin quotations from Roman authors, while four epigraphs are Greek followed by a Latin translation; the Greek citations, together with their Latin translation, are found in Erasmus’s *Adages*.⁶⁷ This use of Greek probably led Vincenzo Frenzo Azopardi in 1923 to describe Zammit as ‘colto come nessun altro nel greco’.⁶⁸ However, it remains doubtful whether Zammit possessed any real knowledge of Greek.⁶⁹ His Greek calligraphy certainly betrays a lack of confidence in the handling of Greek script. Such awkwardness can be observed in the manuscript entitled *Carmina* held at the Cathedral Archives in Mdina and handwritten by the author.⁷⁰ Besides full poems by Zammit, this features a list of the Latin and Greek epigraphs found in the published *Sonetti* and, in the case of the Greek quotations, the writing looks laborious and the letters are unaccented and unaspirated. Perhaps for Frenzo Azopardi, to whom Zammit ‘Brighella’ was the greatest humanist Malta had ever produced,⁷¹ the poet must have known Greek to merit the distinction.

Zammit’s best remembered collections of Latin verse are his two volumes entitled *Carmina et Inscriptiones*, published in 1864 and 1876, both featuring a convenient selection of elegies and epigrams, sacred hymns

⁶⁵ Cumbo 1840: 18.

⁶⁶ Zammit, G. 1846. These sonnets were later published in the issues of 1931 of the periodical *Malta Letteraria*, with an article by Frenzo Azopardi (1931) serving as a general introduction.

⁶⁷ The Greek quotations are Eur. *Bacch.* 369, Theoc. *Id.* 9.31-33, Ar. *Ran.* 289-290, Thgn. 499, and the well-known Greek proverb (*ὄνος λύρας*), of which one of the earliest attestations is Cratinus, fr. 247K.-A (cf. Tosi 2017: 417).

⁶⁸ Frenzo Azopardi 1923: 232.

⁶⁹ Very occasionally, Zammit makes use of a transliterated Greek word or phrase in his poems, e.g. in his distich entitled *In Zoilum*: ‘Ruptus es, et dentes adhibes crinesque coemptos: / Rem magnam praestas si Kalokagathos es’; see Zammit, G. 1876: 43.

⁷⁰ ACM, Ms. 446.

⁷¹ Frenzo Azopardi 1931: 1; cf. Frenzo Azopardi (1933: 35): ‘È stato il migliore umanista maltese, il più grande scrittore di epigrafi e di epigrammi latini’.

and inscriptions.⁷² Of particular interest from the latter edition are the handful of poems he addresses to Prince Edward Albert, Prince of Wales and later King Edward VII, who visited Malta in April 1876, which show the aged Zammit at his most authentic and forceful. A poem in elegiac couplets, 'In adventu ad insulam Melitam Alberti Eduardi', dated to 6 April 1876, opens in flurry of jubilation at the Prince's arrival:

Salve, Alberte! O venisti tandem! Aspice circum
Quomodo jam Melite te adveniente fremit
Laetitia, et populus vultu sua gaudia pandit,
Gestit et applaudit voce manumque tibi

only to undergo a dramatic change in tone when Zammit urges the Prince to attend to the people's plea and improve their dire condition:

Ast oculos alibi paulum verte, optime Princeps.
Atque vide ut Melite perdolet acta malis
Casibus! en audi gemitus inopumque querelas,
Quos misere cruciat irrequieta fames.⁷³

In a shorter poem, 'Eidem Augusto Principi ab insula Melita discedenti', written on 11 April, Zammit can hardly contain his bitterness and finally erupts in a flourish of anger:

Ah! Redeas numquam amplius quocumque libebit:
Si nihil attuleris, littora nostra fuge.⁷⁴

Zammit retained a belligerent and cynical spirit to the end of his life. The suspicions that he was the mysterious author of the already discussed *Sillabo di Erroruzzi* are well-founded,⁷⁵ and reveal that even in his old age Zammit had lost none of his power to shock and amuse.

⁷² Zammit, G. 1864 and 1876.

⁷³ Zammit, G. 1876: 24-25.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 27. For a discussion of this poem, see Frenzo Azopardi 1925: 37-38.

⁷⁵ Anon. 1878. See 4.4.

By the middle of the century Zammit had already acquired a name for himself as one of the finest living poets writing in Latin. Tommaso Vallauri mentions Zammit as one of the best composers of inscriptions.⁷⁶ In his *Asinus Pontanianus* of 1845, Diego Vitrioli (who possibly met Zammit during the latter's spell in Italy) includes 'Melitae Zammit' among the illustrious names in the 'exigua legio' still fighting against the 'enemies of civilization'.⁷⁷ Zammit could have hardly left out a copy of Vitrioli's poem among the ample testimonials we learn that he enclosed with his application in 1846 for the post of Professor of Latin and Italian Literatures at the University of Malta.⁷⁸ Zammit's failure in getting the job would have been a gross disappointment to him, especially if he had had a hand in bringing down the previous occupant of the chair, Lorenzo De Caro.⁷⁹ This setback, however, did very little to diminish his literary stature outside Maltese shores. Vitrioli, in a poem from 1858, still describes Zammit as 'Marci Valerii Martialis aemulum', winding up in the following lines:⁸⁰

Unus erat quondam Marcus celebratus in orbe, -
Nunc per te, Melite, cernimus esse duos.

Gold medals, in token of literary appreciation, came from Pope Leo XIII and from Queen Victoria. Zammit received these splendid gifts with typical cynicism, remarking that he would have preferred bottles of whisky to them.⁸¹ This was not Zammit's mordant tongue getting the better of him, but his real weakness for alcohol that seems to have increased with age: an eye-witness description of the poet a few days before his death reports that the empty bottles in his rooms, had they been refilled, would have supplied all the public houses in town.⁸² Liquor seems to have been

⁷⁶ Quoted by Frenzo Azopardi 1931: 3.

⁷⁷ Debono, M. 1978: 29-30.

⁷⁸ UMHA, Consiglio Generale 1840-1873, 14/01/1846.

⁷⁹ See 6.4.

⁸⁰ Debono, M. 1978: 38-40.

⁸¹ Frenzo Azopardi 1929: 38.

⁸² The town being Birkirkara, where Zammit lived for the last years of his life and is buried. The description, by Antonio Dalli, is quoted by Frenzo Azopardi 1932: 263-264.

Zammit's major drain on his yearly £100 pension issued by the Government from 1884. Writing to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (the Earl of Derby) to request official sanction for a pension to 'an Eminent Latin Scholar and Epigraphist', Governor Arthur Borton thought it advisable to wind up his letter by remarking that 'the state of Dr Zammit's health is such that it is impossible he will enjoy his pension for any lengthened period'.⁸³ A few weeks later, Zammit wrote a letter of gratitude in Italian, in a shaky hand, to Lieutenant Governor Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, to thank him 'for the great generosity accorded me on the occasion when it pleased the Government to grant me the annual pension'.⁸⁴ Until his death in 1890, Zammit would have received six instalments of this pension, a number that surely exceeded Barton's original expectations. At the time £100 was a considerable sum of money, considering the fact the Professor of Latin in 1884 was receiving an annual salary of £170.⁸⁵ This suggests that an aura of celebrity still hung about Zammit 'Brighella' during the last years of his life, a remnant of his former days of glory, which Count Gerald Strickland could so vividly recall fifty years later:

I have never seen any production in Latin so thoroughly in keeping with the best style of diction, grammar, etymology and phraseology as the verses that were printed and published by a certain Zammit, known as *Brighella*. I remember, as a small boy, as a very small boy, being sent by my mother as a sort of pilgrimage to *Brighella*, just to be able to say that I knew him. I have learned many of his verses by heart.⁸⁶

Even though Zammit's restless personality may not have been suited to the discipline required by the teaching profession, he still coached a number of private students, some of whom later established themselves

⁸³ NAM, CSG02 A7781, no. 1884, Borton to Early of Derby, 01/05/1884. Cf. Debono, M. 1978: 56. Borton was relying on Professor Albanese's testimonial reproduced in 6.8.

⁸⁴ NAM, CSG02 A7781, Zammit to Hely-Hutchinson, 14/06/1884.

⁸⁵ *MBB* 1884, H62. Professor Albanese had started with £100 in 1877, raised to £170 by 1883.

⁸⁶ *LA*, 31/03/1924, 1417.

in the literary field. Among them, there was Luigi Farrugia,⁸⁷ described as 'chiaro discepolo dello Zammit'.⁸⁸ Another distinguished name is that of Gian Anton Vassallo, later Professor of Italian Literature and one of Malta's best known poets,⁸⁹ who 'fortunately had excellent local teachers, amongst whom Abate Dr D. Giuseppe Zammit, a living ornament of the language of Latium and a credit to our homeland.'⁹⁰ When, in 1868, Vassallo died at the age of fifty, Zammit composed a moving elegy to his memory.⁹¹

6.4 Lorenzo De Caro (1817-1853)

Little is known about the life of Lorenzo De Caro, the first occupier of the Chair of Italian and Latin Literatures since its institution by the Fundamental Statute. The main source is Maria Cristina Tufigno's article on his life and work, which *Malta Letteraria* published in 1932.⁹² De Caro was born in Malta, but as a young man moved to Italy to study jurisprudence at the University of Pisa, where he graduated Doctor of Law. He showed an early disposition for poetry, publishing some Italian verse even during his student years in Pisa and continuing to write poetry, mainly in Italian, to the end of his short life.

His return to Malta in 1839 must have been in order to fill the Chair, and De Caro would have surely believed he was embarking on a long academic career. A series of articles on Latin Literature published in *Filologo Maltese* in 1840 indicated a good start.⁹³ By February 1842 he had already delivered four public lectures,⁹⁴ which, according to Salvatore Cumbo, were 'equipped by a great apparatus of arguments,

⁸⁷ See 6.10.

⁸⁸ Frenzo Azopardi 1933: 89.

⁸⁹ Friggieri 2012a: 3-44.

⁹⁰ Cesareo (undated): 10-11.

⁹¹ Zammit, G. 1876: 11, entitled 'In funere Ioannis Antonii Vassallo'.

⁹² Tufigno 1932.

⁹³ De Caro 1840b. De Caro also edited two journals, both short-lived: *L'Occulta Illustrata* (1839-1840) and *Il Globo* (1841-1842); see Fiorentini 1982.

⁹⁴ Cumbo 1842c.

sustained by much erudition. He well deserved his audience's applause'.⁹⁵

In 1844, however, the weekly journal *Il Mediterraneo: Gazzetta di Malta* published two letters within the space of three weeks laying a charge of plagiarism against him.⁹⁶ Both letters were written in English (the journal was bilingual despite its title) and signed by an unidentified correspondent under the pseudonym of 'A Constant Reader'. The first letter's target was De Caro's poem of 346 Latin hexameters, *De Aqua, Carmen*, which had been published by the same press publishing the journal (i.e. 'Izzo è Co.') in 1842 with a parallel translation in Italian by Felice Bisazza.⁹⁷ Claiming that 'one of the more remarkable topics of conversation in our literary circles, during the last few weeks, having been relative to the *real* authorship of the Latin poem, *De Aqua, Carmen*,' the unknown author reveals that, in 1829, the reputable Tuscan journal *Antologia* had published a review of a poem of 355 hexameter verses entitled *De Aqua*, the name of whose poet the reviewer, signing as 'P. C.', fails to identify.⁹⁸ Next, 'A Constant Reader' launches his indictment:

There is rather a long extract from the poem, beginning, "Coelicolae" and ending "succrescite fontes," of which the singularity is that it agrees, with the substitution of *Buverius* for *Leopoldus*, with a like passage in the *Carmen de Aqua*, that issued from your press in 1842, as the work of Dr. Lorenzo De Caro, with an Italian translation, by Felice Bisazza, preceded by a letter from B. to D. in which the Latin poem is distinctly attributed to the latter as *his own*.

The period from 1829 to 1842 was thirteen years.

The question now asked, and to which an unequivocal answer must be given is

WHO IS THE REAL AUTHOR OF THE CARMEN DE AQUA?

⁹⁵ Cumbo 1842a.

⁹⁶ 'A Constant Reader' 1844a and 1844b.

⁹⁷ De Caro 1842. The epigraph to *De Aqua* is ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ (Pind. *Ol.* 1.1), suggesting knowledge of Greek. In 1840 De Caro had published an extract from his poem on *Il Filologo Maltese*: see De Caro 1840a.

⁹⁸ 'P. C.' 1829. Regarding the authorship of the poem 'P. C.' only says that it is the same poet of *Eusebius seu de Christiana Educatione* published in 1825, which had been reviewed in *Antologia* in 1826 by 'S. C.' (cf. 'S. C.' 1826 in List of References).

The extract found in *Antologia* is 39 lines long. Of these, De Caro lifted fully no fewer than 28 lines incorporating them virtually as a chunk midway through his poem.⁹⁹ A few other lines received a few necessary changes. E.g.,

Regis ad exemplum tot tantaque ubique parantis
became

Angliae ad exemplum tot tantaque ubique parantis

and

Jam tandem felix habeat Flora inclyta Agrippas.

became

Jam tandem *Valecta* [Valletta] habeat nunc inclyta Agrippas.

while

Quem satis Italiae plenis dat mensibus annus.

became

Quem vix exhaustis praesens dat mensibus annus.

De Caro adds the occasional line, such as the one on Grand Master Wignacourt, ‘Et *Vignacourti* magno molimine mentis’. The major changes are found in the lines corresponding to the last nine of the *Antologia* excerpt, where ‘Buverius’, the Latinised name of Governor Bouverie, substitutes for that of ‘Leopoldus’ (Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany):

Roma, tuis quamquam tabescis pallida in agris, Fontibus urbe viges, quos hospes flumina credat. Urbs Pisae, domus Sophiae, spes thusca juventae, Fernandi lattices tibi origo fuere salutis.	Urbs Medina tuis, quamquam tabescis in agris, Fontibus urbe viges, quos hospes flumina credat. Gaulos, terra potens, vitrea celebrate Calypso BUVERI lattices tibi origo fuere salutis.
---	--

⁹⁹ De Caro 1842: 18-20.

<p>Fernandi Austriaci caelo aucti, et fausta precantis Gentibus Hetruscis, sonat inclyta fama Labronis Ad portus: Leopoldus amans coeptide, patrisque Longinquis puras ducentis collibus undas, Urget opus: Leopoldus adest, succrescite fontes.</p>	<p>BUVERI puras ducentis collibus undas Fervet opus - BUVERIUS instat, crescite fontes! (De Caro)</p>
--	--

Three weeks later the *Mediterraneo* published a second injurious letter from 'A Constant Reader'. Seeing that 'nothing has yet been done to clear up our doubts in respect to the now too celebrated *De Aqua, Carmen*', the unknown author this time refers to a Latin poem by De Caro dedicated to Saint Paul which had been published the previous year in a booklet of poetry in honour of the Apostle. Written in asclepiads, the poem began with the following lines:

Alme sol dulces obeunte curru
Afferens horas, nitidum peccamur
Mox diem cela rapidusque ponti
Perge sub undas.

De Caro had also attached the words 'Urbs nocturnis lampadibus illustrata' to the poem. 'A Constant Reader' affirmed that the poem had been composed around 1839, at Pisa, by a certain Maestro Alessio Bandecchi della Fornacette, in honour of Pisa's patron saint, Saint Ranieri. The added words had originally read 'Pisae nocturnis lampadibus illustratae'. 'A Constant Reader' chose to wind up his letter by a touch of sardonic humour:

I hope some of your correspondents, friends of truth and faithful to the memory of S. RANIERI, will favour us with information on this subject, in order that no undue advantage may hereafter be taken

by the inhabitants of strada S. PAOLO [St. Paul's Street in Valletta] of the composition of Maestro Bandecchi of Pisa.

The wry tone infusing these two letters could well point to Zammit 'Brighella' as the author. That Zammit would eventually be one of the several applicants for the Chair vacated by De Caro might indicate he had a personal interest in stirring up some mischief for De Caro.¹⁰⁰ To what extent were the accusations damaging to De Caro's academic prestige is not entirely clear. Tufigno seems to have believed that they actually managed to depose the young professor.¹⁰¹ What is certain is that De Caro relinquished his Chair in 1844. It appears that, henceforth, his production of Latin verse diminished considerably, although he continued to write verse and prose in Italian. De Caro died impoverished at 36 years of age.¹⁰²

6.5 Salvatore Cumbo (1810-1877)

From a young age, Revd Salvatore Cumbo showed great promise for a successful academic career, receiving when he was 25 years old an appointment as 'Doctor of Moral Theology' at the University.¹⁰³ He was also an excellent Latinist, professing a 'grandissimo amor' for a language the perfect mastery of which he admitted having spared no effort to achieve.¹⁰⁴ Cumbo was a firm believer in a good Latin style as the best, if not the only, proof of one's real proficiency in the language.¹⁰⁵

Cumbo published a collection of Latin poems in 1839,¹⁰⁶ the same year when Zammit 'Brighella's' first Latin compilation appeared. The Greek of the last three verses of *Anacreontea* 23 adorns the title-page as an

¹⁰⁰ See 3.7.

¹⁰¹ Tufigno 1932: 39.

¹⁰² Ibid. 42.

¹⁰³ *MBB* 1835, 84.

¹⁰⁴ Cumbo 1840a: 90.

¹⁰⁵ Cumbo 1840a: 105.

¹⁰⁶ Cumbo 1839a.

epigraph to these *Carmina*.¹⁰⁷ It was also in 1839 that Cumbo started his own journal *Il Filologo Maltese* with the objective of contributing to 'il vero risorgimento delle lettere in Malta'.¹⁰⁸ In the first issues he attempted to counter George Percy Badger's contemporary denunciation of the Church as the main cause for the poor level of education in Malta.¹⁰⁹ Badger had written about the dismal knowledge by Maltese scholarly priests of Classical Latin (as opposed to 'syllogistic Latin'), to which Cumbo replies with some vehemence:

After all, that priests do not know the classical Latin language is a lie already sufficiently denied by the publication of our verses and those of the Abate Zammit, not to mention many others who have a profound knowledge of the Latin language and who have not yet bothered to expose anything to the glare of publication.¹¹⁰

Badger had also mentioned a priestly dearth of Ancient Greek and Hebrew, but Cumbo retorts that 'he should know that Professor [Serafino] Marmara, even though a priest, has broad knowledge of those languages, as well as of Ethiopian, English, French, Latin, Italian'.¹¹¹ In the following year, an article appeared in the journal *L'amico della patria*, criticizing the fact that at the Lyceum students of Rhetoric had been asked at their examination to sight-translate extracts from Cicero's *Pro Archia*.¹¹² Cumbo is aghast: 'Simply a translation? And from one of the easiest orations by Cicero?' he exclaims. 'Let them have a look at the exams of Rhetoric in other universities, and then let them say whether someone fresh from the School of Rhetoric can get off by simply translating Cicero.'¹¹³ The article in *L'amico della patria* provoked Cumbo to write a series of articles on *Il Filologo Maltese* entitled 'Istruzione -

¹⁰⁷ [Anacreon] *Anacreontea* 23. 10-12. Cumbo 1839a.

¹⁰⁸ Cumbo 1839e: 2. On *Il Filologo*, see Fiorentini 1982: 41-42.

¹⁰⁹ Badger 1839: 35-36. See also 3.3.

¹¹⁰ Cumbo 1839f: 26.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Anon. 1840: 10.

¹¹³ Cumbo 1840d.

Lingua Latina'.¹¹⁴ Here the author, aware of the pervasive utility of Latin, stressed the need, for anyone who wants to embark on an ecclesiastical or legal career, to possess a profound knowledge of the language, and presented a critique of current methodologies of its teaching (including that offered by clerics), rounded up by the formulation of the system he believed to be the best.¹¹⁵

We have seen that,¹¹⁶ in the deadlock resulting after Lorenzo De Caro's resignation, British Governor Patrick Stewart personally handpicked Cumbo as the best solution to clear the controversy. With a promised rise of £20 yearly, Cumbo was lured into accepting the move, shifting to the Chair of Latin and Italian Literature in 1844 which he occupied till 1853. Cumbo also published an annotated textbook for schools containing the 'casta carmina' of Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius.¹¹⁷ In the introduction, Cumbo laments the fact that some of the best Golden Age Latin poets were neglected in schools, their frequent licentiousness often debarring their appearance in class. His expurgated edition, he says, is an attempt to counteract this absence, remarking also that he had been less rigorous in his censoring than others had been before him:

E multis, quae christianae pietati ingenuisque adolescentium moribus nil periculi paritura videbantur selegi, vnoque in libello collecta studiosae iuuentuti proponere statui. Minus tamen anxie, quam qui hac in parte praecesserunt, me gessi, et nonnulla a ceteris, nescio quo consilio, omissa inserenda putavi. Quae autem uno vel altero vocabulo immutato obscoenitatem exuerent, hac conditione retinui, vocemque substitutam italico, ut aiunt, character notavi. Quin imo si quando obscoeno in carmine versus aliqui elegantiam praeferant, nec ullam redoleant obscoenitatem, et hos seruandos existimaui.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Cumbo 1840a.

¹¹⁵ See further 9.3.

¹¹⁶ See 3.7.

¹¹⁷ Cumbo 1856. Such a combination of poets was typical in British school-volumes: e.g. *Catulli, Tibulli, et Propertii opera, in usum tironum proborum diligenter recognita et castigata*, published by Eton College in 1825.

¹¹⁸ Cumbo 1856: 5.

Nevertheless, Catullus 5, to give one example, (which Cumbo titles *Fragmentum Carminis*), suffers a severe mutilation, certainly much worse than it had received at Rigord's hands, and is rendered as follows:

Rumoresque senum seueriorum
Omnes unius aestimemus assis.
Soles occidere et redire possunt:
Nobis, cum semel occidit breuis lux,
Nox est perpetua una dormienda.¹¹⁹

So much for the opening verse bidding Lesbia to love and live, or for the thousands of kisses as Catullus' antidote to the impending darkness (verses 7-13)! Each poet is preceded by a short biographical note (although no reference is made to the lover-figures of Lesbia, Cynthia, Delia or Nemesis - or the boy Marathus, for that matter) and, for the Catullus selection, by a longer explication of the metres used. Cumbo also inserted testimonia for the three poets by classical and humanist authors and scholars (e.g. Marcantonio Flaminio, Poliziano, Scaliger, and Lipsius). Like many of his contemporaries, Cumbo was also keenly interested in the art of Latin inscriptions. Evidence of this is a manuscript in Cumbo's hand, dated 1866, which is held at the Library of the University of Malta.¹²⁰ This copybook contains, packed in minute handwriting across its 258 pages, all the inscriptions found in the three volumes of Stefano Morcelli's *De Stilo Inscriptionum Latinarum*, first published in 1780.¹²¹

Besides being also an important pioneer in the emergence of a certain consciousness of Maltese as a literary language (by, for example, translating his own poem *Nuper fugit amor* into Maltese in 1838),¹²² Cumbo seems to have possessed a sound knowledge of Greek which enabled him to occasionally cite a Greek proverb in his writings,¹²³ or

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 16.

¹²⁰ ASCD, MS 170 (see List of References: Archival Sources)

¹²¹ The Italian Jesuit Stefano Morcelli (1737-1822) was a celebrated scholar and archaeologist.

¹²² Friggieri 2012b: 319.

¹²³ E.g. Cumbo 1839: 6, where he quotes *δῖς κράμβη θάνατος*.

even compose the occasional epigram in the language. One of these, dedicated to Saint Aloysius Gonzaga,¹²⁴ he considered good enough to publish in *Il Filologo Maltese* together with a handful of Latin poems from his *Carmina*:

εἰς ἅγιον Αλοῦσιον Γονζάγαν
Ἀγγελικὴν μοι ψυχὴν ἐμφαίνει τό πρόσκορον·
Γονζάγα τὰ πτερὰ λαμβανε, ἄγγελος εἶ.¹²⁵

Cumbo was a widely read scholar, supporting his arguments in *Brevo Cenzo* with several quotations,¹²⁶ ranging from the the decrees of the Council of Trent and the Jesuits' *Ratio Studiorum*, to individual authorities such as St. Augustine and the 18th century Protestant jurist Ephraim Gerhard.

6.6 Lorenzo Pulicino (d. 1863)

Abate Lorenzo Pulicino was elected Preceptor of Rhetoric and Latin at the Lyceum in 1833¹²⁷ and, three years later, he graduated Master of Arts and Philosophy.¹²⁸ A four-year course designed by Pulicino for the 'Scuola di Latino e Rettorica' at the Lyceum is dated to 1838,¹²⁹ the same year when the Fundamental Statute of the University was established - although epistolary evidence (below) suggests that the course had been

¹²⁴ Saint Aloysius Gonzaga (1568-1591) is the patron saint of young students.

¹²⁵ Cumbo 1840: 79. *πρόσκορον* is evidently a misprint for *πρόσωπον*. The couplet is elegiac, but the hexameter is mistaken, as such a verse never ends in a dactyl. ASCD, MS 179 (see List of References: Archival Sources) features another Greek couplet by Cumbo:

Δίστικον
Οὐ θαυμάζε, Δέβωνος εἶ ἀρχιέρεις ἀπολάμπει :
Αἶθερα ἐπειδήπερ ταῖς ἀρετῆσι κρατεῖ.

¹²⁶ Cumbo 1839d. See 3.6.

¹²⁷ UMHA, Council Minutes 1824-1839, 28/10/1833, where Council recommended Pulicino as 'Precettore della Classe della Rettorica'. UMHA, Miscellanea 1827-1833, 04/11/1833, for official approval of Pulicino's post (and of Vincenzo Carbonaro's).

¹²⁸ UMHA, University Council 1824-1839, 11/08/1836, for Council's approval of the degree.

¹²⁹ UMHA, Courses - University/Lyceum 1838, 'Scuola di latino e Rettorica da formare un corso di quattro anni, ed essere aperta dalle otto alle dieci a.m.' Signed by Pulicino on 24/12/1838.

up and running some time before that year. The first two years of the course (the 'Classe Inferiore'), consisting of instruction in Latin grammar and syntax, were under the charge of the Assistant Preceptor, Vincenzo Carbonaro. Pullicino taught the 'Classe Superiore', a two-year course in Latin rhetoric and prosody. In 1839 we find Pullicino alarmed by the imminent danger of his course being reduced to half of its original period. In an impassioned letter to the Rector of the University,¹³⁰ Pullicino wrote about the range of his Latin prospectus and argues that two years of instruction would only result in a very shallow understanding of the concepts that, according to the Fundamental Statute, he was meant to impart to his students in readiness for their University studies:

If finally, in view of the due connection between the Latin school and University, the tutor by statute is charged by statute to give precepts on rhetoric and poetics, this comprises not only comprise an explanation of the precepts, but also their practice by means of compositions appropriate to the tender age, and in prose and in verse, in Italian and Latin; whenever would this be achievable in the very short period of two years? As necessary, to rhetoric and poetics he will dedicate at least a year; and what time will there remain for the Latin grammar course? One year. Here is the ultimate analysis of what the Latin language course will be reduced to. A period of time so restricted will not produce any result but a very superficial tincture of Latin, a hotchpotch of rules learnt by heart and badly digested (*un guazzabuglio di regole imparate a memoria e mal digerite*), excluding in fact the urgent exercises of Italian translations, Latin *fatti*, analysis of the classics, short compositions in prose and in verse; in short it will remove the soul of teaching (*l'anima dell' insegnamento*) and will substantially destroy any connection (contemplated in the Fundamental Statute) of the Latin school with that of eloquence.

It cannot be ascertained whether Pullicino's arguments were persuasive enough to carry the day for him. In all likelihood, a compromise was reached, since the next Latin syllabus that we have on record is of a three-year period.¹³¹

¹³⁰ UMHA, Miscellanea 1837-1840, 30/01/1839.

¹³¹ The syllabus of 1860; see Anon. 1860: 31.

As the Preceptor of Latin at the Lyceum, Pullicino was also the author of an interesting handwritten memorandum in Italian. 'Osservazioni sul poco progresso degli allievi del Liceo e Scuola Latina' is addressed to the Rector and bears the date of 18 March 1843.¹³² Pullicino attempts to address the very slow ('lentissimo') progress shown generally by Lyceum students, with particular attention to the students who attended the Latin School. The Preceptor attributes this to four main causes, namely, an institution which provided little guidance to its students, students coming to the Lyceum with inadequate preparation, a low level of diligence, and the lack of appropriate textbooks. Teaching had indeed become not only tedious and tiring, but at times even humiliating. That not even the simplest form of chastisement was at the disposal of a preceptor to correct negligence or insubordination rendered the situation extremely difficult. Pullicino is not loath to propose efficacious modes of punishment, and to 'scevrare il loglio dal grano', to separate the chaff from the wheat. Semi-public examinations every three semesters on material covered during the preceding semesters in the presence of the Rector would be a 'molla potente', a powerful motive, not spurred by fear but by a sense of competition and the incentive of award.

Pullicino was elected to the Chair of Latin and Italian Literature in 1853,¹³³ which he occupied until his death in 1863.¹³⁴ His syllabus was the following:

Construction and Beauties of Style in the two Languages -
Composition and Elocution - Reading and Commentation on
the principal Latin and Italian classics in prose and verse -
History of the Literature of the Latin and Italian Languages.
Daily lectures on Latin and Italian Literature, alternately,
during the three years.¹³⁵

¹³² UMHA, MSS 122.

¹³³ *MBB* 1853, 154.

¹³⁴ *MBB* 1863, 168, dates the appointment of Salvatore Caruana, Pullicino's successor, to 01/01/1864. Farrugia (1886: 12) mistakenly gives Pullicino's death in 1864.

¹³⁵ Anon. 1860: 4.

6.7 Salvatore Caruana (1825-1885)

Born in Valletta, Salvatore Caruana studied at the Seminary of Mdina where, from an early age, he showed his scholarly aptitude by winning a number of book-prizes. Although he distinguished himself in the study of Letters, Caruana did not neglect the scientific branches of learning, such as physics and mathematics. At the University, he studied Theology under, among others, Professor Salvatore Cumbo. At 23 years of age he finished his Theology course, gaining his doctoral degree. He was ordained in 1850.¹³⁶

At the insistence of Emmanuele Rosignaud, Rector of the University, the Government appointed Caruana, aged 27, 'Precettore di Lingua Latina' at the Lyceum in 1852.¹³⁷ As a teacher of Latin, he was remembered for the depth of his knowledge, his excellent teaching skills, and his affable character:

He had a profound understanding of the language which he was called to teach, communicated his knowledge to others with facility, was kind in all that he said and nice to his students. He had a large number of disciples, in whose hearts he left an indelible memory.¹³⁸

Following the demise of Professor Lorenzo Pullicino, Caruana succeeded to the Chair of Latin in 1864.¹³⁹ Caruana based his triennial programme of studies on the principles of the Neapolitan grammarian and literary critic, Basilio Puoti (1782-1847).¹⁴⁰ He divided the course in three parts, the Narrative, the Didactic, and the Orational, incorporating

¹³⁶ Farrugia 1886 gives the basic biographical information on Caruana.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 4

¹³⁸ Ibid. 10.

¹³⁹ *MBB* 1864, 168. Cf. 3.7.

¹⁴⁰ Caruana 1864b: 25-29. For Puoti, <<http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/basilio-puoti/>> (accessed 01/11/2017).

for each year a wide selection of classical works. Caruana's programme of studies earned the approval of no less a personality than the Latin scholar and pedagogue Tommaso Vallauri (1805-1897), who praised it in a highly flattering letter addressed to the Maltese professor.¹⁴¹ That Caruana's programme featured some of Vallauri's books might have helped to earn the latter's commendation.¹⁴² Caruana remained in the Chair until 1877 when he relinquished it to occupy the Chair of Moral Theology.

A number of Caruana's writings were published.¹⁴³ His highly learned studies in theology, fashioned in the form of lectures addressed to Lyceum and University students and published as *Lezioni Sagre* in five volumes between 1862-1866, with a later short study on Hell in 1869,¹⁴⁴ earned Caruana words of admiration from such eminent Catholic theologians as Cardinal Wiseman, Cardinal Manning, the Jesuit scholar Giovanni Perrone, and Pope Pius IX.¹⁴⁵ He published two volumes on the Latin language. *La sintassi Latina spiegata agli studenti del Liceo di Malta* appeared in 1868, consisting of a full exposition of Latin syntax with referenced examples from classical authors. This book also features a series of graded translation exercises, Italian into Latin, with linguistic aids; the sources for these exercises, thoroughly referenced by the author, are Leopoldo Chimani's *Introduzione alla Lingua Latina* (1838), and Gian Severino Perosino's *Trecento temi italiani con note latine* (1864) and *Narrazioni e lettere* (1862). His brief introduction, addressed to 'Giovanetti', says a lot about the character of Caruana:

Here you have an additional work, made solely for your own good ... Be therefore grateful for this gift, and be certain that, if it lacks those things which it should have, it is what best I can offer you.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Farrugia 1886: Annotazioni, n. 2.

¹⁴² Vallauri's *Latinae Exercitationes* and *Historia critica literarum Latinarum*; see 9.4.

¹⁴³ For full bibliography, see Schiavone 2009: 1.496.

¹⁴⁴ Caruana 1862, 1863, 1864b, 1865, 1866, and 1869.

¹⁴⁵ Farrugia 1886: 11.

¹⁴⁶ Caruana 1868: Preface.

Caruana's introduction to his second book on Latin, *Lexicon et Dialogi* of 1871, reveals a genuine, sympathetic concern for students faced with the formidable study of the language. According to the author, two reasons were making the study even more problematic:

Jampridem ex animo mihi dolet vos magnis defatigari laboribus in linguae latinae studio. At nonnisi duabus de causis, ut opinor, tanta vos premit difficultas: primum quod lexicon, quo verba, usu frequentiora, ordinate disponantur, vobis desit: deinde quod, cum latina lingua in libris tantum sit superstes, nihil in ea addiscenda, ex communi, quo utimur sermone, adjumenti habere possitis.¹⁴⁷

Caruana intends his book to mitigate not only the absence of a dictionary of commonly used words and the lack of surviving Latin texts containing everyday conversation, but also the absence of oral encounter with the spoken language.¹⁴⁸ As suggested by the title, it is a book of Latin words and dialogues, in three divisions. The first division, aimed at the Lower Class, is headed as 'De iis quae ad hominem pertinent', and contains lists of words, with their Italian equivalents, to do with the human body, age, family, etc. The accompanying annotated dialogues in this section, containing basic conversation, are taken from the work of Juan Luis Vives. The second division, for the Middle Class, is 'De urbe et rure', with vocabulary from the house and the countryside, but also inclusive of a sub-section, 'De templo', dedicated to church architecture, items, and hierarchy. The dialogues for this section, apart from another one from Vives, are taken from Horace's *Sermones* 1.9, Plautus' *Aulularia* and *Trinummus*, and Terence's *Andria* and *Heauton Timorumenos*. The third section, for the Higher Class, features terms from the animal and plant kingdoms, and lengthier annotated excerpts from the same comedies of Plautus and Terence. A particular language difficulty might provoke Caruana into an extended note on a syntactical point, inclusive of literary illustrations, as is the case, for example, of Plautus' 'ne intro miseris' in *Aulularia* 100 which allows the author to elaborate on the uses

¹⁴⁷ Caruana 1871: 1.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 2.

of the subjunctive mood to express the imperative, or the series of subjunctives in *Trinummus* 133-135 which elicits a longer note on the potential subjunctive.¹⁴⁹ Besides, in his notes Caruana often refers his readers to explanations given in his *Sintassi*. On occasion Caruana gives, besides its equivalent meaning in Italian, the Maltese version of a Latin word, as he does twice on page 107 with fish, explaining that 'spigola' (Italian for Latin 'lupum', 'sea-bass', rendered as 'illum assum cum aceto et capparibus') would be 'spnotta' in Maltese, and that 'rombetto', 'brill, the Latin 'passer', would be 'barbun'. It is also interesting to note that Michele Antonio Albanese, when still a Preceptor of Latin at the Lyceum of the Three Cities in Vittoriosa, utilized the Latin textbooks of Professor Caruana - perhaps with an eye for the succession to the academic post!¹⁵⁰

Two of Caruana's orations in Latin were also published. 'De Litteris Latinis' was a speech he delivered at the Lyceum in 1864, the year when he was elected to the Chair.¹⁵¹ Divided in two parts, Caruana's work traces the history, its flourishing and its decline, of Latin in both the language's spoken and written forms. In 'De pulcro oratio studiis rite auspicandis', delivered at the Lyceum in 1868 and published in the same year, Caruana speaks about Beauty, its nature and its manifestations in poetry and the arts.¹⁵² Caruana quotes Isola, Victor Cousin, Thomasseus, Villemanius and others in Italian, but Burke in English. He also cites Diotima's speech from Plato's *Symposium* and Plato's *Timaeus* in the Latin translation of Jean de Serres (1540-1598).¹⁵³ At times he seems to quote philosophers in Italian (or English) to make his speech more comprehensible to his young audience:

Mihi non aliud videtur esse quam sublime et singulare cogitatum,
quod mentem et cor vehementer moveat, illam sui admiratio, hoc
variis affectibus: qua in re ne obscure agam, verbis Dupanloup

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 116-117, 133-135.

¹⁵⁰ Anon. [1872a], which displays examination source books for 1872.

¹⁵¹ Caruana 1864a.

¹⁵² Caruana 1868.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 10, 14.

uti volo: "Il bello reale, ita fatur, consistendo nella natura creatta
..."¹⁵⁴

The comparison between pagan and Christian literature often reveals Caruana's Christian bias.¹⁵⁵

At the demise of Pope Pius IX in 1878, Caruna undertook the composition of a number of Latin inscriptions for the obsequies performed at Saint Paul's Church in Valletta.¹⁵⁶ These came under attack by the nameless author of the satiric critique *Sillabo di Erroruzzi*,¹⁵⁷ who reveals that Caruana had also distributed in its 'thousands' a printed copy of the texts, thus laying bare to all and sundry a number of errors. The great inscription on the main entrance, for example, which ran for 33 verses, but which would have been even longer had the doorway been not so wide, would have been, according to the mysterious critic, much better had Caruana simply stopped it after the first six lines. Consequently, it bore a number of mistakes, including the date when Pius acceded to the pontifical throne, as well as some inappropriate linguistic usage such as the repetition of the word 'idem' that made the inscription 'reek of the good old smell of a notarial contract'. What the *Sillabo* finds truly unacceptable about the Professor of Moral Theology's inscriptions, however, is the borrowings of seven verses from the 'materialist' Ovid, Propertius, and Persius, which it reviles as a ridiculous display of encyclopedic erudition, a 'shameful profanity for which [Caruana] deserves a good flogging!'¹⁵⁸

Notwithstanding the *Sillabo's* denunciation of Salvatore Caruana, the professor continued to command great respect from his current and former students. He died on Christmas Eve, 1885, at the age of sixty. Six months later, his University students organized a memorial event at the Chiesa del Gesù at Valletta, for which his former student, confidante and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 9, 11. Mgr Félic Dupanloup (1802-1878) was an important French ecclesiastic.

¹⁵⁵ Caruana 1868: 14-15, where Homer is unfavourably compared with Scriptures.

¹⁵⁶ Ferres 1878: 138, 144-147.

¹⁵⁷ Anon. 1878. See 4.4.

¹⁵⁸ Anon. 1878: 5-8.

intimate friend, Revd Luigi Farrugia, composed four short poems in Latin.¹⁵⁹ Farrugia also wrote his *Piccolo Ricordo* in remembrance of his former master, where he addresses him as 'dolce maestro e padre', and includes a brief physical description: 'he was a rather tall man, with lively eyes, always smiling, open, expansive, truly loveable'.¹⁶⁰

6.8 Michele Antonio Albanese (1832-1885)

Salvatore Caruana's successor in the Chair of Latin in 1877 was Revd Michele Antonio Albanese,¹⁶¹ who occupied it till his death. Professor Nicolo Zammit's speech in Albanese's memory, delivered at the University a few days after the professor's decease, is an important assessment of the Latinist's career and character.¹⁶² Another interesting source is the *Report* of the British Royal Commissioner, Patrick Keenan, where *inter alia* we learn that in 1878 Albanese delivered, weekly, three lectures of an hour and half each in the University, and nine more hours of lectures at the Lyceum of Valletta, and that 'his salary, for University and Lyceum combined, (was) £100 a year'.¹⁶³

According to Zammit, Albanese 'as a man of letters was no phenomenon';¹⁶⁴ yet, through long and arduous study of the Classics, he had acquired a fine sense of the beautiful and the sublime, and, more importantly, a liberal mind. This became his 'professione d'amore',¹⁶⁵ which not only was the beacon of his scholarly objectives but which indeed pervaded his whole outlook on life. Zammit alleges that he excelled in languages, being 'proficient in the classical language of Virgil

¹⁵⁹ Farrugia 1901: 136-139.

¹⁶⁰ Farrugia 1886: 19.

¹⁶¹ *MBB* 1877, M116.

¹⁶² Zammit, N. 1885. Zammit (1815-1899) was the renowned architect and scholar elected to the Chair of Philosophy in 1876. Montebello (2001: 1.12) considers this memorial speech as inferior in (philosophical) interest to others delivered by Zammit.

¹⁶³ Keenan 1880: 54. Salary raised to £170 by 1883 (*MBB* 1883, H60).

¹⁶⁴ Zammit, N. 1885: 5-6.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 10.

as in that of Dante and of Milton';¹⁶⁶ before moving to the Lyceum in Valletta and eventually to the University, Albanese had been employed at the Lyceum of the Three Cities at Vittoriosa, where he taught Latin and Italian for seven years, as well as English for a few years.¹⁶⁷ He also possessed a solid knowledge of French and, something which was a rare competence among contemporary Maltese men of letters, that of Ancient Greek ('leggeva ancora in originale l'Iliade e l'Odissea come il Telemaco e la Zaira').¹⁶⁸

Albanese's curriculum of the triennial course of Latin Literature was very strong in Rhetoric. His syllabus for the Second Year, for example, looks like the Table of Contents of a book of Rhetoric in its list of uncommon figures of speech, such as 'tralasciamento' (aposiopesis) and 'ripulimento' (clarification'), and the different techniques of figurative language, such as synecdoche and metonymy. In the third and last year of the course, Albanese treated the different styles of oratory, the structure of a speech, the various species of the Demonstrative Speech and the Deliberative Speech, as well as the parts of the Funerary Oration.¹⁶⁹

An over-modest opinion of himself must have debarred Albanese from producing any serious publication,¹⁷⁰ but this was fully compensated by a great commitment to teaching: 'If he does not leave behind a book, he bequeaths the product of an education that is alive, personal, and immediate with the school.'¹⁷¹ Unlike other Maltese Latinists of the period, he was not a prolific author of Latin verse, while the few inscriptions he composed were plain and 'non sempre felice', remarks Zammit.¹⁷² As far as quantity is concerned, Zammit seems not to have been aware that, for

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 6.

¹⁶⁷ Keenan 1880: 54.

¹⁶⁸ Zammit, N. 1885: 6.

¹⁶⁹ Savona 1883: 89-90.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Zammit, N. 1885: 7, 'quasi ninete diede alla pubblicità'. Schiavone (2009: 1.52) cites one posthumous publication of a religious nature.

¹⁷¹ Zammit, N. 1885: 7.

¹⁷² Ibid. 6.

one single occasion in 1878, namely the funerary mass for Pope Pius IX celebrated at the Cospicua parish church, where Albanese was archpriest, the professor had composed no less than twenty-two Latin (temporary) inscriptions.¹⁷³ Independently of style and language, such a great number was a feat in its own right for which Albanese was mockingly described, by the unnamed author of *Sillabo di Erroruzzi*, to possess 'un fiato da Palombaro', the breath of a deep-sea diver.¹⁷⁴ If contemporary suspicions were correct to identify Abate Zammit 'Brighella' as the author of the *Sillabo*, then Albanese did not hold it against the satirist for a long time. Six years after the publication of that irreverent critique, Albanese used the dignity of his Chair to intervene on behalf of Zammit 'Brighella' with the British Governor, Sir Arthur Borton, and ask for a grant of an annual pension for the impoverished Latin poet. Written in a clear hand and an elegant style, this letter in English is being reproduced in full:

Having heard that the Rev. Joseph Zammit DD, aged 84 years, residing in Birchircara Valley, brother of the late Magistrate Zammit, and one of the first Latinists and Epigraphists in Europe, is almost starving and has no means to support the last days of his life, {I} deem it a sacred duty in my capacity of Professor of Latin Literature in the University to lay before your Excellency's paternal heart the pitiable condition in which this distinguished scholar now finds himself.

I confidently trust that Your Excellency will crown the many generous and paternal deeds of your administration by following the precedent of one of Your Excellency's Predecessors who had assigned a pension to the Architect of the Church of Casal Musta Mr George Grognet De Vassé who in his old age was in most distressing circumstances.¹⁷⁵

I hope that Your Excellency will be so kind as to take my humble request into serious consideration - and ordain thus a monthly pension may be paid to the distinguished Ecclesiastic, who, few

¹⁷³ Ferres 1878: 265-271.

¹⁷⁴ Anon. 1878: 12.

¹⁷⁵ Grognet (1774-1862) was a Maltese architect and antiquarian; see Schiavone 2009: 1.989-990.

years ago, by the *Civiltà Cattolica*, was compared with Vallauri, Vitrioli and Vincenzo Pecci (now Leo XIII) as a Latin writer.

I appeal to your Excellency's consideration and I beg to remain

Your Excellency's
Most obedient servant
Prof A. Albanese DD
Archpriest of Cospicua.¹⁷⁶

Nicolo Zammit's glowing evaluation of Albanese's pedagogical strengths was only reservedly shared by Patrick Keenan, who visited Albanese during his Latin class at the Lyceum in 1878. The opinion he formed of Albanese's class was that 'whilst the instruction was good in quality, it was very limited in quantity', and where it would take a youth an uncommonly long time to master a comprehensive course of Latin classics'.¹⁷⁷ Nor would Keenan probably have agreed that Albanese had a special capability to generate, what Zammit terms, an 'energia spontanea' in his students.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the strong student presence at his funeral was a testimonial to the endearing and hardworking personality of Albanese.¹⁷⁹ His unassuming character and genuine love for learning also earned the respect of their scholarly elders; one of these was the Italian Paolo Cesareo, a teacher of Italian at the Lyceum and a poet of Italian and Latin verse,¹⁸⁰ who, in a poem in his native language written a few days after Albanese's death, recalls the late Professor's dedication as a master of Latin:

In the temple of knowledge, the abstruse idea
Of the poets of Latium he no longer solves
For the studious Maltese youth.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ NAM, CSG02 A7781, 08/05/1884.

¹⁷⁷ Keenan 1879: 54, who later (76) also assesses Albanese's class at the Lyceum; further discussed in 4.5.

¹⁷⁸ Zammit, N. 1885: 5.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 15.

¹⁸⁰ On Cesareo (1844-1928), see Mifsud Bonnici, R. 1960: 127.

¹⁸¹ Zammit, N. 1885: 17-18, entitled 'In morte del Professore Arc. Antonio Albanese D.D. Elegia'.

6.9 Francesco Maria Sceberras (1851-1923)

A short paragraph in the autobiography of a well-known Maltese personality nails down the academic characteristics of Revd Francesco Sceberras, who was appointed to the Chair of Latin after Albanese's death: 'very learned were the lectures of the Revd Francesco Sceberras, a Latinist of note and an elegant writer. But the uproar in class was such that he could not control it, and he was reduced to addressing himself only to me and one other who still paid attention to him.'¹⁸² Sceberras's credentials as a Latinist were high, and this is amply proven in his published Latin speeches, composed in the complex intricacies of classical Latin rhetoric. However, an inability to maintain discipline in class seems to have been a constant impediment to real professional success.¹⁸³

Sceberras studied at the University of Malta, where he was a student of Professor Salvatore Caruana.¹⁸⁴ He graduated Doctor of Divinity from the Archiepiscopal Seminary,¹⁸⁵ and was ordained priest in 1878.¹⁸⁶ In 1877 he was appointed by competition as teacher of Italian and Latin at the Lyceum of the Three Cities at Vittoriosa, where his salary consisted of '£80 a year, for thirty hours weekly, and £10 a year for giving an hour's

¹⁸² Mercieca 1969: 22. It must be said that, as a young man, Sir Arturo Mercieca, later Malta's Chief Justice for many years, was a brilliant University student who was placed first in the final examinations of the Course of Literature (1894-1897), scoring a total of 395 marks out of a maximum of 500, and outdoing the second-placed candidate by 110 marks. In the annual examinations of 1896, he was placed first in Latin Literature with 455 marks out of 500 (UMHA, Faculty of Literature and Science 1889-1913, 27/07/1896 and 30/07/1897). Mercieca might thus have gained something from the uproar ('baccano' in Mercieca's original published 1946 version in Italian) of the Latin class and the undivided attention given him and a few others by Professor Sceberras.

¹⁸³ Cf. n. 188.

¹⁸⁴ *Rosa*, 2, 01/02/1909, v-vi, for Sceberras' 1875 poem dedicated to Caruana.

¹⁸⁵ Keenan (1879: 62) explains how the conferral of Doctor of Theology was exclusively held by the Seminary.

¹⁸⁶ For a brief biography and list of publications, see Schiavone 2009: 2.1452.

Religious Instructions on Saturdays'.¹⁸⁷ Sceberras' appointment to the Chair of Latin, following Albanese's demise in 1885, was at first a provisional one, his inability to hold class-discipline being put into question. It appears from a governmental dispatch that Sigismondo Savona, the Director of Education, had recommended Sceberras but entertained very dim hopes that the Latinist would last the provisional year:

I have appointed provisionally the Reverend Francesco Maria Sceberras. D.D. to be Professor of Latin Literature at a salary of £120 per annum from 1st instant. The appointment has been made in consequence of a recommendation from the Director of Education who states that he considers the Revd Dr Sceberras to possess a very fair knowledge of the Latin language he having published several writings in prose and verse that have been praised by eminent Latin scholars both here and in Italy. It is not proposed however to appoint that gentleman permanently, for the present, because the Director of Education is not quite satisfied that he possesses sufficient energy to maintain the necessary order and discipline in his classes.¹⁸⁸

And yet, last he somehow did, and Sceberras received his full appointment on 1 October 1886.¹⁸⁹ Soon after, Sceberras was faced with the task of framing a model syllabus of Latin in line with the Colonial Government's attempt in 1887 to reform the Matriculation system.¹⁹⁰ His actual programme of studies was particularised by the addition of rather unorthodox Latin authors to the typical assortment, with the names of Lactantius and Sulpicius Severus appearing alongside those of Caesar and Cicero.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Keenan 1879: 84.

¹⁸⁸ NAM, GOV 1/3/20, letter Major Davies J. Davis, Administering the Government to Edward Stanhope, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 04/10/1886. NAM, GOV 2/1/84B No. 53, Stanhope to Davies, 14/10/1886, where Stanhope approves the provisional appointment of Sceberras. Cp. Anon. 1897: 25, where Sigismondo Savona remarks that, 'Something similar takes place in the School of Latin; the professor, although very erudite, is unable to maintain discipline'.

¹⁸⁹ *MBB* 1886, H64.

¹⁹⁰ See 4.6.

¹⁹¹ Anon. 1890, which features the Latin programme for 1888-1892.

As the Professor of Latin, Sceberras was the author of a number of speeches, both in Latin and Italian. In the year of his election to the Chair, he delivered the lengthy 'De puerili institutione', extending in its published version to over 20 pages.¹⁹² The following year, he gave the slightly shorter 'De studio Litterarum Latinarum doctis et eruditis hominibus necessario'.¹⁹³ Both orations are composed in elaborate Ciceronian prose, which does justice to Luigi Farrugia's description of Sceberras as 'latini sermonis peritissimus Romanos aureae aetatis scriptores aemulatus'.¹⁹⁴ The exordium of the second speech should suffice as an exemplar of Sceberras' Latin style and to demonstrate where his indebtedness lay:

Quod exoptavi, nec me, si Deus dedisset, assecuturum diffisus sum, ut de studiis illis orationem habere mihi contingeret, quae ab ieunte aetate incepta, nunquam ad haec tempora intermisi; id, Auditores, hodiernus dies attulit. Cum enim in more eorum positum videam, quibus tradendae alicujus disciplinae onus demandatur, ut de illa imprimis apud discipulos dicant; vestrae expectationi satis nequaquam facerem, quin immo aequitatem quodammodo laederem, si de litteris latinis aut omnino silendum, aut prae earum nobilitate strictius mihi hodie dicendum existimarem.¹⁹⁵

Sceberras admired Cicero not only as a model of oratorical style, but also for his statesmanship, philosophy, and affable character.¹⁹⁶ He seems to have been very willing to be inspired by the Roman, starting the speech in Italian 'Della Professione Scientifica' by a reflection on a quotation from 'quel grande ingegno'.¹⁹⁷ Such was his knowledge of Latin that he could improvise expressive speeches, as he did during the Graduation ceremony in 1916, a few years after his retirement:

¹⁹² Sceberras 1885.

¹⁹³ Sceberras 1886.

¹⁹⁴ Farrugia 1930: 336.

¹⁹⁵ Sceberras 1886: 1.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. the eulogy of Cicero in Sceberras 1886: 6-7.

¹⁹⁷ Sceberras 1892: 1. The quote is from Cic. *Rep.* 1.17.27, which Sceberras modifies to 'lex naturae vetat etc.'

Prof. Dr Sceberras delivered a most eloquent *ex tempore* discourse in Latin, well worthy of the doyen of our University Professional Staff, who has for so many years occupied the chair of Latin Literature with the greatest credit to himself and advantage to his pupils, and with corresponding honour to our Athenaeum, and whose fame as a first rate Latin scholar has long since travelled beyond the narrow limits of his island home, which may well be proud of such a learned and distinguished, if unassuming, citizen.¹⁹⁸

His sensitivity to criticism compelled him to publish a pamphlet in defence of his inscription in honour of Pius IX which,¹⁹⁹ like so many other compositions by different authors, had been lambasted by the anonymous author of *Sillabo di taluni erroruzzi* in 1878.²⁰⁰ He seems to have been especially irritated by the criticism that, by saying a lot, his inscription had headed towards confusion, invoking the authority of Horace's *Ars Poetica* and citing the examples of Persius, Sallust, and Tacitus as evidence for his argument that it is rather an obsession with conciseness that usually results in obscurity.²⁰¹

An 'Elegia' in Latin he published in 1887 in honour of Queen Victoria, on occasion of her Golden Jubilee, was sent by Governor Sir Lintorn Simmons to Sir Henry Holland, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 'for submission to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen'.²⁰² The last verses left no doubt where Sceberras' loyalty lay:

Si quando patriae te onerat querimonia nostrae,
Ah! Patriae nostrae sis, precor, usque parens.
Nulla tuae Meliten capiant sic taedia curae!
Mutua sic pietas crescat utrimque simul!²⁰³

On the day of Sceberras' demise in 1923, Alfredo Bartoli, his successor in the Chair of Latin, wrote a poem in his memory, 'In obitum Francisci M.

¹⁹⁸ Anon. 1913: 7.

¹⁹⁹ Sceberras 1878. Cf. the critique in Anon. 1878: 8.

²⁰⁰ Anon. 1878: 8. See 4.4.

²⁰¹ Sceberras 1878: 3-4.

²⁰² NAM, GOV 1/3/2, Simmons to Holland, 20/06/1887.

²⁰³ Sceberras 1887: 6.

Sciberras', which shows that, in spite of the characteristic incapacity to keep order in his class, Sceberras was still a scholar highly respected by his academic colleagues.²⁰⁴ A year later, Professor Augustus Bartolo, haranguing the pro-Italian party at the Legislative Assembly on their design to have an Italian Professor of Latin, could only remember good things about the Maltese Latinist:

We do not need to go back to the times of Brighella, but only a few years back when I and other colleagues of mine were still students of the University; we all remember with feelings of particular pride the late Father Professor Sceberras, who was an honour to his country, and who would have graced the Chair of Latin Literature in any University in the world.²⁰⁵

6.10 Luigi Farrugia (1858-1933)

It was Francesco Sceberras who encouraged Luigi Farrugia (Fig. 16), a cleric two years his junior and the Teacher of Latin at the Lyceum, to overcome a certain literary timidity and publish a collection of his Latin epigrams.²⁰⁶ The reception of the volume, which appeared in 1901, was so encouraging that four successive volumes were to see the light of day in the next thirty years. As a Latin epigrammatist, Farrugia was lauded by a wide spectrum of Italian cognoscenti, from Pontiffs to laureates at neo-Latin international competitions. A proof of his fame in Italy is the short biography that appeared in 1931, two years before Farrugia's demise, by the Italian writer Oreste Ferdinando Tencajoli, entitled *Un umanista maltese d'oggi: Monsignor Luigi Farrugia*.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ *TCJ* 1950, 35.

²⁰⁵ *LA*, 31/03/1924, 1418; praise repeated later in the debate (1423) by another former student, Dr Borg Grech.

²⁰⁶ Farrugia 1901: Introduction.

²⁰⁷ Tencajoli 1931.

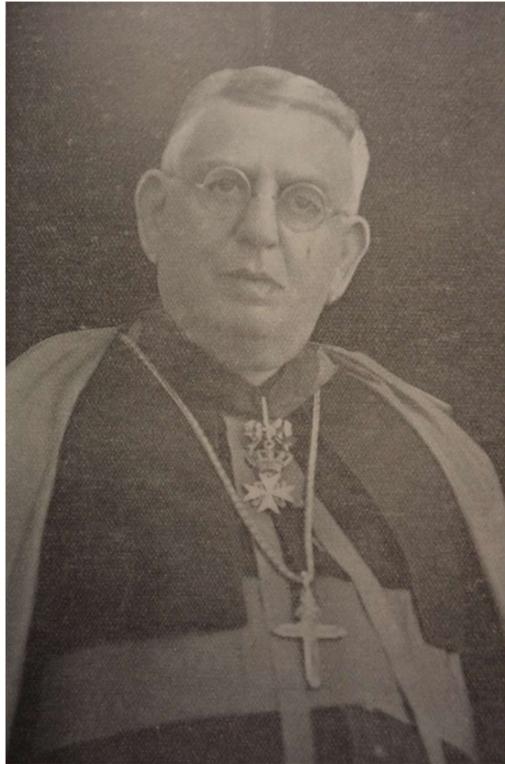


Figure 16 - Mgr Luigi Farrugia

Born in Valletta, Farrugia studied at the Lyceum and University of Malta, obtaining the doctorate in Sacred Theology in 1881, the same year in which he was ordained priest. In 1888 he won the competition for the post of Teacher of Latin at the Lyceum.²⁰⁸ He continued to fill this post until 1906.²⁰⁹ He also taught Philosophy at the Archiepiscopal Seminary and was interim Professor of Theology at the University.²¹⁰

In his student days, Farrugia had given vent to his creative flair by writing Italian poems and translating Latin poetry, including Giuseppe Zammit 'Brighella's 'De morte Sapphus'.²¹¹ Calling Zammit 'magister idemque amicus meus',²¹² it was he who had inspired Farrugia to start writing Latin epigrams.²¹³ In the Introduction to the first collection of *Inscriptiones* (1901), Farrugia confesses to a certain fear that his epigraphs might suffer comparison with the compositions of Zammit, and also with those by such Italian masters as Tommaso Vallauri and Diego Vitrioli; but a larger, nobler objective impelled him to carry on with the enterprise:

²⁰⁸ Anon. 1898: 11, where Senate on 22/01/1888 approves his appointment 'in lieu of the Rev. F. Bonnici, D.D., who had given up that situation on account of ill health'.

²⁰⁹ *MBB* 1905-1906, H90.

²¹⁰ Schiavone 2009: 1.780-781.

²¹¹ Frendo Azopardi 1929: 35, who states Farrugia translated the sapphic verse of the original into Italian sestines. Cf. Tencajoli 1931: 3.

²¹² Farrugia 1901: Introduction.

²¹³ Farrugia 1930: 335. In the same footnote, Farrugia adds: 'È doloroso che non si è mai pensato ad onorare la memoria del valoroso Sacerdote che ha illustrato la patria, mentre di tanti traditori si parla come di eroi'.

Non inanis gloriae ambitio ad id me movit; sed quum latinum sermonem a prima aetatula et magno cum ardore coluissem, aliquem huius liberalis occupationis fructum, praesertim discipulis meis praebere in votis erat, quo in litteras Latinas, aevo nostro prorsus neglectas, melius animarentur.²¹⁴

Farrugia must have been a more ambitious person than he reveals in this Introduction. Using a somewhat pretentious epigraph from Horace,²¹⁵ a slogan which continued to appear on the covers of subsequent volumes, Farrugia dedicated his first collection to Cardinal Vincenzo Vannutelli, a move which must have facilitated the book falling in the hands of Leo XIII, an eminent Latinist himself,²¹⁶ and whom Farrugia had briefly met during one of his many trips to Rome.²¹⁷ The elegance of the epigrams impressed His Holiness so much that he offered Farrugia employment at the Vatican, which the Maltese priest humbly turned down. Had he accepted, comments Tencajoli, Farrugia would have reached very high places in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. With his erudition, thinks Tencajoli, Farrugia would have cut an 'ottima figura' even at the Renaissance court of Leo X himself.²¹⁸ In any case, Farrugia had good contacts at Rome, and one suspects he assiduously cultivated the powerful by the dedications and addresses of his Latin epigrams, efforts which earned him such opportunities as preaching at the Church of San Martino ai Monti at Rome.²¹⁹ As an orator he was in great demand on the island as well, publishing many of his sermons in Italian (e.g. the one on Salvatore Caruana²²⁰), while inserting examples of his Latin orations in the volumes of *Inscriptiones*, starting with the second (1905) which contains an 'oratiuncula' he delivered during a celebration held in 1903 at the Chiesa del Gesù in Valletta on the occasion of the Pontifical Jubilee of Leo XIII. There seems to have been a keen desire in Farrugia to gain the appreciation of any reigning Pope: his third instalment of *Inscriptiones*,

²¹⁴ Farrugia 1901: Introduction.

²¹⁵ Hor. *Sat.* 6.1.122-3: 'aut ego lecto / aut scripto, quod me tacitum iuvet'.

²¹⁶ See e.g. Piccirillo 1887.

²¹⁷ ASCD, MS 125, Il mio terzo viaggio in Sicilia, Napoli e Roma: Ricordi del Sec. Dr. Luigi Farrugia Luglio-Agosto 1891, 32.

²¹⁸ Tencajoli 1931: 4.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Farrugia 1886; cf. 6.7.

published in 1913, is not only dedicated to Pius X, but also contains a series of epigrams on the life and deeds of the Pontiff.²²¹ Ten years later, he published a fourth instalment, this time dedicated to Pius XI, but also enclosing a letter to Leo XIII from 1904 (expressing gratitude for Farrugia's election into the 'Collegium Pontificae Domus Praesulum') and another to Benedict XV from 1920 (thanking him for receiving Farrugia at the Vatican earlier the same year and the gift of a medallion in appreciation of the series of Latin epigrams Farrugia had composed on His Holiness).²²² The last volume, published in 1930, also includes two letters in Latin which are addressed to popes, (Benedict XV and Pius XI), both of which Farrugia had written on behalf of the General Council of the University.²²³

In an approbatory letter to Farrugia of 1930, Vincenzo Laurenza, the Professor of Italian Literature, who at the time was also the acting Professor of Latin, described the range of *Inscriptiones* so succinctly and eloquently that even Tenacjoli quotes major parts of the description:

I read with special interest the rapid most effective series in which are narrated the life and deeds of the Supreme Pontiffs Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI and of His Excellency, The Most Reverend Monsignor Pietro Pace, Bishop of Malta and Archbishop of Rhodes. With profound appreciation I also read your other very numerous permanent inscriptions, monumental, sepulchral, commemorative, that are entrusted to marble or bronze in all the cities and villages of these islands, as well as in Italy, in Tunisia, in Egypt, and the temporary ones, even these very numerous, for funerary orations, for public and private feasts, for newly-ordained priests, for distinguished or modest friends.

Happy invention and disposition of ideas, simplicity not averse to decorous ornament, a spontaneous kind of brevity (*brevità non ricercata*), effective elegance, demonstrate well the lengthy studies and the great love with which you researched the Latin

²²¹ Farrugia 1913.

²²² Farrugia 1923: 379-380 (Leo XIII), 381-382 (Benedict XV).

²²³ Farrugia 1930: 347-348 (Benedict XV), 349-350 (Pius XI).

classics and the most clear inscription-writers from Morcelli to Vallauri.²²⁴

The name of Stefano Antonio Morcelli (1737-1822), the famous Italian inscription-writer and author of books on Latin epigraphy, had also been invoked in a letter to Farrugia written in 1925 by Nello Martinelli when the latter was occupying the Chair of Latin.²²⁵ Martinelli urges the Maltese inscription-writer to write a guidebook about Latin epigraphy as he possessed all the secrets of the art: this, he adds, will doubly merit Farrugia the title of 'il Morcelli Maltese'.²²⁶

Farrugia loved travelling, having allegedly been on forty-one trips to Rome alone.²²⁷ He considered travelling an intellectual need: 'As far as I am concerned, travelling is a necessity, and a great one for anyone who, must as he is to conduct serious studies, needs to pursue intellectual culture', a statement he wrote at the start of the journal he kept of a summer trip in 1891 to Sicily, Naples and Rome.²²⁸ Other visits were made to Monte Cassino,²²⁹ Lago Maggiore,²³⁰ and Vienna.²³¹ A favourite destination was Reggio Calabria, where he enjoyed the hospitality and learned company of his friend, the celebrated Latinist Diego Vitrioli, first laureate of the neo-Latin 'Certamen poeticum Hoeufftianum' in 1845.²³² The respect was mutual: in a letter which he sent Farrugia in 1893, Vitrioli wrote:

In a few words I render the profuse thanks that are due for the beautiful elegant inscriptions that it pleased You to send me. I

²²⁴ Ibid. 362.

²²⁵ Ibid. 363-364 (letter 09/08/1926); on Martinelli, see 7.2.

²²⁶ Ibid. 364.

²²⁷ Tencajoli 1931: 4.

²²⁸ ASCD, MS 125, 2 (cf. n. 217). His original desire at the time was to travel to Lourdes, but he was making good his promise of taking his three siblings on a trip to Italy, their first venture outside the island (p. 3).

²²⁹ Farrugia 1913: 373-376 (undated letter to Mgr Paul Galea).

²³⁰ Farrugia 1928: 290, on his visit to Lago Maggiore in 1927, remarking 'Nelle varie visite da me fatte ai Laghi'.

²³¹ Farrugia 1930: Dedication to the Polish Cardinal and Primate of Poland, August Hlond, who first met Farrugia at the Eucharist Congress in Vienna in 1912.

²³² Farrugia 1923: 386, where, on Vitrioli, in a letter of 1904 to Joseph Romeo, Farrugia adds, 'qui saepe domum adivi semperque magistri instar colui'.

have already read them out to various friends and all praise the wording, the style, the erudition. I am intent on including in a volume a corrected selection (*scelte e rifebite*) of my little works: as soon as it is ready from the printer, you will be a preferred recipient.²³³

A good friendship seems to have been cemented, which later caused Farrugia some fear for Vitrioli's life when the famous earthquake struck Calabria in November 1894, a fear which the subsequent delivery of a book of poetry from Vitrioli happily dispelled. The episode was commemorated in *Epistola ad Didacum Vitriolium* (1894), which provided Farrugia with the opportunity to eulogise Vitrioli's renowned poem 'Xiphias', which had earned him the gold medal at Amsterdam in 1845, and to reminisce on the good times the two Latinists had shared together:

Sed prae ceteris mihi manet alta mente defixum temporis illud quo
Te domi tuae visere, tuorum studiorum secreta penetralia ingredi,
magnaue familiaritate tecum conferre potui. Quo animo intento
de ore tuo pendebam, discipuli ad instar, qui magistri doctrinam
haurire gaudet!²³⁴

After the Italian's death, the sight of Vitrioli's empty house and the Latin inscription on the wall was enough to move Farrugia to tears.²³⁵

In Herbert Ganado's memoirs, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*,²³⁶ the physical description of 'Dun Alwiġ', as Farrugia was known to Ganado's family, is not flattering to the Monsignor, but comparison with the photograph in Tencajoli's account rather testifies to its honesty. After alluding to Farrugia's contributions to the nationalistic and pro-Italian daily *Malta*,

²³³ Ibid. 395.

²³⁴ Farrugia 1894: 4. Alfredo Bartoli later published the letter in *Rosa*, 3, 01/03/1909, i-iii.

²³⁵ Farrugia 1923: 385 (letter of 1903 to Antonio Sammut).

²³⁶ Ganado 1977.

‘Ciceronian in style, slightly pompous and as heavy as he was’, Ganado continues:

The Monsignor was a large man, tall, broad and plump, big ears, thick pouting lips, and large swollen neck glands, that at his every word quivered under his chin, a solemn, booming voice with the habit of rolling his “Rs” as the French do ... By the time I got to know him he had put on even more weight and his movements had become heavier. He would jolt forward, walk ten paces, rest on his stick, jolt forward again and carry on walking.²³⁷

A growing propensity towards solemnity and bombast earned the aging Farrugia the nickname of ‘a bunch of popes’; it was a trait which Gandado believes was a hurdle to the Monsignor’s episcopal ambition.²³⁸ Tencajoli prefers to concentrate on positive personality attributes, describing Farrugia as affable, modest, reflective, orderly, highly principled, vastly erudite, and one who ‘non conta che amici fra i suoi concittadini’.²³⁹

²³⁷ Ganado 1977: 1.83-84. Translations of excerpts from Ganado’s memoirs are largely based on the English version by Refalo 2004-2008.

²³⁸ Ganado 1977: 1.83.

²³⁹ Tencajoli 1931: 3.

CHAPTER 7 – THE ITALIAN SECULARISATION

7.1 Alfredo Bartoli (1872 -1954)

Alfredo Bartoli (Fig. 17) was born at Le Piastre in Tuscany, Italy. As a young student of Latin he was somewhat of a prodigy, preferring to learn syntax through the direct reading of classical authors rather than by the orthodox routine, for which he earned the nickname ‘l’antigrammatico’ at the College in Siena.¹ Later, the wearying nature of the system compelled him to give up university soon after enrolment, believing he can learn more on his own. Largely self-taught, Bartoli gained a mastery of the language which, according to his friend, the neo-Latin poet Giuseppe Morabito, ‘surpassed that of University professors, old and new’.²

Bartoli started to write for journals, such as the *Vox Urbis* printed in Latin at Rome. He also became a poet of Latin verse, publishing his first collection in 1899,³ and establishing himself as an ‘Autore di carmi latini d’irrepreensibile fattura’.⁴ By the time the second edition appeared in 1904, two of his poems had already received ‘magna laus’ at the annual neo-Latin ‘Certamen Hoeufftianum’ in Amsterdam.⁵ Meanwhile, he taught for some years at Grosseto and Florence,⁶ before moving to Malta in 1907.⁷ In Malta, Bartoli taught Italian at the Lyceum for five years, Latin

¹ Morobito 1979: 303; ‘autodidatta’ (p. 309).

² Ibid. 311. Cf. ‘Virgilio’ 1951: ‘Il Professore Bartoli, che ai miei tempi insegnava Latino nella Università, non aveva nessun titolo accademico, eppure era uno dei migliori professori che abbiamo mai avuto ... Un professore di Latino come Bartoli la nostra Università non ha avuto mai, e probabilmente non ne avrà mai...’.

³ Morobito 1979: 311.

⁴ Fusco 1956: 384.

⁵ For list of winners, see

<https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Certamen_poeticum_Hoeufftianum#cite_note-8>

(accessed 29/12/2017).

For the famous neo-Latin contest in Amsterdam and its influence on academic careers, particularly in Italy, cf. Sacré 2011, who treats the Italian neo-Latin poet Marco Galdi (1880-1936), and includes a formerly unpublished poem on Galdi composed by Bartoli in 1924.

⁶ Morobito 1979: 304.

⁷ ACM, Congress of Latin Studies 1973 (2), Morobito to Coleiro, 09/10/1972.

at Flores College, and gave private tuition.⁸ He was appointed to the Chair of Latin and Italian Literatures in 1914, which he filled until 1923, the year he left Malta for reasons that remain shrouded in mystery.⁹

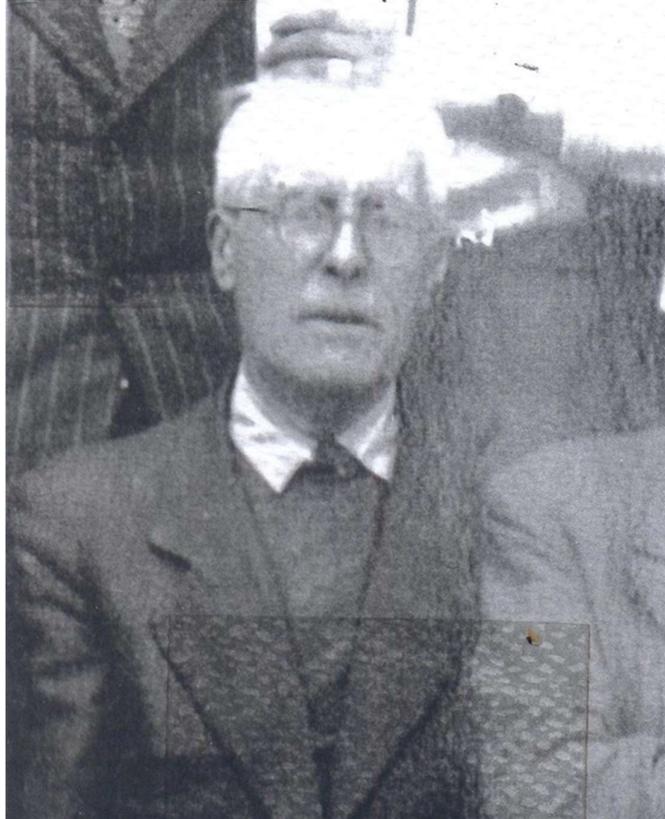


Figure 17 - Professor Alfredo Bartoli

Upon his arrival in Malta, Bartoli immersed himself in the bustling cultural life of the island at the time. Bolstered by a strong and boisterous personality, he organized conferences and public lectures, exploiting every opportunity to remind his Maltese audience of their strong Italian

cultural roots.¹⁰ One of Bartoli's earliest lectures, delivered in 1907 at Flores College, was 'Umanisti vecchi e nuovi', ending with a rousing tribute to the memory of Zammit 'Brighella'.¹¹ He was also an indefatigable contributor to local journals and papers in Italian. By the 1920s, Bartoli had become a leader of a cultural circle that favoured such

⁸ UMHA, Faculty of Literature and Science 1889-1913, 16/09/1913: Council approved Bartoli's request to prepare students for the examinations in the Faculty of Literature & Science 'in accordance with the provisions of Art. 194 of the Statute'.

⁹ UMHA, Miscellanea 1926 (4), for an official 'Certificate of Character' issued on behalf of Bartoli giving 1917-1923 as the years in which Bartoli was Professor of Latin and Italian Literature. But in a letter to Rector Aguis, dated December 1926, Bartoli states that the years were 1914-1923. Cf. *MBB* 1914-15, H78, where his appointment is dated to 15/07/1914. Bartoli is also listed as a member of the staff at Flores College in Anon. [1907]: The Staff. Cf. also Ganado 1977: 1.261.

¹⁰ Morobito 1979: 304.

¹¹ Bartoli 1907: 114.

Italian authors as Carducci, D'Annunzio and Rapisardi.¹² Meanwhile, Bartoli continued to write poetry in Latin, achieving 'magna laus' seven times at Amsterdam during the years he was living in Malta.¹³ Interestingly, the publication of many of these poems, by Io. Muller of Amsterdam, bear the description 'Melitensis' under the poet's name, possibly indicative of the level of local integration that Bartoli had achieved in the island.¹⁴

Bartoli's monthly journal in Latin, the *Rosa Melitensis - de litteris et bonis artibus commentarius*, which appeared for the first time barely two years after his arrival in Malta, has already been discussed.¹⁵ Since Bartoli was first and foremost a poet, it is not surprising that Latin verse received great attention in the *Rosa*. Many poems from previous editions of the 'Certamen Hoeufftianum' were published, among which were Bartoli's own; the September 1909 issue featured one of the poems which in that year's competition had earned 'magna laus' ('Amico Monita' by Francisco Moltedo).¹⁶ Much shorter poetry appeared, too. Among the short poems reproduced in the first issue, there is one by William Gladstone, the four-time British Prime Minister, translator of Horace and Homeric scholar.¹⁷ The poem is Gladstone's Latin translation of Augustus Toplady's well-known hymn 'Rock of Ages'. It is interesting to note how Bartoli introduces it: 'Hoc libentius Carmen ... in vulgus edimus, ut qui bonas litteras a civilibus negotiis alienas autumant, rem aliter sese habere perspiciant.'

Although very strong in poetry, *Rosa* carried a lot of Latin prose writing too. Some articles were of rather scholarly import, written mostly by contemporary Italian academics. To give some examples: in two

¹² Ganado 1977: 2.70.

¹³ In all, Bartoli received the 'magna laus' fifteen times, the last time in 1950; he was never awarded the gold medal; cf. Morobito 1979: 315.

¹⁴ 'Carmen Alafredi Bartoli Melitensis' on the title-page of Bartoli 1912, 1914, 1915, 1917a, and 1917b.

¹⁵ See 5.3.

¹⁶ *Rosa*, 9, 01/09/1909, i.

¹⁷ *Rosa*, 1, 13/12/1908, vii. On Gladstone and the Classics, see Bebbington 2011.

separate articles, both entitled 'Horatiana', Paulo Fossatario (1858-1931) furnished interpretations of Horace *Odes* 3.7.10 and *Satires* 1.4.10 respectively.¹⁸ Filippo Caccialanza wrote about Horatian uses of 'mutare' and 'permutare'.¹⁹ Antonius Bernardini discussed a geographical controversy in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5.513 ff.,²⁰ while Massimo Lenchantin de Gubernatis (1884-1950), later editor of Tacitus and Catullus, debated Polybius' date of birth and the date of Theocritus *Idylls* 7.²¹ Sep. Rasia dal Polo contributed a long, multipart article of Homeric scholarship under the title 'Homericae quaedam a rebus inanimis petita comparationes'.²²

A section of the journal, the 'Palestra Latina' (renamed 'Palestra Scolastica' by Issue 2, so as to also embrace exercises in the Italian and English languages), was dedicated to Latin contests for students divided in two categories, those preparing for the Matriculation examination and those following the Course of Literature at the University. Although poor participation from Maltese students finally led to the discontinuation of these monthly (or so) contests,²³ they do reveal Bartoli's incessant efforts to promote Latin among Maltese students. In the first edition of the *Rosa* Bartoli also announces a public subscription whereby readers could contribute financially towards a scholarship to be awarded to the two students who placed first in Latin in the Matriculation and the Course of Literature annual examination. Bartoli, on behalf of *Rosa Melitensis*, donates £2. By Issue 7 of July 1909, the fund had only risen by 9 shillings, and the scholarship was not awarded because the amount was considered too insignificant.²⁴ Another competition, announced in Issue 13-14 of February 1909, was that of the composition of a Latin poem of a minimum of fifty verses on any subject related to Maltese history. The best poem was to receive a prize of £4 and 100 offprints of the poem.

¹⁸ Fossatario 1909a and 1909b.

¹⁹ Caccialanza 1909.

²⁰ Bernardini 1909.

²¹ Lenchantin de Gubernatis 1909 and 1910.

²² Rasia dal Polo 1910.

²³ *Rosa*, 15-16, 13/04/1910 (unpaged), where the contest is declared abolished.

²⁴ *Rosa*, 7, 01/07/1909, ix.

This competition was launched very close to the end of *Rosa's* lifetime and was probably soon abandoned. In the last issues Bartoli started to publish a dictionary specifically for the *Eclogues* of Virgil in the pages that had previously been occupied by competitions. The last entry is 'Circe' before the *Rosa* abruptly stops.

As Professor of Latin and Italian Literatures, Bartoli made a striking contrast with Francesco Sceberras, his predecessor in the Chair of Latin. His high-spirited lectures were always fully attended,²⁵ and the way he expounded some rousing Latin passage often struck a chord in his students' hearts. He himself described the effect during an oration at the conferment of Honoris Causa degrees in 1920:

Id vero mentis quasi oculis, haec dum recolo, tamquam recentia, ex scriptoris nobilissimi verbis, iterum observari mihi reor, auditores meos vultu atque ore prompsisse eum animorum motum, ut plerique, velut qua nescio expectatione erecti tacito vota labello suspendere viderentur!²⁶

Bartoli's reputation for excellence lasted in the island for many years after his return to Italy.²⁷ He was an energetic lecturer, giving an extra class on Italian Literature, and another on Ancient Greek Language and Literature.²⁸ He sat as a member on the General Council of the University between 1917 and 1919.²⁹

²⁵ Morabito 1979:304.

²⁶ Bartoli 1920: 4-5. The passage referred to is Livy 33.32 describing C. Flaminius appearing at the Isthmian Games in Corinth in 196 BC to proclaim the freedom of the Greek states. The phrase 'tacito vota labello' is from Catull. 61.115.

²⁷ Cf. 'Studiante' 1955, where the author, writing in defence of Giovanni Curmi, the Professor of Italian, states: 'Le sue Lezioni, spesso senza aiuto di libri, perché sapeva la materia a memoria, come il suo predecessore Alfredo Bartoli, che i nostri genitori ricordano'.

²⁸ Cf. editions of *MBB* for the period 1915-1921, which show Bartoli teaching, over different intervals of years, extra classes of Italian Literature and of Ancient Greek and Literature, as well as serving as an examiner for Matriculation and at the Faculty of Literature and Science at the University (paid at 3 shillings per candidate). Starting with a salary of £170 in 1914, by 1922 Bartoli's official income had risen to £290. According to the official Financial Estimates of 1917-1918, for his voluntary Greek course Bartoli received £20 in the form of fees paid by the students themselves.

²⁹ UMHA, Faculty Board of Science - Minutes 1915-1956, 1917-1918 *passim*; Miscellanea 1919 (1), (2), various circulars.

In July 1920 Themistocles Zammit was appointed Rector of the University.³⁰ Whatever the nature of the relationship that had existed between Bartoli and Zammit in the past, it certainly took a turn for the worse with an episode a few months after Zammit's appointment.³¹ When his summer holiday at La Piastre was coming to an end, Bartoli fell sick. He sent a letter from Le Piastre on 20 September announcing his sickness, followed by a telegram on 28 September, requesting postponement of the Latin examination. On 8 October, a telegram sent from Pistoia announced his departure on that day and the dispatch of a medical certificate. In Syracuse, Bartoli missed his connecting train and the steamer to Malta, about which he informed the Rector by telegram on 13 October. The trip must have taken its toll on his enfeebled health: on 21 October, Bartoli's wife dispatched a letter from their residence in Sliema, Malta, informing Zammit that a severe cold was keeping her feverish husband in bed. Upon his return to the University, Bartoli apparently discovered that, in his long absence, some changes had been applied to the Italian and Latin Matriculation syllabi which he had proposed (together with the Preceptors of Italian and Latin at the Lyceum, Vincenzo Laurenza³² and Revd Paul Vella) and which had already been published in the Government Gazette. His letter of 24 October, addressed to Rector Zammit, reveals his disappointment and anger: 'I do not want to, nor should I pass over in silence the accusation and the censure inflicted on the Syllabus proposed by me for the Matriculation examination in Latin and Italian of 1921'. The texts which had been considered objectionable, at least in parts, were Bartolomeo Sestini's *Pia de' Tolomei* (1822) and the *Carmina* of Catullus, particularly the 'Epithalamium' (either Catullus 61 or 62). About the *Pia*, which Bartoli considers 'the most successful [verse] 'novella' of the 19th century', the professor observes that he can find nothing which could be considered inappropriate for schools. Regarding Catullus, he says that, to counter

³⁰ Ellul-Micallef 2013: 2.337.

³¹ UMHA, Miscellanea 1920 (2), for the following letters and telegrams.

³² See 7.3.

'for the few slightly licentious (*libere*) expressions', he would have selected a school edition, such as that by Zanchielli, which, as its preface states, only reproduces poems 'which can end up in the hands of the young without offending their decorum'. Bartoli points out that the same 'Epithalamium' which was 'slandered and proscribed ... as immoral' had been translated by Abate Luigi Rigord himself³³ and other churchmen. On this principle, he argues, one could not even read the Bible, which is, 'more licentious, surely, in certain passages, than Sestini and Catullus'. Bartoli is especially worried that 'an external and incompetent authority is superseding the General Council and the authority appointed by the University', and this creates, as he sees it, 'a dangerous precedent'. The 'authority' which had found Bartoli's choice of texts morally distasteful had also noted a flaw in Bartoli's Latin syllabus: he had given the wrong references to the selection of chapters from an oration of Cicero that students had to prepare.³⁴ In his letter, Bartoli takes full responsibility for this error, but adds that a similar mistake had been committed by his predecessor, Professor Sceberras, in the case of a book by Caesar, and the oversight had been simply rectified by the publication of a notice. Rector Zammit replied the next day in a very curt letter:

I object to the tone of your letter of yesterday. The Matriculation syllabus was modified by the General Council which can only be blamed for having been too lenient to approve it the first time. Some strophes from the *Pia* were found to be inappropriate, and were so considered following my own advice. I hope that never again will I need to correct a syllabus which had already been published in the official gazette.³⁵

A few months later, in December of 1920, Bartoli wrote a letter to Rector Zammit asking for a revision of his salary.³⁶ He requests that this should be proportionate to the amount of hours he is putting in to prepare the

³³ See 6.2.

³⁴ Bartoli's almost illegible handwriting makes it very difficult to identify this oration by Cicero, as so much else in his letters!

³⁵ UMHA, Miscellanea 1920 (2), 25/10/1920.

³⁶ UMHA, Miscellanea 1920 (3), 17/12/1920. Cf. n. 28. In 1921, Eric Shepherd's salary was £320 (including £90 as Professor of Modern History), plus £52 in remuneration for other services; cf. *MBB* 1921, L28.

daily two hours of lectures for the full three-year duration of the Course of Literature, as well as for the marking of students' written work, which he does at home and which, for the Italian Literature alone, amounts to about seventy assignments per week. He also asks that a pensionable rise might be incorporated into his salary (as was already being done, he remarks, in the case of the stipend of the Chair of English), and that he might start receiving the 'house-allowance' that foreign masters at the Lyceum were already benefitting from.³⁷ The official reply is not recorded, but a handwritten note in pencil in the bottom margin, presumably Zammit's, reads 'To be considered later on when better prospects of success may be in view'.³⁸

Rather than a clash of personalities, the edgy relationship with Rector Zammit might have been provoked by a growing unease on the part of the British government towards the Professor. According to his friend Giuseppe Morabito, Bartoli had a nationalistic objective: 'voleva italianizzare l'isola', which was rather unharmonious with the government's efforts at the time towards anglicizing the island. He 'hosted a number of conferences, participated in or promoted many political demonstrations during the war, as well as battled (*battagliò*) in local journals in defence of the Italian language'.³⁹ To the colonial government, he became a cause of suspicion and concern. Finally, he was forbidden to hold public-lectures, unless he consented to show the text beforehand. He sought to bypass this impediment by proposing lectures on English poets, which was readily conceded.⁴⁰ But even on such topics he found occasion for being politically controversial.⁴¹ The dedication to 'Benito Mussolinio, sacrum' of his two poems, 'Ignotus miles' and 'Mater ignoti militis', published in Florence in 1923, must have

³⁷ *MBB* 1921, L28, showing that, by 1921, Bartoli, and most foreign academics at the University and the Lyceum, were receiving an annual house-allowance of £30.

³⁸ The note is dated to 17/01/1921.

³⁹ Morabito 1979: 304.

⁴⁰ UMHA, *Miscellenea* 1921 (2), notice 26/03/1921 'to commemorate the first centenary of the death of John Keats, Prof. A. Bartoli will deliver at Aula Magna on 04/04/1921 a lecture in Italian on the life and works of the poet.'

⁴¹ Morabito 1979: 304.

exacerbated British ill-feeling towards him.⁴² By that time, it was clear that Bartoli's time in Malta was drawing to an end. 'Towards 1924' says Morabito, 'I am not sure whether as a result of his own decision or otherwise, he left the island'.⁴³ The departure was an abrupt one,⁴⁴ with the Chair of Latin continuing unoccupied for nearly a year. Bartoli's appointment officially terminated on 20 October 1923.⁴⁵ The real reason is mysterious. During the long debate by the Legislative Assembly of 31 March 1924, when the Assembly was heatedly addressing the question whether a Maltese or a foreigner should fill the vacant Chair of Latin, Professor Augustus Bartolo stated that:

although the matter is rather delicate, and I hope my remark will be taken in the spirit in which it is made - I hope that the Government will take very great precaution to see that the person selected has not only literary ability, but character, moral and otherwise (Hon. Members: Hear, hear). Once bitten twice shy. It may have been a very unfortunate incident, but after all it would be in the interest of the prospective Professor himself if the Government took the necessary precautions.⁴⁶

This research has not yet discovered the nature of the 'very unfortunate incident' with the required supportive evidence. However, Gerald Strickland's comment at the end of Augustus Bartolo's speech suggests the incident was connected with 'La società Dante Alighieri'.⁴⁷

Themistocles Zammit relinquished his post in April 1926 and a new Rector was appointed in the person of Professor Thomas Agius.⁴⁸ Bartoli wrote a letter to Agius from Regio Calabria to congratulate him, as well

⁴² Bartoli 1923.

⁴³ Morabito 1979: 304.

⁴⁴ UMHA, Miscellanea 1923 (2), Mgr Giovanni Gauci to Rector Zammit, 17/10/1923, which indicates that Bartoli had been missing lectures already for some time, as Gauci requests to be considered as a temporary lecturer of Latin.

⁴⁵ UMHA, Miscellanea 1926 (4), for a Certificate of Character drafted by the University on Bartoli's request in 1926, and signed by Rector Agius, stating that Bartoli's appointment terminated on 20/10/1923.

⁴⁶ LA, 31/03/1924, 1419.

⁴⁷ Enrico Mizzi founded a Malta branch of the 'Società Dante Alighieri' in 1913, soon becoming a centre of the anti-British campaign; Frendo 2013: 159-162.

⁴⁸ Ellul-Micallef 2013: 2.378.

as to promote the new 'Certamen Poeticum Latinum' which he was helping to institute in the city of Locri.⁴⁹ About his years in Malta, Bartoli writes that he has fond memories of the University 'that I cherish with great affection and, unfortunately, with great regret (*con tanto rammarico*), since the situation that made me renounce Malta was not a happy one'.⁵⁰ He also requests the new Rector to issue a Certificate of Character on his behalf. A draft of the Certificate was indeed drawn up and signed by the Rector, quoting the dates of his employment at the Lyceum and the University. It also stated that '(Bartoli) left the service at this own request. During the above-mentioned period, he performed his duties to the satisfaction of his Superiors, and his conduct was Good'.⁵¹ However, the Certificate was not dispatched to Bartoli. Instead, Bartoli received a letter signed by the Secretary of the University:

Since you were employed by the Government and attached to the University, such a certificate, according to the regulations, needs the approval of The Honourable Minister of Public Instruction, who, given the circumstances which have effected the resignation from the occupation you held, cannot concede to such a request. Consequently, I regret to inform you that your request cannot be accepted.⁵²

The reason why Bartoli left Malta continued to baffle Giuseppe Morabito for many years after Bartoli's death in 1954. Morabito hoped that documents at the University of Malta might be discovered that would throw some light on the mysterious events: 'I have attempted to do so, but in vain,' he complains.⁵³

The rest of Bartoli's career needs not concern us here. After Malta, he spent a few years in Locri, where he taught Italian, Latin, Greek, History of Art, and even English at the Liceo Comunale. He then moved to

⁴⁹ The contest was held between 1926 and 1931; cf. Morabito 1979: 306-309.

⁵⁰ UMHA, *Miscellanea* 1926 (4), dated December 1926.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* two versions of the Certificate, the second one featuring different dates of Bartoli's tenure of the Professorship and the signature of the Rector.

⁵² *Ibid.* the letter is only a draft and is undated.

⁵³ Morabito 1979: 304.

Salerno, and next to Florence, where he continued to teach, translate, and organize conferences. He died on 28 January 1954 at Le Piastre. A short elegiac poem Bartoli published in one of the issues of *Rosa Melitensis* should suffice to reveal the troubled humanity of the man:

IN TUMULO CANIS MEI

Unus qui soli fueras mihi tres comes annos,
hic tristi ereptus, Mersule, sorte iaces;
at paene humani hoc pateant ex marmore sensus,
maior et humana, Mersule care, fides!⁵⁴

7.2 Nello Martinelli

With the resignation of Alfredo Bartoli, Latin and Italian Literatures were once again separated into two distinct chairs.⁵⁵ Vincenzo Laurenza was elected to the Chair of Italian.⁵⁶ For a while he acted as Professor of Latin until its next occupier, Nello Martinelli, took over officially on 1 October 1924.⁵⁷ A few weeks later Martinelli delivered a public lecture at the University entitled 'Il sentimento religioso di Virgilio'.⁵⁸

Like Bartoli, Nello Martinelli was another notable Latin poet who would actually win the gold medal at the 'Certamen Hoeufftianum' in 1950. A holder of a D. Litt. from the University of Pisa,⁵⁹ he also published works of classical scholarship, such as *L'ode d'Archita* (1932), *Critica del testo* (1952), a translation from the German of Paul Maas' *Textkritik*, and *La*

⁵⁴ *Rosa*, 3, 01/03/1909, vii.

⁵⁵ See 5.4.

⁵⁶ UMHA, Miscellanea 1924 (2), undated Secretary's notice announcing a public lecture from the 'new Professor of Italian' Mr Vincenzo Laurenza D.Litt. (Naples) in the Aula Magna on 31/10/1924 on 'La questione del metodo negli studi letterari e la letteratura italiana in Malta'.

⁵⁷ UMHA, Miscellanea 1927-1928, Rector's letter, 27/08/1927, provides date. See 5.4.

⁵⁸ UMHA, Miscellanea 1924 (2), Secretary's notice, 30/10/1924, announcing public lecture by Nello Martinelli, 'the new Professor of Latin Literature'.

⁵⁹ *LA*, 28/07/1924, 531.

rappresentazione dello stile e di Crasso e di Antonio nel De Oratore (1963). Among his non-classical publications, one could mention his edition of Goethe's tragedy *Ifigenia in Tauride*.⁶⁰

Martinelli's tenure of the Chair was very brief. Luckily one of his students in the Course of Letters was Herbert Ganado.⁶¹ In his memoirs, Ganado paints a colourful picture of the professor:

Nello Martinelli was a real character and undoubtedly our best professor. He ... was a first-class academic, finicky and very precise in his work which he undertook with exaggerated seriousness. He was not well paid and although he could hardly make ends meet, his dedication was such that to have sufficient time to prepare lectures, he even declined to give private lessons.⁶²

The high level of scrupulousness in the character of Martinelli is also observable in some of his letters that have been preserved at the University of Malta, an example of which is the one he wrote to the Rector on the morning he was supposed to give his first lecture. Bearing the letterhead of the Great Britain Hotel at Valletta, Martinelli described in great detail the problems he had encountered the day before when his attempt to move into his new residence in Sliema had proved unsuccessful owing to the inadequacy of the place (no electricity, no bed, etc.). This situation had compelled him to spend the night at the hotel in the capital and, in the morning, left him unable to change into a new set of clothes and with all his books still locked up in his suitcases. He regrets that in the dire circumstances he could not show up for his first

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<http://www.internetculturale.it/openscms/ricercaExpansion.jsp?q=&searchType=a_vanzato&channel_creator=Martinelli%2C+Nello&channel_contributor=Martinelli%2C+Nello&opCha_contributor=OR&opCha_creator=OR> (accessed 29/12/2017).

⁶¹ Ganado (1906-1979) had been a top-class Latin student. Of the 12 candidates who sat for the Oral Matriculation Examination in Latin in June 1922, Ganado was one of only two who were judged 'Excellent'; cf. UMHA, *Miscellanea* 1922 (3), results of Matriculation Examination June 1922.

⁶² Ganado 1977: 1.294.

lesson, adding that he would understand if a one-day remuneration be deducted from his monthly salary.⁶³

Martinelli had taken his new post in Malta with the utmost seriousness. He had sent a postal card from Viareggio to the Secretary of the University to express his gratitude for the data the Secretary had sent him, which he considered 'utilissime', and also to thank him for anticipating his request of communicating Professor Laurenza's address as he wished to ask for a lot of information from the latter.⁶⁴ About Martinelli's academic dedication, Ganado concludes that he 'was certainly the most academically competent and conscientious professor whose lectures I had the good fortune to attend. He was an exemplary academic who gave me a deeper insight into the importance of study.'⁶⁵ Another student of Martinelli's, J.P. Vassallo, who later served as the Director of Education for many years, cherished fond recollections of Martinelli, whom he considered a 'meravilja' (Maltese for 'a marvel').⁶⁶ There was a sense of integrity and thoroughness about Martinelli that earned him the respect and devotion of his students, as Ganado acknowledges: 'We loved Martinelli and he loved us. Many of us did him proud in the examination. He was very emotional and with tears in his eyes told us that doing well in the examination was the best "thank you" we could ever have given him.'⁶⁷

And yet, University life was not continuously rosy, and students could be troublesome especially at the expense of such a sensitive professor as Martinelli. Ganado humourously tells of Martinelli's attempt to introduce

⁶³ UMHA, Miscellanea 1925 (1), undated letter in Italian bearing the letterhead of Great Britain Hotel, Valletta (67, Strada Mezzodi), from Nello Martinelli, addressed to Rector.

⁶⁴ UMHA, Miscellanea 1924 (2), 07/08/1924.

⁶⁵ Ganado 1977: 1.295.

⁶⁶ Interview: Vassallo. It was during the professorship of Martinelli that J.P. Vassallo and others submitted a request to the Rector to start 'un corso regolare di lezioni serali di lingua e letteratura greca': UMHA, Miscellanea 1925 (3), 20/10/1925.

⁶⁷ Ganado 1977: 1.296.

an after-hours weekly debate in Latin and how his students, who elsewhere showed a lot of affection for their Latin professor, conspired to make a fiasco of the first gathering, with the result that Martinelli had to abandon the initiative.⁶⁸ Another episode was much more serious and might have had something to do with Martinelli's eventual resignation from his post. We learn this from a long and detailed letter that Martinelli wrote to the Rector.⁶⁹ Martinelli complains bitterly about the disturbance that a group of fourth-year Medicine and Law students had been making in the corridor outside the lecture-hall during his lectures. On a Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, between 12 and 1 pm, a loud chorus-like chanting would arise to disturb the lecturing professor. Following Martinelli's admonishment, the students stopped for a while, only to resume the hubbub during his next lecture. The repetition of this furore had gone on undiminished for four months, not even desisting when Martinelli had attended his lectures conspicuously unwell. Although Martinelli had refrained from reporting the offence to the Rector, he had now realized that such a complacent attitude on his part was unworthy of the honour of a professor and of the University, not to mention the harm that was being inflicted on his Latin students. In marked contrast to the corridors, Martinelli makes certain to stress, the behaviour in his class was perfect and natural ('spontanea'), because his long teaching experience provided him with the necessary tools to discipline and engage a class of young men.⁷⁰ Quoting Articles 76 and 21 of the Statute on 'Subversive Conduct', Martinelli warns the Rector that if such behaviour persists he would be constrained to abandon his lectures, and that meanwhile he would be reporting the affair to the Minister of Public Instruction himself.

It is not possible at this stage to determine the motives behind this mediated and long-drawn action to frustrate Martinelli; nor has any

⁶⁸ Ganado 1977: 1.295-296. On a similarly failed attempt to start an English Debate Society, cf. Shepherd 1922: 78.

⁶⁹ UMHA, Miscellanea 1925 (1), 06/03/1925.

⁷⁰ *LA*, 28/07/1924, 531, for a list of Martinelli's teaching posts in Italy (Lucca, Palermo, Pavia, and Florence), previous to his appointment in Malta.

evidence been found of the official measures, if any, taken to check it. Surely, bearing in mind the small size of the building and the current student population,⁷¹ the affair does not say much for the general level of discipline prevailing at the University at the time.⁷² It is likely that, rather than an attack on Martinelli himself, this was probably a sign of the growing political tension in the island which tended to materialize in diverse forms. The situation was certainly unnerving to the delicate Martinelli, who must have found the academic duties in Malta, and possibly the general situation in the island, particularly taxing. During a summer holiday at Assisi in 1926, Martinelli lamented in a letter to Mgr Luigi Farrugia that it was only on the region's 'mistiche montagne' that he had found again the necessary tranquillity to resume his studies and be able to read the Monsignor's collection of Latin epigrams.⁷³ The implication is that Martinelli was suffering from a nervous breakdown that must have accelerated the termination of his time in Malta. A Certificate of Character was issued for Martinelli during late August of 1927. The Certificate is indicative of the esteem in which the University held Martinelli, but the professor must have left the island with a rather bitter taste of the Maltese experience:

[He] fulfilled his duties with the greatest assiduity and consistency, bringing to completion the programme with diligence and interest while earning the respect and gratitude of his students, who obtained the greatest profit from him. Taking into consideration his qualities of mind and heart, I am certain that the most illustrious professor can occupy with dignity the Chair of Latin Literature of any University!⁷⁴

⁷¹ Cf. Ganado 1977: 1.287, 'In the twenties ... the average number of students hovered around a hundred and fifty'.

⁷² Cf. Shepherd 1922: 69-75.

⁷³ Farrugia 1923: 363-364 (letter 09/08/1926). Martinelli refers particularly to the Monsignor's 'bella ed interessante *Epitome*'.

⁷⁴ UMHA, Miscellanea 1927-1928, Certificate of Character, 27/08/1927.

7.3 Vincenzo Laurenza (born c. 1880)



Figure 18 - Professor
Vincezo Laurenza

Apart for the fact that he was considered ‘an institution in the Italian cultural field in Malta’,⁷⁵ and from being a long-time occupier of the Chair of Italian Literature, Vincenzo Laurenza (Fig. 18) is important to the present study for the many years he served the University as its Acting Professor of Latin. Many students who later distinguished themselves in the professional sphere had studied Latin at the University under Laurenza during the interwar period, among whom was Edward Coleiro, the future holder of the Chair of Latin for thirty years.

Laurenza, holder of a D. Litt. from the University of Naples,⁷⁶ taught Italian at the Lyceum for seventeen years.⁷⁷ He supplemented his income during this period by giving private tuition in Italian, Latin, and Philosophy to matriculating and University students.⁷⁸ Maltese history was a source of great interest to him, publishing a number of scholarly papers over the years which are still considered highly relevant.⁷⁹ He also composed Latin verse, and several poems were published by Alfredo Bartoli in the latter’s *Rosa Melitensis*. Laurenza inaugurated his appointment to the Chair of Italian in 1924 by delivering a public lecture entitled ‘La questione del metodo negli studi letterari e la letteratura

⁷⁵ Peresso 2014: 5.

⁷⁶ Cf. UMHA, *Miscellanea* 1924 (2), notice 27/10/1924.

⁷⁷ Peresso 2014: 2.

⁷⁸ UMHA, *Miscellanea* 1910, letter 28/07/1910; *Miscellanea* 1918 (2), listing Laurenza among Extra Academic Teachers authorized to prepare students for University examinations; *Miscellanea* 1919 (1), for Laurenza’s statement that student Tessie Camilleri had received his instruction to sit for the Matric in Latin in 1919. Camilleri (1901-1930) was the first female graduate of the University of Malta; cf. *TM*, 23/11/2007, 6.

⁷⁹ His major contribution is ‘Malta nei documenti angioini del Regio Archivio di Napoli’ (Laurenza 1934c), which contains 66 documents pertaining to the Angevin administration of Malta in the period 1270-1300; cf. Peresso 2015: 141-142.

italiana in Malta'.⁸⁰ It is again Herbert Ganado who, having enrolled in the Course of Literature also in 1924, provides us with the best reminiscences of Laurenza as Professor of Italian Literature:

At the Lyceum Professor Laurenza had been my teacher for three years. He felt happier and much more at ease at University where he had ample time to prepare lectures which were therefore of a much higher calibre. We were his first students. Laurenza belonged to the historical school and naturally chose Toracca as the main textbook on the history of Italian literature. He could never keep his head straight and we had a standing joke that it tilted to the right because that side of his brain stored the dates and data he spoke about during his lectures.⁸¹

Elsewhere, Ganado refers to Laurenza's weak disposition, remarking that he 'sneezed and coughed at the very mention of sport'.⁸² Nevertheless, he could get highly emotional, especially when exposing some of the most poignant episodes in Dante, where 'Laurenza became so emotional that he lost his voice'.⁸³ Laurenza was instrumental in the setting up of the 'Società Universitaria di Letteratura Italiana' in 1932, of which he was the first President.⁸⁴

With the resignation of Professor Martinelli in 1927, Laurenza was called to fill in as Acting Chair of Latin Literature, besides retaining his post in Italian Literature.⁸⁵ This went on for six whole years, until the appointment of Umberto Moricca in 1933 relieved Laurenza of the responsibility.⁸⁶ Moricca's tenure was, however, very brief (see below), and between 1936 and 1939 we find Laurenza returning to the role of Acting Professor

⁸⁰ UMHA, Miscellanea 1924 (2), notice 27/10/1924, announcing lecture, which, delivered on 31/10/1924, was also published in the same year (Laurenza 1924).

⁸¹ Ganado 1977: 1.293.

⁸² Ibid. 1.349. Laurenza's feeble disposition did not prevent him from contributing financially to an initiative by the University Sports Club in 1926 to start rowing and water-polo teams; cf. Anon. 1926: 45.

⁸³ Ganado 1977: 1.293.

⁸⁴ UMHA, Miscellanea 1932 (1), letter of 13/02/1930 requesting Rector's approval to found a Society; letter of 21/02/1930 requesting use of Aula Magna to hold meetings.

⁸⁵ *ARU* 1928-1929, ii.

⁸⁶ Cf. *ARU*, 1929 to 1934.

of Latin.⁸⁷ Mgr Joseph Lupi, who was following the same course with Edward Coleiro, recalls Laurenza's effect on him as his Professor of Italian and Latin:

Having skipped the fourth year [of the Lyceum], I was still very weak in Latin syntax and used to make the most elementary mistakes in the translations into Italian and into Latin, and continued to be weak even in the first year of University. But then I improved a lot under Laurenza, and started to appreciate Latin literature ... I immediately recognized Laurenza's impact on me: from my second University year, Laurenza used to assign, in both Latin and Italian, the appreciation of some poem or some other literary excerpt. He used then to discuss with us every piece of work that we submitted, and this was for me the best way to understand the beauty and the greatness of human thought. In the examinations of the second and third years of the course, Laurenza always included an appreciation of a poem or a piece of prose; I always chose this question and did very well in it.⁸⁸

Another student in the same year with Coleiro and Lupi was Anton Buttigieg, later President of the Republic (1976-1981). He describes Laurenza as highly cultured, humane, and deeply religious, the kind of professor never to forget individual effort on the part of a student: 'Once, years after my time as a student, we met and he was very happy to see me, and, among other things, said: "*Mi scrivevi un buon Latino.*"'⁸⁹

Laurenza resigned from the Chair of Italian Literature on attaining the retirement age of 60 years on 12 February 1940.⁹⁰ Age-limit is also the reason given in the University's Annual Report as to Laurenza's resignation.⁹¹ According to historian Henry Frenco, however, Laurenza, having become suspect to the British government for alleged Fascist sympathies, was one of the 'next batch of Italians listed for expulsion by the military regime', the same list which also included Umberto

⁸⁷ Cf. *ARU*, 1936 to 1939.

⁸⁸ Lupi 2002: 48-49.

⁸⁹ Buttigieg 1980: 56.

⁹⁰ Peresso 2014: 2.

⁹¹ UMHA, Reports of the University 1933-47, Report on the Working of the Royal University of Malta for the period 1st October, 1939, to 30th September, 1940, 6.

Moricca.⁹² According to Frendo, the Italian vice-consul in Valletta had described Laurenza as a 'true Italian', which was enough to render the scholar a *persona non grata*.⁹³ Both Lupi and Buttigieg, in their respective memoirs, categorically deny that Laurenza, during his University lectures, had ever as much as hinted at any form of fascist propaganda.⁹⁴ However, if a particular letter from the University's Secretary to Laurenza in October 1936 is anything to go by, trouble seems to have loomed as the professor approached the age of retirement: 'I am directed by the Rector to inform you that the special class of Italian Literature will not be held during the current scholastic year 1936-37'.⁹⁵

Laurenza left Malta on 21 May 1940, just a few weeks before the commencement of hostilities by Italy against Malta.⁹⁶ His long years of teaching, his active participation in the cultural scenario, and his scholarly contributions in the field of Maltese historiography had indeed elevated him to the status of a 'national institution'.⁹⁷

⁹² Frendo 2012: 543.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 547.

⁹⁴ Lupi 2002: 42; Buttigieg 1980: 56.

⁹⁵ UMHA, *Miscellanea* 1936 (3), 08/10/1936.

⁹⁶ Peresso 2014: 2.

⁹⁷ Ganado 1977: 1.293.

7.4 Umberto Moricca (1888-1948)



Figure 19 - Professor Umberto Moricca

Umberto Moricca (Fig. 19) was born in Filandari, in Calabria, Italy, into a family of noble origin. After obtaining his D.Litt. from La Sapienza in Rome, Moricca taught Classics in a number of 'licei' at Rome, and, in 1920, took a post as lecturer at La Sapienza. In 1931, he was appointed to the Chair of Latin at the University of Cagliari.⁹⁸

Moricca produced a great number of publications, the earliest one in 1911.⁹⁹ He treated an impressively comprehensive range of Latin

and Greek authors, including Plautus, Cicero, Virgil, Nepos, Horace, Livy, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Marcus Minucius Felix, Boethius, Gregory the Great, Ignatius of Antioch, and Ambrose.¹⁰⁰ Some of these works were school-texts; others were critical editions on a more scholarly scale. He is especially remembered for the massive *Storia della Letteratura Latina Cristiana*, in three volumes (each of the last two volumes further divided into two parts), which he published in Turin between 1924 and 1934. The second part of the third volume was published when Moricca had already moved to Malta to occupy the Chair of Latin at the University. He had received his appointment on 1 October

⁹⁸ For a short biography, by Pasquale Romano, <<http://www.filandari.net/index.php/2-non-categorizzato/23-umberto-moricca>> (accessed 29/12/2017).

⁹⁹ Moricca 1911.

¹⁰⁰ For a bibliography, <<http://opac.uniroma1.it/SebinaOpacRMS/Opac>> (accessed 29/12/2017).

1933 after winning the competition through the excellence of his various published works.¹⁰¹

The first months in Malta seem to have been propitious enough, with Moricca even delivering two public lectures, 'Scuola ed eloquenza nei primi secoli di Roma Imperiale' and 'L'esame di coscienza secondo la filosofia antica e la religione cristiana'.¹⁰² Soon enough, uneasy signs started to appear. As early as January 1934 the General Council rejected Moricca's request to initiate a free class in Greek at the University, even though Moricca, in his letter, had thought it helpful to his case to remind the Rector that a similar request had been previously granted to Professor Bartoli.¹⁰³ By October of the same year it became clearer that Moricca had fallen foul of the British authorities, as Sir Arturo Mercieca recalled:

After that in the Courts,¹⁰⁴ the turn came for the old University to feel the blows of 'reform' dealt by the authorities who were still out in full roar on the path of destruction. The first step, which was to be followed by others more serious, was taken on the conferment of the academic degrees in that year, 1934. Professor of Latin Moricca, who was to deliver the oration, and had prepared it as usual in Italian, had been a few days before ordered to read it in Latin. Of no avail were the protests of the candidates for graduation, who claimed that, as the promoters who paid the piper at the feast, they had the right to have the ceremonial carried out in the form that pleased *them*. Even so, the speech had to be delivered in Latin.¹⁰⁵

Moricca delivered his speech in Latin, 'De ingenuis artibus optime colendis', during the graduation ceremony held on 1 October 1934.¹⁰⁶ In a speech on the necessity of assiduous study of classical letters and

¹⁰¹ UMHA, Miscellanea 1935 (2), accounts-clerk's letter to Rector, 13/05/1935, stating Moricca's date of appointment.

¹⁰² *ARU* 1933-1934, 4.

¹⁰³ UMHA, Miscellanea 1934, File. 82/33-34, containing Moricca's request, 17/01/1934, rejected during General Council meeting, 24/01/1934.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Mercieca 1969: 238, 'the use of Italian was abolished in all the Courts, and Maltese was substituted' by Letters Patent of 20/08/1934.

¹⁰⁵ Mercieca 1969: 241.

¹⁰⁶ Moricca 1934.

philology for those aspiring to hold places of authority in civil life, one can still read some remarks that suggest criticism of the edgy political situation. After quoting Sextus Turpilius's fragment about the tortuous road to wisdom,¹⁰⁷ from his lost comedy *Canephorus*, Moricca observes:

Ita est: per asperam viam, molestiarum plenissimam, ad sapientiam pervenitur. ... Nam, cum in omni populo alteros imperare alteros oboedire maxime necessarium sit, hinc illud consequitur, ut neminem ad imperandum satis idoneum dicamus, qui doctrina atque optimarum artium studiis accuratissime non sit eruditus.

Alluding to navigation as a metaphor of governance, he warns: 'si litterarum rudi ignaroque reipublicae clavum commiseris, mangopere timendum est, ne ulla in re muneri suo aut communi desit saluti'.

During the next months, suspicions continued to thicken around the personality of Moricca. That some students not registered for the Course in Literature were attending his lectures could not pass unnoticed in the circumstances. Moricca received a letter from the University's Secretary officially forbidding such attendance:

It has been reported to the Rector that on Monday last a number of students who are not in the Faculty of Literature have attended your class.

The Rector has therefore directed me to inform you that you must on no account allow such students to attend your lectures, and that if any such students desire to do so, they must produce the Rector's permission.¹⁰⁸

The letter sent to the attendees is more revealing as to the nature of the growing fear surrounding Moricca:

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. unpagged: '... haud facile est venire illi ubi sita est sapientia. Spissum est iter: aspici haut possem nisi cum magna miseria.' (Diehl 4, 9s).

¹⁰⁸ UMHA, Miscellanea 1935 (1), letter 08/02/1935, which bears the handwritten word 'Visto' signed by Moricca.

I am directed by the Rector to inform you that your attending the class of Latin Literature on the 4th instant without his permission was contrary to the Regulations of the University.

The Rector is aware that such attendance formed part of a scheme of insubordination, but as he is not fully convinced that the further stages of such scheme were known to you, he means to take no other step for the moment beyond that of reprimanding you for your action on the above mentioned date.

I also am directed to warn you that, in view of the decision of the General Council communicated to you on the 31st October, 1934, any further infringement of discipline on your part will be immediately reported to His Excellency the Visitor and to the General Council for the application of the sanctions detailed in Article 89 (v), (vi) and (vii) of the University Regulations.¹⁰⁹

Even Moricca's conditions of employment were being called into question, as the following query by the Clerk in charge of Accounts reveals:

In view of the Government's decision regarding the conditions of employment of the Professor of Latin Literature, instructions should be obtained from the Treasury whether Professor Moricca is to continue to pay the subscriptions under the Widows and Orphans Pension Act, 1927, and if the rates already paid since his appointment on 1.10.33 are to be refunded to him.¹¹⁰

In reply, Rector Galea asked for a letter to be drafted to the Government.¹¹¹ The rest of Moricca's story in Malta is succinctly told by Henry Frendo in a passage from his long chapter on the clampdown on 'disloyalty' in Malta.¹¹² The entire reproduction of this paragraph is not inappropriate here:

His appointment to the chair of Latin literature at the University of Malta in 1933 had been on merit but, a year later, the regime began dabbling with his probationary period, extending, reducing, and finally informing him that under a new 'Aliens' ordinance only British subjects could hold office as a professor. He was faced

¹⁰⁹ UMHA, Miscellanea 1935 (1), 15/02/1935, unidentified addressees.

¹¹⁰ UMHA, Miscellanea 1935 (2), 13/05/1935.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 13/05/1935.

¹¹² Frendo 2012: 545-546.

with the option either to give up teaching at the end of 1935 or to accept retroactively a temporary fixed-term contract, which would expire in 1936. Having opted reluctantly for the latter option, he was nevertheless summoned to Luke's office on the morning of 20 January 1936 where he found himself face to face with Major Bertram Ede and the Rector of the University, Professor Robert Galea, a former member of Lord Strickland's cabinet and deputy leader of the Constitutional Party. Accused of engaging in activities dangerous to the state, Moricca was compelled to resign his chair, prohibited from entering the university building, and given six days to leave. Moricca was so disgusted that he left overnight, to the cheers of his students who saw him to the ship and out of the Grand Harbour. On the following day Moricca wrote to Galea to make it clear that he only resigned because compelled to do so 'by Major Bertram Ede who, in your presence, put questions to me and threatened me with immediate deportation if I did not resign there and then.' Although it is claimed, not surprisingly, that even his mail was being tampered with, no reasons of any substance were given for his removal. However, according to an Italian newspaper report, as he left harbor he twice responded to his students' farewells by a "*Viva l'Italia! Viva il Duce!*"¹¹³

Evidence of the eminence that Moricca enjoyed in his native country are the Middle School in Filandri and a street in Rome, which both bear his name.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Frendo 2012: 545. Sir Harry Luke was Lieutenant Governor of Malta (1930-1938). Major (later Colonel) Bertram Ede was the Defence Security Officer for Malta (1933-1942). Professor Robert V. Galea was Rector of the University (1934-1948).

¹¹⁴ Cf. n. 100.

CHAPTER 8 – RETURN OF THE CLERICS

8.1 Joseph Schembri (1888-1953)



Figure 20 - Mgr Joseph Schembri, 'lè-Ċimpla'

Although Mgr Joseph Schembri's teaching career was mainly attached to the Archiepiscopal Seminary, he was acknowledged in the whole island as an excellent Latinist and as an outstanding poet in the language.¹ Schembri himself mentioned Vincenzo Laurenza as the first person to praise his early ventures into Latin verse composition.²

Schembri, who was better known by the family nickname 'lè-Ċimpla' (Fig. 20), was educated at the Seminary and at the University of Malta, reading for the degrees of B.Litt. and BL.Can.³ After his ordination to the priesthood in 1915, he received with honours his Doctorate in Divinity from the same University. In 1920 he was a teacher at the Lyceum and in the same year he was appointed examiner in Latin Literature at the Major Seminary for a period of three years. During the war he moved to

¹ Schiavone 2009: 2.1437.

² Cf. *TCJ*, 5, 1952, 3, where Schembri, in a poem addressed to Laurenza, says 'Meos qui numeras measque nugas / Solus, esse aliquid, putat benignus'.

³ For a biography, see Borg, L. 1975: 3-7.

Gozo where he taught Latin at the Gozitan Seminary. Returning to Malta after the war, he resumed his teaching career as a teacher of Latin at the Seminary. Schembri was also engaged by the University as an examiner in Latin.⁴

At the Seminary he was usually responsible for the senior classes.⁵ A very cultured person (he had a propensity for languages,⁶ and loved mathematics⁷), Schembri was also a first-rate teacher of Latin.⁸ Schembri incorporated his own poetry into his Latin lessons at the Seminary, often updating his class with his latest verses, thus stimulating the students' interest in Latin as a living language.⁹ In his unpublished MA dissertation, Louis Borg collected 61 Latin poems by Schembri,¹⁰ many of which the poet had published during his lifetime in local journals and newspapers, while others were only discovered posthumously, still in manuscript form. According to Borg:

Schembri's range of themes, although not very wide, derives much from the framework of his life: his character (its humorous aspect in particular), the situation in which he found himself, his religious and civil aspirations, his cultural background, his acquaintances, life itself with its ups and downs ... he dedicates elegies to people placed on high and to his friends; he gives vent to his national sentiment in "epic style" verse; and, in Horatian and Tibullan manner he touches upon interesting and familiar points of human psychology.¹¹

⁴ Cf. his poem 'Ad canem fidelem' (Borg, L. 1975: 15; poem 39) which describes Professor Coleiro's dog sitting quietly at the professor's feet while the latter and Schembri mark the examination papers. During a private communication with the author on 12/03/2014, Revd N. Debono Montebello recalled a tricky question posed by Schembri during a Latin oral exam: 'Give me the Latin for 'a beautiful portico'. Cf. also Interview: Xuereb.

⁵ Interview: Vella, A.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Interview: Schembri.

⁸ Interviews: Borg, V. (1); Vella, A.

⁹ Interview: Vella, A.

¹⁰ Borg, L. 1974.

¹¹ Ibid. 8.

One of Schembri's most appealing composition is a long poem (319 verses) in phalaecian hendecasyllables, 'Pupilli Folliculo Ludentes',¹² in which he gives philosophical reasons why soccer, of which he was particularly fond, is so congenial to youngsters.¹³ Schembri here showed remarkable ingenuity in the ability to coin Latin expressions corresponding to football terms (such as 'princeps arbiter' referee, 'arbitri minores' linesmen, 'palma' goal, 'mulcta' penalty; the term 'football' is rendered in various ways, e.g., 'folliculus', 'follis', 'pila', 'globus', 'sphaera', and 'rotundum missile'). Another poem, 'Excursus iucundissimus complurium Almae Matris alumnorum' in hexameter verse, recalls Horace's poem on the journey to Brundisium (*Sat.* 1.5).¹⁴ This is a description of an authentic archaeological excursion in January 1953 to prehistoric sites in Malta (Fig. 26), including the presence of Professor Coleiro and Fr Seaston, the journey by bus, the verbose explanations of the guide, and the incidents on the road. When the lane leading to Hagar Qim Temples proved too narrow for the bus, Fr. Seaston, the Professor of Greek, asked a local constable for direction, only to be misunderstood:

Sed cum Father Seaston Anglo sermone rogavit
 Tramite quo nobis Hagar Qim intrare liceret
 Sir, inquit trepidus, this bus too bigger than street.
 Obstupuit Graecus Doctor demisit et aures. (verses 39-41)

Schembri was also the author of a number of prose plays in Latin which, in the post-war years, were staged by Seminary students at the Seminary during carnival days.¹⁵ One of these plays, on Saint Paul's arrival at Malta, was published in pamphlet-form;¹⁶ another one dealt with Grand Master La Vallette during the Siege of Malta in 1565. Although, in his dissertation, Borg does not mention the plays, presumably because they were prose compositions, he reproduces

¹² Ibid. 160-170 (poem 40; originally published in the *TCJ*, 5, 1952, 6-12).

¹³ For Schembri and football, see Interview: Schembri.

¹⁴ Borg, L. 1975: 176-178 (poem 44, never published).

¹⁵ Interviews: Vella, A.; Borg, V. (2); Mintoff.

¹⁶ Schembri, J. 1947.

Schembri's *Musicum praeconium in divum Thomam Aquinatem*, a musical consisting in three parts, a prologue and an epilogue, numbering 273 verses in all.¹⁷ In any case, the Carnival plays used to be extremely popular cultural events for families and friends of Seminarians. In the style of Renaissance 'colloquies',¹⁸ Schembri was also attentive to opportunities to insert classical quotations into his dialogue of his characters. In the play on Saint Paul's arrival at Malta, for example, Quintus, a Roman guard, in one of his exchanges with a companion, utters 'Oh tempora! Oh mores!'¹⁹

Schembri's knowledge of languages and his sense of inquisitiveness into the etymological influence of Latin in modern languages (including Maltese), at times bordering on the whimsical, is evident from a couple of articles he published in the journal *Scientia*.²⁰

8.2 Edward Coleiro (1914- 1996)

Plures generationes iuvenum per fere quinquaginta annos erudit; intense laboravit in Instituti Catholici erectione, in festis centenariis Naufragii Divi Pauli, in Societate Melitensi Equitum S. Joannis, in museis Cathedralis et Con-Cathedralis instituedis [sic], et in operibus Capituli Metropolitanani, semperque admirationem concivium attraxit ita ut suo opera et doctrina sacerdotium catholicum magis illustraverit. Si opera hujus sacerdotis enarrare tentarem certus sum quod in his paucis notitiis non possem tot labores, tot opera, per fere sexaginta annos a Rev.mo Coleiro in exercitio ministerii sacerdotais [sic] et in promovendo Societatem civilem peracta memorare.²¹

The paragraph in the 'Canicorum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Melitensis' which summarises the long and variegated career of Edward Coleiro

¹⁷ Borg, L. 1975: 213-228 (poem 61, about which Borg gives no further information).

¹⁸ Waquet 2002: 20.

¹⁹ Schembri, J. 1947: 4.

²⁰ Schembri, J. 1952, 1953.

²¹ ACM, 'Canonicorum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Melitensis: Chronologia (1591-)'.

immediately reveals that Latin scholarship and pedagogy was only one side of Coleiro's multitalented interests. What follows is, in the main, an overview of his scholarly career especially as the long-time occupier of the Chair of Latin at the University of Malta.

Coleiro studied Latin at the Lyceum under Revd Paul Vella, an excellent Latinist who 'hated to see syntactical errors in students' Latin translations from Italian, especially in the use of the subjunctive'.²² He then enrolled in the Course of Arts at the University of Malta in 1930, studying Latin under Professor Vincenzo Laurenza. Coleiro's diligence was a trait from a young age, when, as a student at the Major Seminary, he studied late into the night.²³ He graduated in Arts (BA), and later in Canon Law and Theology. Following his ordination to the priesthood, Coleiro requested funding from the Government to follow a post-graduate course in Greek and Latin at University College London, undertaking to refund the Government's expenses by teaching Latin and Greek in Government Schools on his return.²⁴ After an exchange of correspondence between the Governor and the Archbishop, it was agreed that the Church would subsidise Coleiro's London studies 'out of the funds accruing from the rents of suppressed benefices; but on condition that Revd Colerio accept to bind himself to give his services, on his return, exclusively and entirely to the Seminary until the subsidy is repaid'.²⁵ It is interesting to see that Coleiro wanted to strengthen his Greek, a language he had only started to learn in its Koine dialect under Professor Peter Paul Saydon during the Theology Course at the University.²⁶ Coleiro entered University College London in 1937, eventually enrolling for a BA Hons Degree in Latin (with Greek subsidiary). He was unable to complete the course due

²² Lupi 2002: 40. Vella had a remarkably long career as the Teacher of Latin at the Lyceum, extending between 1902 and 1934 (cf. relative editions of *MBB*). Vella died in 1938: *ARU*, 1938-1939, iv.

²³ Lupi 2002: 74, using candlelight, as electricity was switched off at 10pm. At the time Joseph Lupi and Coleiro shared rooms.

²⁴ AAM, Corrispondenza, 1937, vol.35, f., Governor Bonham Carter to Archbishop Mauro Caruana, 11/12/1937.

²⁵ Ibid. Archbishop Caruana to Governor Bonham Carter, 17/12/1937.

²⁶ Interview: Borg, V. (1).

to the outbreak of World War II.²⁷ From some indirect comments in Saydon's correspondence with Joseph Aquilina, preserved at the University Archives, one gathers that Coleiro found the study of Greek at the time rather daunting: 'he is giving up on Greek, and if he keeps somewhat backward, he will return next year or next summer', remarks Saydon.²⁸ This might have prevented him from finishing the course in time. In any case, the commencement of hostilities must have cut short his plans.²⁹ By summer 1939, we find him back in Malta in search of a decent teaching job. Saydon mentions Coleiro's frustration in a letter to Aquilina:

Coleiro is sorely disappointed. No job with the Government; his services are not required at St. Edward's; he has only got two classes at the Seminary, but not in the Faculty of Literature. I pity him; he is bright and promising, though not sufficiently self-controlled.³⁰

This is indeed an early reference to Coleiro's temper which in later years was to grow into a major characteristic.³¹ Another aspect was his vanity, also noted by Saydon, who in the following description might have had Cicero in mind as a worthy subject for comparison:³²

Coleiro has got classes V and VI at the Seminary and St. Paul's School. The Government does not require his services. But this is very funny: he has been offered a job at Floriana Parish-Church. A very good job consisting in distributing Holy Communion from

²⁷ Edward Coleiro's registry file, University College London. I am grateful to Robert Winckworth, UCL Records Office, for his assistance via email dated 17/05/2016.

²⁸ ASCD, Ġużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 11/06/1939.

²⁹ ASCD, Ġużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 15/05/1941. Coleiro's family house in Valletta was wrecked in an air-raid; luckily, the family had moved to the country town of Balzan before attacks hit the island. Cf. ASCD, Edward Coleiro Papers, Valletta District Emergency Committee - Letters Received, consisting of records of the Valletta District Emergency Committee for which Coleiro served as Hon. Secretary. The Committee's main objective was to organize and oversee air-raid shelters during the war.

³⁰ ASCD, Ġużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 26/09/1939. In another letter (25/08/1948), Saydon describes Coleiro as 'A hardworking young man, intelligent and full of vigour, perhaps at times too full of himself, like all young people.'

³¹ Cf. Interviews: Borg, V. (1); Zerafa; Mifsud Bonnici; Azzopardi; Attard, etc.

³² Cf. Cic. *Planc.* 26.64-65.

very early morning up to late in the morning, every day, *Sagrìstan* [sexton]! Good Heavens! After a two-year course of studies in the University of London one comes home to perform such work which any priest can do. Naturally he refused. Poor boy! He expected to come to Malta and walk through streets strewn with roses.³³

In due course, Coleiro also taught Latin at the Girls' Secondary School in Valletta (1941-1945) and the Lyceum in Malta (1942-1947), while he continued to teach at the Seminary until 1956.³⁴ Coleiro's career objective was academic,³⁵ but his obligations to the Seminary occasioned by the postgraduate funding in 1937 was an obstacle: the 'binding' takes on a figuratively dark connotation when Saydon speaks of Coleiro's 'chaining himself to the Archbishop, bound as he is with the Seminary, and the Statute does not permit him to be employed by the University, not even as an examiner'.³⁶ Coleiro's ambition must have received a major blow when Arthur Hilary Armstrong was appointed Professor of Latin Literature and Classical Greek in October 1939.³⁷ However, following a long sickness probably exacerbated by the war situation, Armstrong had relinquished his post by August 1943.³⁸ From 1942 Coleiro was *ad interim* Professor of Latin at the University of Malta; some form of settlement must have been reached with the Archbishop. In this capacity, Coleiro published his first classical book, *Fallen from the Laurel Tree*, an anthology of Latin verse comprising excerpts from Ennius down to Silver Age poetry.³⁹ In the Preface, Coleiro names the prevailing difficulty in the procurement of textbooks from war-torn Britain as the spur that had accelerated his long-desired wish to publish such a

³³ ASCD, Ġużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 01/10/1939.

³⁴ Azzopardi 1998: 3.

³⁵ NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, Coleiro to Aquilina, 19/05/1948: 'When I left the Lyceum to come to University I sacrificed almost half my salary, but I never thought twice about the decision: the honour alone and the prestige is [sic] of much greater value than money'.

³⁶ ASCD, Ġużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 09/03/1939 ('Terġa', Coleiro mar tqħallaq mal-Isqof', literally, 'hung himself').

³⁷ Cf. ASCD, Ġużè Aquilina Collection, Saydon to Aquilina, 09/ 03/1939.

³⁸ On Armstrong in Malta, see 5.5.

³⁹ Coleiro 1946.

collection.⁴⁰ As an apology for the number of misprints, Coleiro blames the local publishing industry for its lack of proper proofreading,⁴¹ adding that ‘to make things worse, the printing had to be rushed through in the last two months as we had not decided to publish until we had lost hope that the set books on our University syllabus would be forthcoming. Such a rush could have only one result’.⁴² This was typical of the indefatigable Coleiro, as was his continual use of the royal ‘we’ in his writings.⁴³ Indeed, his whole bearing exuded authority and energy:

Tall, well-built, ruddy, and always in a hurry, he was very quick to flare up but equally quick to calm down; he would speak with his arms wide open and waving left and right, the fingers of both hands spread out as well, with a sweet Maltese accent and with an English neoclassical intonation, as if to please those blessed Latin poets of his who were the cause of so much trouble for us. His cassock fitted close to his body as he strode along. Always with the cassock, till the end, even when the clergyman appeared.⁴⁴

In 1947 Coleiro received the Chair’s full status and immediately proceeded to King’s College, London, where he obtained his PhD in 1949 with the thesis ‘St. Jerome’s ‘Letters’ and ‘Lives of Hermits’ with reference to (1) art and style; (2) social and historical significance’.⁴⁵ This is how Coleiro explains the aims of the thesis:

⁴⁰ Ibid. v.

⁴¹ Re. current state of printing in Malta, cf. NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, Coleiro to Aquilina, 19/09/1948: ‘Independently where you publish it ... you will end up with a mess: misprints, smeared ink, poor paper, terrible binding, and in a nutshell you will be ruining an admirable work’.

⁴² Coleiro 1946: vii.

⁴³ Cf. e.g. Coleiro 1979: Preface. For an analysis of Maltese prime minister Dom Mintoff’s use of ‘we’, see Zammit, M.R. 2012: 319-320.

⁴⁴ Friggieri 2008: 404.

⁴⁵ Coleiro 1949. According to King’s College records, Coleiro registered in October 1947 for the Degree of MA (Classics), shifting in May 1948 as an ‘Internal whole-time student for the PhD’. The upgrade entailed the inclusion of Jerome’s *Life of the Hermits* in addition to his *Letters*. The slip-entry also states that Coleiro was a ‘Full-time - Scholarship holder’ (my gratitude to Adam Cox, Archives, Library Services, King’s College London, for the information via email on 09/05/2016). Cf. NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, Coleiro to Aquilina, 09/05/1948: ‘The thesis I am working on is developing nicely, to such an extent that the professor who is supervising it advised me to upgrade it from MA to PhD and present it for the latter’s degree’. Coleiro adds that this had been his original plan, but that before he threw himself ‘into the ocean’ (i.e. PhD) he had wanted to ascertain he could swim ‘the

The thesis attempts a new and more comprehensive approach to the study of Jerome's art, based on Jerome's own conception of style and on the stylistic theory current in schools in which Jerome had his education. In particular, it purposes to deal with the following points which, so far, have received negligible, or, in some cases, no consideration: the influence of rhetoric on Jerome's compositional structure; the debt of Jerome to the Classical writers; the relation between Jerome's character and his style; his stylistic use of language; his Ciceronianism as modified by post-Augustan and Late-Latin theories of style; the structure and the grouping together of his sentences; the correction and more detailed consideration of various points in Hritzu's work.⁴⁶

The work was supervised by Professor William S. Maguinness, of King's College,⁴⁷ who was later to extend his collaboration with Professor Coleiro as an external examiner for final BA examinations and MA dissertations at the University.⁴⁸ Coleiro was justifiably proud that it was through his own initiative that, for the first time in its history, the University had acquired the services of an external examiner.⁴⁹

Some of the polemical character of Saint Jerome must have rubbed off on Coleiro.⁵⁰ A strict disciplinarian, Coleiro could easily fly into a fury during a lecture at the slightest evidence of inattention or negligence.⁵¹ His choleric disposition used to be given full vent during the several

lake of MA'. In a later letter to Aquilina, dated 05/07/1949, Coleiro wrote that he had presented the thesis in mid June 1949, and had had word from Maguinness that all was well. However, due to commitments of the external examiner, the viva could not take place before September of the same year.

⁴⁶ Coleiro 1949: xxii. The reference at the end is to scholar John N. Hritzu. Cf. UMHA, Council Enclsoures 1955-1956, Coleiro to Rector J.A. Manché, 28/11/1955, where Coleiro requests that the first part of the thesis be considered for publication in book-form by the University Printing Press, pointing out that 'the thesis is a research work which should not be of discredit to the University'. The work remains unpublished.

⁴⁷ Coleiro 1949: xxvii.

⁴⁸ Since 1951: ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (2), Colerio to the Academic Registrar, King's College London, 26/05/1972.

⁴⁹ UMHA, Council Agendas & Enclosures 1962-1963, Coleiro's application, submitted on 14/06/1963, for the post of Vice-Chancellor and Rector Magnificus.

⁵⁰ Interview: Attard.

⁵¹ Interviews: several, particularly, Borg, V. (1); Zerafa; Mifsud Bonnici; Azzopardi; Attard. Cf. also Friggieri 2008: 405-406.

committees he served on in academic, ecclesiastical, and civic domains.⁵² Former colleague members of the University Senate, on which Coleiro sat for twenty-eight years (1950-1978),⁵³ still recall, with nostalgic delight, Coleiro's endless squabbles and spectacular outbursts.⁵⁴ He would just as quickly calm down, playing down the previous scene as mere sound and fury from 'a professor of rhetoric'.⁵⁵ Coleiro himself was aware that his 'outspokenness' was an obstacle to his ever becoming a Bishop,⁵⁶ or a Rector for that matter.⁵⁷ In his quieter moments, he was known to be kind-hearted and generous, displaying genuine concern for his students' educational and moral welfare.⁵⁸



Figure 21- Mgr Edward Coleiro, with Fr Marius Zerafa, in 1980

⁵² UMHA, RUM Council Enclosures 1952-1953, letters from October 1952 on a serious fallout between Coleiro and lexicographer Erin Serracino Inglott, at the time Secretary of the University, regarding the management of examination papers.

⁵³ Azzopardi 1998: 3. For a typical scenario, cf. UMHA, Faculty Board Minutes 1960/61, 26/04/1961, where Coleiro walks out of the meeting after declaring that 'the office made a muddle of things.'

⁵⁴ Interviews: Borg, V. (1); Xuereb.

⁵⁵ Interview: Attard.

⁵⁶ Interview: Xuereb. Cf. Friggieri 2008: 409.

⁵⁷ Interviews: Gatt; Friggieri. Coleiro was one of the four applicants for the post in 1963; Prof. Edwin Borg Costanzi was elected; cf. n. 49.

⁵⁸ Interviews: several, particularly Zerafa; Azzopardi; Borg, L.; De Martino; Borg, V. (2); Felice. Interviews also testify to Coleiro's devotion to his mother, and to his love for cats.

Coleiro (Fig. 21) occupied the Chair until his retirement in 1979.⁵⁹ In this capacity, Coleiro was a member of various international academies for the promotion of the Latin language and culture, convening in Malta in 1973 the third International Latin Congress for the 'Istituto di Studi Romani'.⁶⁰ The success of this five-day event was a testimonial to Coleiro's boundless energy and sense of organization.⁶¹ He also lectured as guest speaker in the Institute of Classical Studies in London, at the 'Istituto di Studi Romani' in Rome, and at the Universities of Leeds, Florence, Pisa, Siena, Bologna, Palermo, and Milan.⁶² He was responsible for the enlargement of the Classics Department in its full-time academic posts, starting with Revd Gerald Seaston, and later with Revd Joseph Busuttill, Revd Nicholas Debono Montebello, and David Frendo.⁶³ He arranged for both Busuttill and Debono Montebello to go to University College London, and read for a PhD in Classics. Coleiro also engaged successful graduate students as part-time lecturers: these included Ena Cremona, Louis Borg, and Anthony Bonanno.⁶⁴ In 1975, Borg was the first student to submit an MA dissertation in Classics at the University, which was supervised by Coleiro.⁶⁵ A few years later, in 1977, Horatio Caesar Roger Vella presented his MA in Classics, to be followed by a PhD in 1979, both under the supervision of Coleiro; Vella was the first student graduating PhD in Classics from the University of Malta.⁶⁶ Anthony Bonanno, assisted by Vella, edited *Laurea Corona: Studies in honour of Edward Coleiro*, a festschrift containing 29 essays by international classical scholars on a variety of subjects in a number of languages, including Latin.⁶⁷ Some of these contributors found occasion in their essay to pay tribute to Coleiro, for example W. Geoffrey Arnott:

⁵⁹ Bonanno 1987: xi. Cf. Xuereb 1988, where the author notes that 'much of Mgr Coleiro's best work was published after his retirement'.

⁶⁰ See 5.9.

⁶¹ Coleiro 1976.

⁶² Azzopardi 1998: 3.

⁶³ For Busuttill and Debono Montebello, see 8.4 and 8.5 respectively.

⁶⁴ Interviews: Cremona; Borg, L.; Bonanno; cf. Interview: Vella, H.C.R. Ena Cremona was possibly the first woman to teach Latin in Malta.

⁶⁵ Borg, L. 1975.

⁶⁶ Interview: Vella, H.C.R.

⁶⁷ Bonanno 1987. For a review, Xuereb 1988.

It is both a privilege and a pleasure to dedicate this little paper to Edward Coleiro, priest, professor, scholar and one of the kindest and most considerate of men. Even though he is now retired, his name will always be remembered for his lively promotion of Latin studies in the University of Malta and for the links that he forged throughout the world with colleagues who appreciated the qualities of his humanity and scholarship.⁶⁸

Coleiro's direct involvement in many committees and organizations was at times held against him as a sign of megalomania.⁶⁹ He was characterised a '*factotum, deus ex machina*, wherever he is, and whatever he does'.⁷⁰ There was something of Benjamin Jowett in Coleiro: the famous Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford University is said to have lived by the motto 'Never retreat. Never explain. Get it done and let them howl!'⁷¹ and Coleiro sometimes adopted a similar principle.⁷² With all his ongoing responsibilities, it is almost surprising that Coleiro found time to conduct research and publish a number of scholarly monographs and articles on a variety of topics.⁷³ These ranged from Maltese history in the classical age, to Latin poets such as Horace, Tibullus, and Virgil.⁷⁴ Virgil was Coleiro's lifelong interest, specifically his *Eclogues*. One of Coleiro's earliest published articles was on 'The Child of the Fourth *Eclogue*'.⁷⁵ The fruit of this interest was *An Introduction to*

⁶⁸ Arnott 1987: 23. Arnott (1930-2010) was a renowned British Hellenist.

⁶⁹ Interview: Zerafa.

⁷⁰ 'Tito Accademico' 1955. 'Tito Accademico's letter is included in a special edition of *Malta Letteraria* dedicated to the case of Giovanni Curmi who, in spite of many years of service to the University as a lecturer in Italian, failed to secure the appointment to the reinstated Chair of Italian Literature in 1955. Repeatedly, in this issue, Coleiro is indirectly alleged to have been the prime mover behind the ousting of Curmi to favour an Italian appointee (Professor Di Pietro). Cf. Interviews: Borg, V. (1); Gatt.

⁷¹ Quoted by Richardson 2007: 39. Cf. also Jowett to Florence Nightingale in 1873: 'I should like to govern the world through my pupils', cited by Symonds 1986: 24. Coleiro taught Latin to three future Presidents of the Republic of Malta; cf. 11.2 and 11.3. Cf. also Interview: Azzopardi.

⁷² Interview: Zerafa.

⁷³ For a list of publications, Bonanno 1987: xvii-xix. Updated, revised, and organized in Azzopardi 1998: 4-8.

⁷⁴ Cf. Azzopardi (1998: 9) for a list of Coleiro's main themes.

⁷⁵ Coleiro 1939. According to Bonanno 1987: xvii, Coleiro's first published work was an article on the bucolic poem of the fourth-century poet, Severus of

Virgil's Bucolics with a critical edition of the text published in Amsterdam in 1979.⁷⁶ Coleiro had been working on his *magnum opus* for a number of years.⁷⁷ Part I, 'General Considerations', comprises twenty-four essays of varying length on and around the *Eclogues*, the two longest being on metre⁷⁸ (with an appendix of metrical patterns)⁷⁹ and neoteric style⁸⁰. Part II, 'The Several *Eclogues*',⁸¹ features a content summary and a selective bibliographical survey on each *Eclogue* in turn, taken in the chronological order Coleiro argues they were written. The longest by far is the exposition of the fourth *Eclogue*,⁸² where Coleiro discusses 13 possible identifications of the 'puer' (*Ecl.* 4.18), and finally chooses the child of Herod the Great as the best possible person to fill the criteria. Part III constitutes an overview of the MSS, a text of the *Eclogues*, and a vast textual apparatus for the poems. Coleiro's chief changes in the text are the lacunae at *Ecl.* 4.23a and *Ecl.* 8.70. He rounds up his work with a catalogue of scholarly work on the *Eclogues* since the Renaissance (which runs to some two thousand items), indices, and a short appendix on the location of Virgil's farm.⁸³ In a letter of 1973 W.S. Maguinness had advised Coleiro on the importance of a thorough revision: 'I feel that any freetime you have had better be devoted to (1) a holiday, (2) careful and deliberate revision of what you have already written to avoid errors and misprints. This is important and necessary.'⁸⁴ Coleiro should have paid greater heed to Maguinness' warning, as reviewers criticised the great number of typographical errors: 'the proof-reading (or rather the correction of the typescript) must have been very sloppy, for the misprints and mistakes are innumerable: I counted in the Bibliography about 350, some of them very bad indeed'; the same

Barcelona, which appeared in the Italian periodical *La Brigata* in 1934. This publication is omitted in Azzopardi 1998.

⁷⁶ Coleiro 1979.

⁷⁷ ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (2), Coleiro to Grimal, 11/11/1972, when Coleiro had just returned from a research trip in London related to *Bucolics*.

⁷⁸ Coleiro 1979: 70-92.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 114-120.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 43-61.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 123-284.

⁸² *Ibid.* 219-254.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 357-487.

⁸⁴ ACM, Latin Congress 1973 (2), 06/07/1973.

reviewer was annoyed with ‘the violent mutilation of nearly every Greek citation’.⁸⁵ Coleiro may have anticipated this line of critique: in the Preface, he reserves his final acknowledgment for his secretary (Marina Xuereb), stating that ‘to her is due not only the immense labour of typing from the first notes to the finished sections but also that of carefully checking up details, including quotations and references’.⁸⁶ The unattractive offset printing was another point of disappointment for a number of critics.⁸⁷ Besides the book’s production, however, other, more serious, aspects irked reviewers. Although the impressive amount of industry and its wealth of information was not overlooked,⁸⁸ Coleiro’s approach was deemed too single-minded and old-fashioned, which ‘blinds him to the delicate and subtle textures’ of the poems’.⁸⁹ He was criticized for the ‘often cavalier assumptions’ about Virgil’s career and work,⁹⁰ for neglecting some key scholarly arguments in spite of the evidence of wide reading,⁹¹ and even for failing to explain the need for a new critical edition of the *Eclogues*.⁹² French-written reviews were more optimistic,⁹³ one praising the work as ‘une véritable somme’.⁹⁴ But, other than as a useful synthesis, Coleiro’s near-500 page colossus was considered too grand and pretentious for its own good, and as a German reviewer expressed it, ‘dicke Buecher muessen besser als dieses sein’ (‘thick books have to be better than this’).⁹⁵

Significant downsizing seems to have been a major concern with Coleiro for the work succeeding the *Bucolics*. This was another book on Virgil,

⁸⁵ Westendorp Boerma 1983: 213. Cp. Coleman 1984: 28, and Schmidt 1981: 800.

⁸⁶ Coleiro 1979: x. In her interview, Xuereb confesses zero knowledge of Latin or Greek, cf. Interview: Felice.

⁸⁷ Briggs 1982: 359; Coleman 1984: 28; Westendorp Boerma 1983: 213.

⁸⁸ Briggs (1982: 361): ‘wealth of useful information’. Coleman (1984: 28): ‘a prodigious amount of industry and erudition’.

⁸⁹ Briggs 1982: 361.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 359: ‘recondite biographical sources are exhumed and from each bone of biographical trivia Coleiro reconstructs a dinosaur’.

⁹¹ Liénard 1980: 395; Briggs, *passim*; Westendorp Boerma 1983: 214.

⁹² Westendorp Boerma 1983: 213.

⁹³ Liénard 1980; Stenuit 1982.

⁹⁴ Liénard 1980: 396.

⁹⁵ Schmidt 1981: 800.

in Italian this time, entitled *Tematica e struttura dell'Eneide di Virgilio*.⁹⁶ In his introduction, Coleiro states that the allegorical interpretation he was presenting, although partly based on scholarship of the previous fifty years, was a new contribution.⁹⁷ He considers the *Aeneid* as consisting of two superstructures ('sovrastutture'), namely, the theme of Roman history and Augustan epic, which are inserted on top of the fundamental theme of Aeneas. After a chapter on the general themes of the epic,⁹⁸ Coleiro offers a thematic analysis of each book,⁹⁹ while the third chapter deals with structural correspondences and parallelisms.¹⁰⁰ A fourth chapter on focal points is followed by an excursus on other allegorical interpretations of the *Aeneid*.¹⁰¹ Some forty pages of notes and bibliography, which make up twenty-five percent of the whole (and constitute 'a monument of disorganization and typographical inexactitude'¹⁰²), conclude the book whose chief virtue, according to a reviewer, 'is its limited size'.¹⁰³ Coleiro also contributed two articles to the *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, one on 'Allegoria' and the other on 'Omphalos'.¹⁰⁴ He was proud that several articles in this multi-volume work contained references to his works.¹⁰⁵

Of the number of academic orations that Coleiro delivered in his long career,¹⁰⁶ the one which most relates to the present study is the long speech entitled 'The Place of the Classics in Education' given untypically in English (rather than Latin) at the Opening Day Ceremony in 1954.¹⁰⁷ Here, Coleiro gave a thoughtful evaluation of the benefits of a classical education, at one point highlighting the broad cultural appreciation that such learning should impart:

⁹⁶ Coleiro 1983.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 1-2.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 5-36.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 37-75.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 76-92.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 93-106.

¹⁰² Horsfall 1987.

¹⁰³ Galinsky 1985: 87.

¹⁰⁴ Coleiro 1984 and 1987.

¹⁰⁵ Azzopardi 1998: 5.

¹⁰⁶ At least eleven published orations, delivered between 1949 and 1965 - all in Latin except that of 1954.

¹⁰⁷ Coleiro 1954.

I should not think much of a Classical education that taught a man to love the mighty measure of Virgil and left him deaf to the harmonies of Beethoven, to admire the grace of Praxiteles but to see no majesty in Michelangelo, to look upon the Parthenon as a thing so perfect as to render every more modern building unworthy of attention. Heroes have lived not only before but since the days of Agamemnon. And it is one of the main achievements of Classical studies that they teach us to see around endless sources of instruction and delight.¹⁰⁸

A positive, comprehensive vision of Classics, which was not quite congruent with what really happened in the lecture-room of Professor Coleiro.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, students admired the zeal and the drive, and grew fond of his discipline and outbursts, characteristics which to their mind almost became part of Classics as much as Coleiro's uncontested Latin scholarship. As one of his last students put it, 'I'd sooner forget everyone else than Coleiro!'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 9. 'Heroes ... Agamemnon' is a reference to 'Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona multi' from Hor. *Carm.* 4.9.25-26. Here and elsewhere, the speech bears a resemblance to J.W. Mackail's well-remembered address delivered to the Classical Association at its first general meeting in 1904; see Mackail 1925: 1-16.

¹⁰⁹ See 11.4.

¹¹⁰ Interview: Borg, V. (2). Cf. Interview: Debono, M.

8.3 Gerald F. Seaston (1905 - 1989)¹¹¹

Students following Classics at the University during the 1950s and early 1960s could not help being struck by the contrast in personalities between the authoritarian and vigorous Professor of Latin, Can Edward Coleiro, and the light-hearted and liberally minded Catholic priest and Professor of Greek, Revd Gerald Seaston. To the more discerning ones, Coleiro represented the old Roman austerity *par excellence*, while the cool-headed and multifaceted Seaston had about him something of the Hellene.¹¹² Rather than a Hellenic inheritance, this in Seaston probably had more to do with typical British humour and understatement which he possessed to a great extent,¹¹³ as the following paragraph, from the introduction to his oration at the University Opening Day Ceremony in 1960, illustrates:

It is a privilege to be invited to deliver the address on this annual occasion; and for me the essence of the privilege resides firstly in the fact that one may choose one's own topic and say exactly what one likes - with due regard to the law of libel and the respect due to this holy place; and secondly in the fact that one has, so to speak, a captive audience, unable to escape, unlikely to interrupt (a rare privilege, this, in Malta), an audience in fact forced to give one a hearing whether they like it or not - that is, if the loudspeaker functions efficiently.¹¹⁴

The element of tongue-in-cheek seldom, if ever, appeared in orations delivered by Maltese professors on such solemn occasions. One only needs to compare Seaston's words in the passage quoted above with the general tone of Coleiro's speech of 1954 (see previous section), and

¹¹¹ For the dates, <<http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/WARWICK/2000-05/0957650118>> (accessed 11/02/2017). Cf. UMHA, Faculty Boards Agendas and Enclosures 1963/64, agenda for 10/07/1964, stating that 'Senate was informed that Professor Fr. G.J. Seaston will reach retirement age on the 14th May, 1965, and that the termination of his appointment will be due on the 30th September 1965'.

¹¹² Interview: Attard.

¹¹³ Cachia 1965: 210, who later mentions Seaston's 'naughty smile'.

¹¹⁴ Seaston 1968: 1.

then read Oliver Friggieri's eye-witness description of how, during an *Honoris Causa* award some years later, students caused Coleiro's sombre speech in Latin to turn into a hilarious farce.¹¹⁵

Born in Manchester,¹¹⁶ Gerald Seaston entered Cambridge University in 1924, studying at Christ's College, where, in 1926, he took Second Class in Part I and, the following year, Second Class in Part II of the Classical Tripos.¹¹⁷ Among his Classics tutors at Christ's were Sydney William Grose,¹¹⁸ Sidney George Campbell,¹¹⁹ and Harris Rackham.¹²⁰ The lists of Classical Tripos of those years reveal an interesting batch of names, some of whom would go on to become distinguished scholars, including W.K.C. Guthrie, D.W. Lucas, E.C. Woodcock, and Arthur Arberry.¹²¹ After his ordination, Seaston was compelled by chest ailments to leave England in 1938 and move to the balmy climate of Malta.¹²² He resided and taught English and Latin at St Edward's College, where his many-sidedness, wide erudition, and gentle humanity proved a source of attraction and edification to the young collegers.¹²³ Although the classical side was very strong in him, students realized that Seaston was also very interested in social and political questions, in the international

¹¹⁵ Friggieri 2008: 407-408. For students' conduct during such occasions, cf. Anon. 1970 for the University bicentenary celebrations in 1969, when Coleiro was Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and to which the Prince of Wales was invited.

¹¹⁶ Manduca 2004: 42.

¹¹⁷ Anon. 1932: 139,142. Anon. 1926: 826, for his matriculation date; tutors and lecturers, p. 450.

¹¹⁸ Grose was a numismatist.

¹¹⁹ Campbell, a Latin epigraphist, edited Livy 27 (first published by CUP in 1913).

¹²⁰ Rackham (1868-1944) was a scholar of ancient prose and philosophy, especially Aristotle and Pliny the Elder (Loeb translator of both). His articles from the Christ's magazine and versions of Greek and Latin translation gives a good idea of the classical culture at Christ's in the period when Seaston was studying there; see Rackman 1935 and 1939.

¹²¹ Guthrie (Trinity College), is mostly remembered for his *History of Greek Philosophy* in six volumes published between 1962 and 1981; Lucas (King's), for his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* published in 1968; Woodcock (St. John's), for his *A New Latin Syntax*, first published in 1959; Arberry (Pembroke), the famous orientalist, received an honorary degree from the University of Malta in 1963 for his studies on the Maltese language, including *A Maltese Anthology* published in 1959.

¹²² Lupi 2002: 220. Micallef Eynaud 2004: 13. Interviews: Borg, V.; Mifsud Bonnici.

¹²³ Interview: Mifsud Montanaro.

aspect of human society, and in the European future.¹²⁴ A former Edwardian recalled Seaston as follows:

As classics master he taught us Latin, was keen on cricket and classical music and smoked Papastratos cigarettes, despite his having one lung and one kidney. After a few years in Malta he was endearingly, or otherwise, known as the 'Red Dean' because he preached the need for social services in Malta!¹²⁵

During those years, he published a pamphlet with his reflections on the teachings of the Church and social justice that even features a commending endorsement by the Archbishop of Malta, Maurus Caruana.¹²⁶ As a self-declared social democrat, Seaston was involved in the Catholic Social Guild.¹²⁷ His influence at St Edward's also contributed to the subsequent establishment of the 'Malta Branch of the Virgil Society',¹²⁸ which was to be responsible for the staging of the first production of a Greek tragedy in Malta.¹²⁹ Seaston attempted to start the teaching of Greek at St Edward's, but this was soon discontinued on the ground that students had enough compulsory languages to study (English, Italian, Latin, and Maltese).¹³⁰ Seaston resigned from St Edward's in 1942.¹³¹

¹²⁴ An aspect which later also influenced politically-orientated students at the University; cf. Interview: Fenech Adami.

¹²⁵ Manduca 2004: 42.

¹²⁶ Seaston 1941a.

¹²⁷ Cf. Seaston 1941b. Interview: Seychell.

¹²⁸ Interview: Mifsud Montanaro; corroborated by Frank Mifsud Montanaro in a private letter to his brother, George, dated 21/01/2015. I am grateful to Mgr George Mifsud Montanaro for providing me with a copy. See also 5.6.

¹²⁹ Serracino (2016).

¹³⁰ Interview: Mifsud Montanaro.

¹³¹ NAM, GOV SEC 01, 7/42. Cf. *Catholic Herald*, 23/10/1942, 5: 'Fr. Gerald Seaston, MA., recalled from St Edward's, Malta, to be assistant priest, St. Mary's, Bolton'.



Figure 22 - Fr Gerald Seaston on a hike with students

After some years spent in England,¹³² Seaston returned to Malta to teach Greek at the University. He probably arrived in 1947, in time to also replace Coleiro as a lecturer in Latin for a duration of two years during which period the Maltese professor was in London reading for his doctoral degree.¹³³ In Coleiro's absence, he delivered two speeches in Latin during the conferment of *Honoris Causa* degrees.¹³⁴ At this point students started to draw comparisons between the capabilities and versatilities of the two scholars, which tended to be unfavourable to Coleiro.¹³⁵ Besides admiring Seaston's deep knowledge of both classical languages, they came to regard him as a sort of Renaissance man for his widespread interest in literature, theatre, and the arts.¹³⁶ This deep-seated cultural infusion informed his perception of Classics as not simply the study of grammar and language but also the pursuit of an awareness of an entire cultural legacy. He believed the study of language should be treated as one aspect of the grander study of civilization: 'I tried to teach

¹³² As stated by Frank Mifsud Montanaro in a letter to his brother George; cf. n. 128.

¹³³ Colerio is listed as acting lecture of 'Classical Greek' in the editions of the *UC* for the period 1944-1948. Unfortunately, UMHA misses the editions for the years 1949-1952. Seaston appears in the 1953-54 edition where he is listed as 'lecturer of Greek'.

¹³⁴ Seaston 1947; 1948b.

¹³⁵ Interviews: Borg, V. (1); Mifsud Bonnici; Felice Pace; Fenech Adami.

¹³⁶ Micallef Eynaud 2004: 14. Interviews: Xuereb; Gatt; Vella, B.

Greek as part of the history, the literature, etc. of the country'.¹³⁷ Consequently, he never refrained from making use of translations to teach Greek Literature in the BA course.¹³⁸ For a time he also conducted a Saturday morning class at the University on Greek civilization based on H.D.F. Kitto's *The Greeks*, which was open to the general public and proved to be a great success.¹³⁹ His contribution to the field of Greek studies earned him the appointment of Professor of Greek in the late 1950s.¹⁴⁰ And yet, another side to Seaston was equally important and impressive (Fig. 22). This was a keen interest in sports, which manifested itself in the practice of several disciplines, including tennis, cricket, and rowing.¹⁴¹ As a former great activist in the University Sports Club, he bewailed, in the speech already cited from 1960, the general lack of interest shown by Maltese University students in sports, quoting Gilbert Murray's well-known exhortation of games as 'a matter of duty' for a student.¹⁴²

For a number of years Seaston also taught Greek at the Seminary. It appears that, on returning to Malta after the war, he offered Archbishop Michael Gonzi his teaching services on condition that he was given residence at the Seminary. Of the list of subjects he was requested to teach, Seaston only accepted to teach Greek.¹⁴³ Thus, in 1951 he reintroduced the study of Greek at the Minor Seminary, making the Seminary the only teaching institution in Malta at the time to be teaching Greek at pre-university level.¹⁴⁴ At the Seminary, Seaston clashed with the strict Rector, Mgr Pantalleresco, by ignoring instructions which he deemed too conventional and useless.¹⁴⁵ His comparatively liberal

¹³⁷ Cachia 1965: 215.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 210.

¹³⁹ Interview: Vassallo.

¹⁴⁰ *UC* 1959-1960, 61.

¹⁴¹ Lupi 2002: 220-221. Micallef Eynaud 2004: 14. Interviews: Schembri; Mifsud Bonnici.

¹⁴² Seaston 1961: 5-6.

¹⁴³ Lupi 2002: 220-1.

¹⁴⁴ Borg 1951: 32.

¹⁴⁵ Lupi 2002: 220-1. Interview: Schembri. Cf. Interview: Felice Pace, on breaching Seminary regulations by listening to football radio commentaries in Seaston's Seminary room.

attitude and behaviour (e.g. wearing of the clerical collar and shirt instead of the cassock, celebrating mass in the classical pronunciation of Latin rather than the ecclesiastical one, etc.¹⁴⁶) must have worsened the situation and finally led to his departure from the Seminary, in 1954, to take up residence in an apartment at Floriana overlooking the Grand Harbour,¹⁴⁷ where he gave private tuition in Greek,¹⁴⁸ and occasionally invited students for drinks.¹⁴⁹

A sideline duty of Seaston's was to act as chaplain to the British servicemen.¹⁵⁰ Since this was paid work, permission had to be granted by the University Council.¹⁵¹ His close intercourse with the British authorities gave rise to suspicions that Seaston might be an agent for the government, the Governor's 'manus longa'.¹⁵² However, to students, he never gave the impression of colonial superiority.¹⁵³ Besides, by the end of his time in Malta, he claimed to be able to read Maltese with difficulty, and referred to the Maltese as 'we'.¹⁵⁴ For a time Seaston was also a friend of Dom Mintoff, Malta Labour Party's leader and Prime Minister between 1955 and 1958, with whom he used to play tennis.¹⁵⁵ Later Seaston deplored what he considered to be Mintoff's populist strategy,¹⁵⁶ and even criticised him publically, on one occasion describing Mintoff's charm as 'the smile on the face of a tiger.'¹⁵⁷

In 1961 Seaston obtained a travel grant under the Commonwealth University Interchange Scheme in order to proceed to Australia between

¹⁴⁶ Interviews: Xuereb; Vella, B.; Felice Pace; Gatt.

¹⁴⁷ Interview: Gatt.

¹⁴⁸ Interview: Vella, B.

¹⁴⁹ Interviews: Attard; Aquilina.

¹⁵⁰ Interview: Azzopardi.

¹⁵¹ It is not clear whether this permission had to be renewed periodically. Cf. UMHA, RUM Council Minutes 1961/62, 14/06/1962, where Council gave Seaston 'permission to continue his duties as Officiating Chaplain up to September 1963'.

¹⁵² Interview: Schembri.

¹⁵³ Interview: Pace. But cf. Interview: Friggieri, who thinks Seaston stood aloof with students.

¹⁵⁴ Cachia 1965: 215, and *passim*.

¹⁵⁵ Interviews: Schembri; Berry; Felice Pace; Gatt; Mintoff, who insisted Seaston and Dom Mintoff used to chat in Latin.

¹⁵⁶ Interview: Fenech Adami.

¹⁵⁷ Seaston 1962. Cf. Interviews: Schembri; Fenech Adami; Mintoff; Berry.

September 1962 and February 1963.¹⁵⁸ Two years later, in January, he co-founded the Malta Ecumenical Group,¹⁵⁹ and, upon reaching retirement age a few months later,¹⁶⁰ Seaston left Malta for good. For a time he acted as the parish priest of Monks Kirby in Warwickshire, England, publishing a short history of its church.¹⁶¹

8.4 Nicholas Debono Montebello (b. 1933)

Although Nicholas Debono Montebello (Fig. 23) had never planned a career in education, fate decreed differently. After he gained a First Class Honours degree in Latin Studies in 1955, Archbishop Gonzi assigned him teaching duties at the Seminary, with a mandate to teach Italian and Latin. This was the start of a teaching career in Classics that lasted 40 years.

Debono Montebello embraced his teaching assignment at the Seminary with a great sense of commitment: 'he not only knew the [Latin] language extremely well, but also taught it with great enthusiasm, with delight'.¹⁶² He was happiest teaching Latin authors, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* 6.¹⁶³ At this early stage of his career, Debono Montebello already sought to give importance to the cultural dimension of a classical text, even in the case of a standard author such as Caesar who was read in schools almost exclusively as an illustrator of pure Latin syntax. In the teaching of the language, Debono Montebello strove to impart the notion that the study of Latin was not merely the mechanical memorization of grammatical forms, but that, just like any other language, Latin 'was a living organism

¹⁵⁸ UMHA, RUM Council Minutes 1961/62, 25/01/1962. The motive is not stated; a substitute lecturer was to be engaged 'for the first term, and remunerated at the rate of £1.10 per lecture'.

¹⁵⁹ Ganado 1977: 4.468. His co-founder was Revd Carmel Sant, Professor of Sacred Scriptures and examiner of Ancient Greek.

¹⁶⁰ Cachia 1965: 210.

¹⁶¹ Seaston 1977.

¹⁶² Friggieri 2008: 283-284.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 170.

to be studied throughout all the stages of its natural development, in the context of the geographical, historical, and social settings'.¹⁶⁴

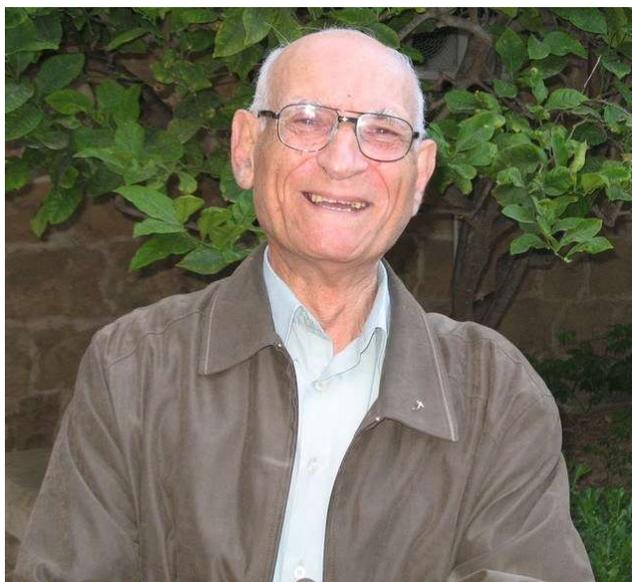


Figure 23 - Revd Nicholas Debono Montebello, Honorary President of the Malta Classics Association, 2013

A year after Debono Montebello's ordination in 1960, Professor Coleiro asked him to give him a hand at the University as a sideline to his teaching job at the Seminary, a situation which soon developed into a full-time lectureship.¹⁶⁵ In 1964 he was awarded

a Commonwealth scholarship to pursue postgraduate studies in Classics at King's College, London, where he graduated PhD in 1967.¹⁶⁶ The title of his thesis was 'A study of the language and concepts of Early Christian Latin funerary inscriptions' that he wrote under the supervision of Dr A.J. Gossage.¹⁶⁷ Although the thesis was never published, the author later discussed an aspect of his research in a subsequent paper on 'Euphemistic and Non-Euphemistic Content of References to Death in Early Christian Inscriptions'.¹⁶⁸ After his return to Malta, Debono Montebello took a lecturing post in Greek and Latin at the University, where he especially taught Greek subjects.¹⁶⁹ This was a great opportunity for him to delve deeply into a language that he always

¹⁶⁴ Interview: Debono Montebello.

¹⁶⁵ Interview: Debono Montebello. UMHA, Faculty Board Minutes 1961/62, 04/10/1961, when Faculty Board unanimously agreed to recommend the Senate the appointment of Debono Montebello.

¹⁶⁶ Schiavone 2009: 1.687.

¹⁶⁷ Debono Montebello 1967. Gossage was a Reader the Department of Classical Literature at King's College London.

¹⁶⁸ Debono Montebello 1970.

¹⁶⁹ Interview: Borg, L.

regretted not having started in his early youth alongside Latin.¹⁷⁰ In Latin studies, he advocated the importance due to Latin writers falling outside the classical canon, believing that the scholarly prejudice in favour of golden-age authors as literary and cultural paradigms had contributed significantly to the deteriorating state of the field of Classics.¹⁷¹

Consequently, as a result of his deep-seated awareness of the continual legacy of classical civilization in its various manifestations, Debono Montebello managed to see the advantages of the introduction of the Classical Cultural and Civilization course in 1970 which,¹⁷² if only in translation, gave him the opportunity to lecture on Greek and Latin topics and texts previously considered too unliterary (such as Plato's *Laws*) or too post-classical (such as Augustine's *City of God*) to merit inclusion in the Classics course.¹⁷³

8.5 Joseph Busuttil (1935 - 2014)

A slightly younger contemporary of Nichols Debono Montebello, Joseph Busuttil (Fig. 24) also graduated First Class Honours in Latin Studies from the University of Malta. After his ordination in 1962, Revd Busuttil went to London to read for a PhD in Classics at King's College. He produced an introduction to, a translation of, and a commentary on the first book of Cicero's *De legibus* under the supervision of S.A. Handford.¹⁷⁴ He returned to Malta in 1964 and took a lecturing post in Latin and Greek at the University. He lectured at the University until 1969. After a brief spell away from the island, he resumed his career in Malta in 1971 by teaching at the Junior College (formerly, the

¹⁷⁰ Interview: Debono Montebello.

¹⁷¹ Aquilina 1985.

¹⁷² On *UC*, the subject first appears in 1969-1970.

¹⁷³ Interview: Debono Montebello. For his thoughts on the educational value of Latin studies, see also Debono Montebello 1993.

¹⁷⁴ Busuttil 1964. Handford (1898-1978) was a Reader at King's and a translator of many classical works for Penguin Classics (including Aesop, Caesar, and Sallust).

Lyceum),¹⁷⁵ which was at the time still administered by the University. Two years later, he left teaching for good, and henceforth worked as Archivist at the Diocesan Curia.¹⁷⁶

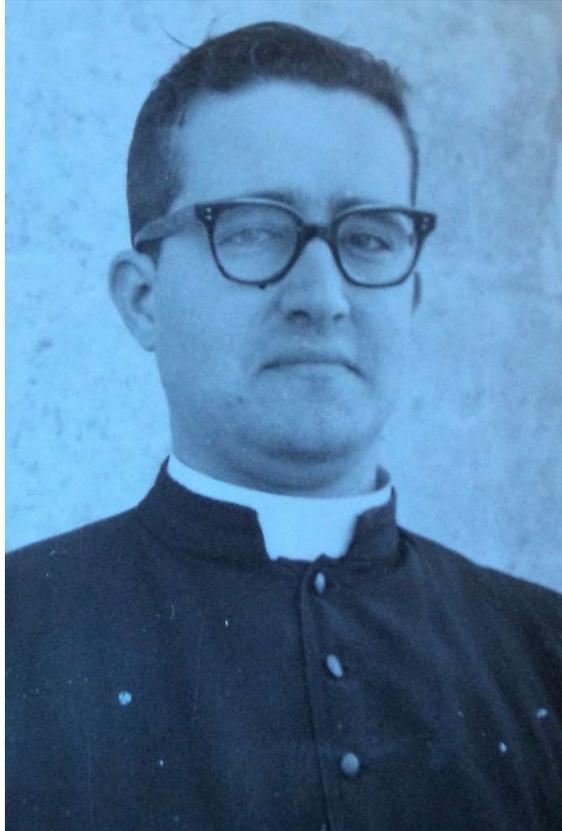


Figure 24 - Revd Joseph Busuttill

Rather than as a lecturer, Busuttill's classical fame rests mainly on a number of excellent papers on ancient Maltese history and economy that he published between 1966 and 1976 mostly in the *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*. Written in terse, matter-of-fact style, the variety of the subject-matter of these papers is impressive, ranging from the first attested reference to the Maltese Islands in ancient literature, by Pseudo-Skylax in his

Periplus,¹⁷⁷ to a potentially older reference to the island in a fragment by Xenophanes,¹⁷⁸ to the first reference to Gozo by a Greek writer, namely, Hecateus.¹⁷⁹ Busuttill discussed the authenticity of the letters to the Maltese attributed to Phalaris, the 6th century tyrant of Acragas in Sicily,¹⁸⁰ and the reference to Malta by Polemo, the Athenian travel writer of the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC.¹⁸¹ Cicero's connection to Malta was

¹⁷⁵ UC 1971-1972.

¹⁷⁶ Interview: Busuttill.

¹⁷⁷ Busuttill 1968b.

¹⁷⁸ Busuttill 1971d.

¹⁷⁹ Busuttill 1975a.

¹⁸⁰ Busuttill 1967b.

¹⁸¹ Busuttill 1971d.

another topic Busuttil treated,¹⁸² as well as Maltese personalities and objects that get a mention in Cicero's Verrine Orations, such as Aulus Licinius Aristotelis,¹⁸³ Diodorus Melitensis,¹⁸⁴ and the fate of the huge ivory tusks stolen from the temple of Juno.¹⁸⁵ He wrote about Malta's textile industry,¹⁸⁶ its coral industry,¹⁸⁷ its harbours,¹⁸⁸ the islands as a haven for piratical activities,¹⁸⁹ as well as the 'Maltese dog'.¹⁹⁰ In other articles, Busuttil analysed important Greek and Roman inscriptions of Imperial times.¹⁹¹ Occasional references to Malta in ancient poetry also stirred his interest, such as that found in the Alexandrian poet, Lycophron,¹⁹² Ovid's reference to Anna Perenna, Dido's sister, and her flight to Battus, the King of 'Melite' (Ovid *Fasti* 3.567),¹⁹³ and the link between Calypso and the island of Gozo in a fragment by Callimachus.¹⁹⁴ To the field of Malta and Byzantium, Busuttil contributed significantly through his 'Fonti Greche per la storia delle isole Maltesi', consisting of a collection of some forty Greek sources on Malta in Byzantine times.¹⁹⁵ Many years later, Busuttil had occasion to deal once again with a major Greek Byzantine text when he transcribed the 12th-century poem by an exile on the island of Gozo, published in 2010.¹⁹⁶

Perhaps Busuttil's widespread interest in topics related to Malta in antiquity reflects the spirit of nationalism of the period during which he contributed significantly to the field, signposted by the attainment of Independence in 1964 and the declaration of a Republic in 1974. That his father was a politician and a member of parliament might have also

¹⁸² Busuttil 1971a.

¹⁸³ Busuttil 1967a.

¹⁸⁴ Busuttil 1968a.

¹⁸⁵ Busuttil 1970a.

¹⁸⁶ Busuttil 1966.

¹⁸⁷ Busuttil 1971d.

¹⁸⁸ Busuttil 1971b.

¹⁸⁹ Busuttil 1971c.

¹⁹⁰ Busuttil 1969b.

¹⁹¹ Busuttil 1972b; 1972a; 1973; 1976a; 1976b.

¹⁹² Busuttil 1975b.

¹⁹³ Busuttil 1970b.

¹⁹⁴ Busuttil 1975c.

¹⁹⁵ Busuttil 1969a.

¹⁹⁶ Busuttil, Fiorini, Vella 2010.

fuelled Busuttil's nationalistic side.¹⁹⁷ It is not surprising that, in his interview with the present author, Busuttil diplomatically aired some misgivings related to the BA programme under Coleiro and suggested the syllabus should have paid more attention to classical authors closer to Malta, such as the Sicilian-born Theocritus.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ A medical doctor by profession, Dr Antonio Busuttil (d. 1967) contested the general elections in 1962 with Democratic Nationalist Party and was elected; see Schiavone 1992: 292, 303. Cf. Interview: Bonanno.

¹⁹⁸ Interview: Busuttil. But cf. UMHA, Special Council, Faculty Board of Arts - Minutes 1954-1960, 10/07/1959, Syllabus for the Honours Course in Classics 1959-1961, showing that Theocritus was in fact one of the prescribed Greek authors in the BA Hons Classics syllabus of 1959/1961.

PART III - CLASSICS IN MALTESE PEDAGOGY

CHAPTER 9 – LYCEUM CLASSICS

9.1 Teaching Latin and Italian

Nineteenth-century teaching in schools, colleges, and lower classes in universities all over Europe is usually associated with the drudgery of Latin grammar study and the memorization of Latin grammatical rules. In the elitist ‘lycées’, gymnasia, and public schools, the teaching of classics filled the classrooms, ‘avec ce bourdonnement monotone qui semble une prière à la déesse Mnémosyne’ in French author Gerard de Nerval’s words.¹ Paradoxically, the efficacy of this teaching was often incommensurate with the great amount of hours and study students were compelled to dedicate to it. In his autobiography, the English novelist Anthony Trollope recalled that, in the twelve years he spent at Harrow School and Winchester College (1822-1834), ‘no attempt had been made to teach me anything but Latin and Greek, and very little attempt to teach me those languages’.² The linguist Niccolò Tommaseo, in mid-century Italy, saw grammar rules as the ‘educatrici d’un popolo di pappagalli’, describing the whole system in such terms as ‘labirinto, ergastolo, lavoro sotterraneo di miniera’.³

In such countries, the dull and prolonged study of Latin often took precedence over that of the vernacular language. Yet, ironically, the same study was, in a number of countries, often conducive to the discovery of the vernacular.⁴ In this respect, British Malta was peculiar in so far as the study of Latin was seen as an appendage to the study of Italian, and was taught in that language, which a sector of the population came to consider the national language of the island, at a time when the Maltese vernacular was still largely educationally ignored. In some

¹ Nerval 1993: 698. The quote is from Nerval’s novel *Aurélia* (published posthumously in 1855).

² Trollope 1947: 15.

³ Quoted by Murru and Pessolano Filos 1980: 63, from Tommaseo’s *Sull’educazione, desiderii* (1851).

⁴ Waquet 2001: 7-30.

respects, to the Maltese Italian and its study signified what the study of Latin meant to many other students all over Europe.

During the first decades of British rule, the teaching of Latin and Italian dominated the curricula of the the first five years of University education. The teaching of both languages was integrated, with lessons taking up four hours a day. In Class I reading and writing in the two languages were taught; in Class II pupils were introduced to declension of nouns, conjugation of verbs, and the rudiments of grammar. Grammar and translation of easy books from Latin into Italian formed the syllabus of Class III, while in Class IV grammar was continued, and more difficult translations into Italian were attempted, together with some translation from Italian into Latin. It was with Class V that University studies properly started: in this class, Humanity ('Umanità') and Rhetoric were taught, consisting of translation into Italian of all genres of books and scansion of Latin verse, as well as frequent writing of compositions in both languages.⁵

When, in 1838, the Fundamental Statute separated the two languages in distinct pursuits at the Lyceum, the chinks in the system became more definable. Two deficiencies were, according to Lorenzo Pullicino, especially hampering the Latin class in the 1840s.⁶ Firstly, an insufficient command of Italian was forcing students into a 'predicament similar to that met by some scholars of the past who had to study Latin through the same language' (i.e. Latin).⁷ This, argues Pullicino, constrained the Preceptor of Latin to dedicate much of his time and energy to the teaching of Italian. A second major handicap was the students' knowledge of grammar, which was habitually weak. The problem with grammar was that students had to go through a different course in the subject with every different language they studied, making grammar 'un guazzabuglio', a muddle characterised by much incoherence and

⁵ UMHA, Acta 1.10.

⁶ UMHA, MSS 122, Osservazioni sul poco progresso degli allievi del Liceo e Scuola Latina, 18/03/1843. See 6.6.

⁷ Ibid. 6.

needless repetition which, Pullicino warns, will never free students from 'a noxious impediment or a whole racket of ideas', resulting in the collapse of 'the fundamental principles of classical education'.⁸ As an antidote to an 'evil' that was becoming 'chronic and indeed irreparable',⁹ Pullicino proposes compulsory examinations in Italian and in general grammar which would ensure that only students with the required level in both subjects would advance to the next year in the course. Such a measure would also be a means of addressing the passivity in the face of praise and criticism alike that had grown so rife among students.¹⁰

The British gradual imposition of English on local education aggravated an already existing problem in Latin instruction. Maltese students found they had to study three compulsory languages simultaneously. When Royal Commissioner Keenan visited the Latin class at the Lyceum in 1878, he found the students engaged in translating into Italian some passages from Ovid. Keenan could not resist testing the ability of the students to translate the same passages into English. 'No one volunteered to do so; but Professor Albanese remarked, it is right to add, that but for shyness or nervousness some of the students might have made the attempt'.¹¹ This was an obvious disappointment to Keenan, and the same exercise during his call on Albanese's University class, where the students there happened to be translating from Horace's *Satires* I, brought results only slightly more encouraging to him.¹²

⁸ Ibid. 11.

⁹ Ibid. 7.

¹⁰ To this day, the two weaknesses highlighted by Pullicino often impedes the progress of the teaching of Latin at the UM, the only difference being the substitution of English for Italian.

¹¹ Keenan 1879: 76.

¹² Ibid. 54.

9.2 Latin Grammar at the Lyceum

The Latin and Greek syllabi from the period are often extensive and ambitious in their projected coverage of topics. They embrace, besides the constant fixtures of grammar and syntax, the study of works by classical authors and original composition, and often a good dose of history of literature and mythology. In his letter to the Rector already discussed,¹³ Lorenzo Pullicino described as ‘the soul of instruction’ (indeed that which the proposed reduction in course-time was threatening to eliminate) the application of language which goes beyond the attainment of grammar and syntax, such as the analysis of the Classics, and short compositions in prose and in verse. One gets the impression that classical teaching in 19th-century Malta did not consist solely of drill in grammar and tedious memorization of linguistic rules.

Some of the Maltese educational theoreticians tended to draw a distinction between higher education in Malta before the reforms instigated by the Royal Commissioners of 1836, steeped entirely as it was in classical instruction, and the state of education in the latter half of the century. The anonymous author of *Informazioni*, published in 1865, speaks disapprovingly of the ‘boredom of the study of Latin grammar, in the sense of a mechanical and perpetual exercise in declensions and conjugations’ that characterised instruction in the first decades of the century.¹⁴ To some, this was redolent of the ecclesiastic monopoly on education and especially higher teaching. In a conversation held in 1855 between the British economist Nassau William Senior and the Maltese lawyer and politician Ruggiero Sciortino, the latter expressed similar recollections of boredom caused by the grind of classical training during his youth in the early 1840s which he, rightly or wrongly, associates with the clerical system of education: ‘The dullness and ignorance of the priestly professors disgusted me with Latin and with all classical literature when I was a boy; it is with difficulty that I have got over my

¹³ See 6.6.

¹⁴ Anon. 1865: 114. See also 4.2.

early associations'. Sciortino, who had spent a couple of years in England in the mid 1850s, believed the solution to be in the secularization of the institution and the suppression of clerics in the University, for 'how can such an intellectual dwarf and cripple infuse into his pupils high and generous principles, or stimulate their curiosity, or animate their courage, or even guide their taste?'. However, Sciortino is hardly positive that, at the time of his conversation with Nassau, the circumstances had changed much: 'the new rector [Dr Saverio Schembri] tells me they are in no respect improved'.¹⁵ To be sure, the priestly methodologies had come under attack even from certain local newspapers. *L'amico della patria* had ridiculed 'the clerical and old-fashioned (*muffat*)' styles of teaching.¹⁶

Although not entirely displeased, Keenan left the Latin classes of the Lyceum with an impression of lethargy, lack of inventiveness, and *laissez faire*. He recommended that students 'ought to be apportioned much more work in Latin, and ought not to experience any difficulty in pursuing their way more rapidly through the elementary stages, and through the reading of a substantial Course in Latin'.¹⁷ Although the predominance of grammar was at the time still a reality in contemporary British education, especially in the way Latin and Greek were taught in public schools, Keenan seems to have found its hold on all levels of Maltese teaching particularly disagreeable¹⁸. He felt that the Maltese teacher of language generally misplaced his energies by an over-emphasis on grammar by rote, the 'bane of all teaching in Malta'.¹⁹ At the Lyceum, Keenan discovered that grammar also held sway in the teaching of all languages, where literature was read and translated

¹⁵ Senior 1882: 273. Cf. Jenkyns 1980: 61, who quotes Revd Sydney Smith (1771-1845) writing on the *Edinburgh Review* in the early 19th century: 'the miserable ... littleness of ecclesiastical instructors' in England. For Sciortino, see Schiavone 2009: 2.1472.

¹⁶ Anon.1840a.

¹⁷ Keenan 1879: 76. He held a similar opinion about the Latin class at the University.

¹⁸ Cf. Stray (1998a: 48) on the term 'the gerund grind', and the more modern one 'grammar grind', first attested by the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the 1890s.

¹⁹ Keenan 1879: 14.

mainly as an exemplification of the rules of grammar.²⁰ Moreover, a lack of imagination in the teaching of grammar did very little to improve matters. Paying a visit to the Lyceum of the Three Cities, the Royal Commissioner found the teacher of Latin and Italian, Revd F.M. Sceberras, drilling his students in Latin declensions:

The pupils who are learning Latin are in very elementary stages. I cannot say that I appreciated the system of instruction: for instance, one pupil was called upon to repeat *all* the parts of the conjugation of “*amo*,” an exercise which, if distributed amongst the pupils of the class generally, would have served as an excellent and stimulating lesson.²¹

This cannot be attributed solely to the instructors’ lack of skill, but even more to the defects of the whole system, not the least of which being the extremely irregular attendance of students of all subjects at the Lyceum that was a cause of severe complaint from Keenan. Of the thirty-eight students on the roll call of Albanese’s Lyceum class, only twenty-one were actually attending during Keenan’s presence.²² The irregularity in student attendance was one of the major defects characterizing the system that the educational authorities strove to adjust in the wake of the Royal Commissioner’s visit.

²⁰ Ibid. 73.

²¹ Ibid. 85.

²² Ibid. 74.

9.3 The Authors

Françoise Waquet observes how whole generations of Classics students across the world have, to a large extent, read and studied the same works by Latin (and Greek) authors.²³ This was no different in Malta, where the author of *Informazione* in 1865 compiles a list that would have been largely applicable to the rest of the world:

The Letters, the Offices, the treatises *De Senectute* and *On Friendship*, selected Orations of Cicero, and for the adepts some book of the *Tristia* of Ovid, an *Eclogue*, some book of the *Georgics*, the first and second books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and for the poor young men some book from Horace's *Odes* and his *Art of Poetry*, these were the Classics commonly used at the Schools.²⁴

This canon of Latin works continued to be the staple diet for students of Classics in Malta not only for the rest of the 19th century, but well into the 20th century. Following upon the learning of grammar, the reading of authors mainly served to consolidate the understanding of the rules of language. Over and above that, the objective was also to inculcate a good style of writing and speaking, and, what was probably less deliberate, to impart the moral edification embedded in the carefully selected excerpts from the authors. Any new method advocating the study of Latin without the canon was to be nipped in the bud, as Salvatore Cumbo asserted in 1840 when he criticised some unidentified Maltese masters of Latin of his time who were eliminating classical authors from the teaching of the language.²⁵ Cumbo warned that such a system would only deprive a young student from ever joining the ranks of real Latinists, or of men of letters generally for the matter.²⁶ Cumbo's *Piano di Pubblica Istruzione* promoted the reading of the easier authors

²³ Waquet 2001: 33-34.

²⁴ Anon. 1865: 114.

²⁵ See 6.7.

²⁶ Cumbo 1840: 121.

early in the Latin student's learning of grammar, quoting the author's hero Marcantonio Flaminio's statement that 'Languages are learnt better from good writers than from grammar books: the latter without the former become meaningless labyrinths'.²⁷ In a series of articles appearing in his journal *Il Filologo Maltese* in 1840, Cumbo discussed in detail his ideas of what constituted the best Latin pedagogy.²⁸ He insisted on the importance of a careful gradation of classical authors in the education of the young Latinist. Such application would ensure that one author serves as a preparation for the next, each slightly more difficult than the preceding one.²⁹ For prose, Cumbo considered no author better than Cicero, whose wide range of style did furnish, explained the Maltese priest, a full course of Latin prose composition. From the shorter letters of Cicero, a student could easily pass to the orator's treatises on friendship and old age, then to *De officiis*, and finally to the variety of his speeches. For poetry, Cumbo's proposed sequence was Terence, Tibullus, Catullus, Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, Horace, and finally Virgil's *Aeneid*.³⁰

Royal Commissioner Keenan had the opportunity to observe Revd Albanese and Revd Paul Vella teaching their Latin classes at the Lyceum. Ninety-two students studied the language, grouped in three levels. Keenan discovered that literature was introduced in the second class, where 'one easy Latin author is read'. In the first class, under Albanese, 'a little of the classics is read - at present a book of Cicero, and a book of Ovid': average style of teaching, judges Keenan, but lukewarm endeavour in the coverage of authors. Even the students' rather free Italian translation of Ovidian passages failed to earn the

²⁷ Cumbo 1839: 12. On the Italian humanist's ideas on Latin education, see Maddison 1965: 130-134.

²⁸ Cumbo 1840.

²⁹ Contemporary Italian theoreticians, such as Niccolò Tommaseo, admonished a similarly careful progression of Latin authors; cf. Murru and Pessolano Filos 1980: 72-73. Cumbo was an admirer of Italian schools; cf. Cumbo 1840: 119, where he claims that 'vi sono metodi eccellentissimi, e che producono grande messe di esimî latinisti.'

³⁰ Cumbo 1840: 139.

Commissioner's approval.³¹ A much greater amount of industry appears to have characterized the Gozo Secondary School, which nominally fell under the responsibility of the Chief Director of Primary Schools, the indefatigable Revd Paolo Pullicino, but whose curricula were closer to those of the Arts Faculty of the University: 'In the Latin Class, for instance, besides Rhetoric and Logic, the study of Cicero, Livy, Virgil, Horace and Ovid was prescribed'.³² From Pullicino's *Circolari* of 1861,³³ we learn that through the course in Latin that lasted six years, besides the authors mentioned above, students also read Nepos, Phaedrus, Sallust, Terence, Sulpicius Severus, and Eutropius - the latter two rather uncanonical. Such was the overwhelming attention given to the reading of authors that no time seems to have been left for translation into Latin or for Latin composition, as there is no mention of either in Pullicino's scheme. After Keenan's visit, the Gozo curricula were brought into line with those of the Lyceum.³⁴

Greek was too new a subject in Malta to enjoy a traditional canon as in the case of Latin. For ancient texts, Archimandrite Solomos prescribed Plato's *Crito*, Lucian's *Charon*, and the Maxmis of Stobaeus.³⁵ Father Burlò started with Aesop and Anacreon, and then progressed to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and *Anabasis*. Burlò's more senior students had to come to grips with the rhetoric of a speech by Demosthenes, or one by Isocrates. Additionally, they translated Homer's *Iliad* I and II, and Pindar's *Olympian* II. Examinations could be tough. Students would have probably expected to be asked for a grammatical and syntactical analysis of an excerpt chosen by lot from Xenophon, but might also be faced with the unenviable task of providing a translation into Ancient Greek of a given selection from Thucydides in Italian.³⁶

³¹ Keenan 1879: 76.

³² Savona 1883: 31.

³³ Pullicino 1861: 67-71.

³⁴ Savona 1883: 31.

³⁵ Anon. 1865: 89-90.

³⁶ Anon. 1890: xvi, which reproduces Burlò's full programme for Ancient and Modern Greek.

9.4 Textbooks

The syllabi of Maltese preceptors and professors of Latin feature a number of prescribed textbooks. The majority are Italian, but French and German books appear as well, although inevitably in an Italian version. Lorenzo Pullicino used *Delectus sententiarum Latinarum* for a reader and for translation.³⁷ Both the Latin and the Greek *Delectus* of Richard Valpy (1754-1836), first published in 1815, achieved wide circulation across the British Empire.³⁸ In Pullicino's class each passage, after being translated, was studied by heart, memorization being forever the core of classical education. In later years, Salvatore Caruana introduced Tommaso Vallauri's *Latinae Exercitationes* as the main exercise book, labelling it an 'aureo libro'. For translation, Salvatore Caruana used *Epitome Historiae sacrae* by the French grammarian Charles François Lhomond (1727-1794) and the *Anthologica Latina* of Giovanni Battista Gandino (1827-1905), the well-known Professor of Latin at the University of Bologna; for recitation, the Latin dialogues of the Valencian humanist Juan Luis Vives (1493-1540) in his *Linguae Latinae Exercitatio*, which was also used for examinations.³⁹ A favourite for Rhetoric was the work of the Jesuit scholar, Domique de Colonia (1660-1741), whose work *De Arte Rhetorica* was used by Lorenzo Pullicino, by Michele Antonio Albanese, and at the Gozo Secondary School.⁴⁰

Lorenzo Pullicino appears to have taken a special interest in the merits, or demerits, of Latin grammar books. In 1838 we find him using the *London Latin Grammar*, rather surprisingly at so early a stage of British rule.⁴¹ Pullicino later expressed his dissatisfaction about Latin grammar

³⁷ UMHA, Courses - University/Lyceum 1838, 'Scuola di latino e Rettorica da formare un corso di quattro anni, ed essere aperta dalle otto alle dieci a.m.'.

³⁸ For the Greek *Delectus*'s use during the 1840s in British Sierra Leone, cf. Goff 2014: 29. For Valpy's career, see Corley 2004.

³⁹ Anon. 1865: 88. For Vives in examinations, see e.g. Anon. 1862.

⁴⁰ For Pullicino, cf. n. 37; for Albanese, Anon. 1881, and Savona 1883: 90; for Gozo, Pullicino 1861: 71. The treatise on rhetoric prescribed in the first Constitution of the University, of 1771, is probably De Colonia's book: cf. Laurenza 1934b: 14.

⁴¹ Cf. n. 37. *London Latin Grammar* was published by John Taylor, publisher to the London University, as part of a series consisting mostly of interlinear editions. Pullicino may have been interested in interlinears: cf. Stray 1996.

books in use at the Lyceum, whose explanation of grammatical rules was either superfluous or incomplete. Accordingly, he cites the *Eton Grammar Book* and John Mair's *An introduction to Latin Syntax* as the best books for grammar and syntax respectively: the former he admired for its simplicity and orderliness and 'la natura filosofica' by which it expounds grammatical rules, while Mair's book earns Pullicino's recommendation for the historical theme of its syntactical exercises.⁴² As for the procurement of the texts of the 'multitude of classical authors prescribed at the School of Latin', Pullicino points to two options currently available to the student: either to incur the heavy expense of buying good and correct editions, or else to make do with cheap Neapolitan or Venetian editions which were full of serious errors. Pullicino's proposal, one that would bring together the useful and the economical, was to compile a course exclusively for the Latin School. This would consist of a volume comprising an adaptation and translation into Italian of the *Eton Grammar* and the Mair syntax, together with the prosody of the Barnabite Fathers and a treatise on elementary rhetoric. A second volume would consist of progressive excerpts from prose and verse classical authors, with the prose pieces ideally constituting a basic ancient history, and a catalogue of the principal synonyms.⁴³ Salvatore Cumbo made a very similar recommendation, having found most of the accessible grammar books defective in some way or another: 'It would be desirable to embark on the production of a new one, on the trail of the best grammarians; and in this case the Latin grammar must be compared with the Greek and the Italian'.⁴⁴ Cumbo held that great benefit would be derived if the student were to study Latin, Greek, and Italian concurrently.⁴⁵

⁴² For Eton College's Latin grammar book, first published in 1758, see Stray 1998a: 97. 'la natura filosofica' is a strange verdict on this notoriously muddled grammar, written in bad Latin. Mair's book was first published in 1750 in Edinburgh, with many subsequent editions.

⁴³ UMHA, MSS 122, 11-13; cf. n. 6.

⁴⁴ Cumbo 1839: 9. Cumbo criticises Poretti's grammar as some parts are faulty, the one of Port Real for its length and lack of substance, and del Soave's for being too restricted.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 8.

For Ancient Greek, the grammar books by French philologist Jean-Louis Burnouf (1775-1844) and by the German scholar Georg Curtius (1820-1885) were favourites.⁴⁶ The Italian version of Curtius' *Griechische Schulgrammatik*, first published in 1868, was described as the book from which Italy learnt the Greek language.⁴⁷

9.5 Examinations

Public examinations for the various Schools of the Lyceum took place in the month of July, at the end of each scholastic year. Records have come down to us of the content of the examinations in Latin and Greek, which in all likelihood provide better evidence of what students covered in class than their preceptors' elaborate syllabi might suggest. The following one is from 1862, when the Latin School consisted of three classified classes.⁴⁸ The examination here appears to be oral in its entirety.⁴⁹

The Assistant Preceptor, Vincente Carbonaro, examined twenty-two students of his class - only one student absenting himself for the examination - on the principles of grammar, the declensions and conjugations. The Preceptor of Latin, Salvatore Caruana, tested students of the two classes he was directly responsible for. Of the twenty-eight students attending the intermediate class, twenty-three presented themselves for the examination. Each student was asked to recite from memory an excerpt from the *Dialogues* of Vives, and to translate orally into Italian from the Latin of Nepos' *Vitae*. Questions were asked to test the students' analytical capabilities in grammar and the principles of syntax. Sentences in Italian were given to be rendered into Latin. Finally, to examine their acquisition of knowledge of Roman

⁴⁶ Solomos and Burlò both prescribed Burnouf, while the latter preceptor also prescribed Curtius; cf. Anon. 1865: 89-90; Anon. 1890: xvi.

⁴⁷ Benedetto 2013: 80.

⁴⁸ Anon. 1862. Another example is found in Anon. [1872a], in the examination of Latin at the Lyceum of the Three Cities.

⁴⁹ By this time *viva voce* examination was giving way to written form in British universities, cf. Stray 2005: 6; at Oxford, cf. Curthoys 1997: 345-349. In Italy, however, the system is practiced to this day.

antiquity, Caruana questioned students on the subject of the Roman army ('militia Romana'). Thirty students of the top class, six having been reported absent, declaimed from memory selections from *Aeneid* 2 and *De Bello Gallico* 1. They were asked to translate orally excerpts chosen at random from Caesar. Beside questions on the rules and analysis of syntax, they were also assigned to write a translation from Italian into Latin.

The establishment of the Matriculation Examination in 1882 served to set a standard for the teaching and the curricula at the Lyceum and other secondary teaching establishments on the island. From the beginning, the exam was largely a written one.

Carrying a maximum of 100 marks, the syllabus for the examination of Latin and Roman History in the first edition consisted as follows:

1. Caesar *De Bello Gallico* 1 and 2
2. Sallust *Bellum Catilinae*
3. Ovid *Fasti* 1
4. Grammar, comprising accidence and syntax
5. A passage of easy English or Italian prose to be translated into Latin
6. Composition: Narrative style
7. Outlines of Roman History.⁵⁰

In the rather accelerated run-up to the first sitting of the Matriculation, it appears that Savona had still managed to seek the advice of some of the leading educationalists of the time with regard to the proposed Matriculation syllabi. The Director of Education received a letter from Revd Henry Martin,⁵¹ an English Jesuit and the Rector of St Ignatius College, who, although generally pleased with the syllabus, expressed some doubt on the appropriateness of using Luigi Fornaciari's anthology *Esempi di bello scrivere in prosa e in poesia* (first published in 1835) for translations into Latin and, besides, recommended composition:

⁵⁰ Savona 1883: 87.

⁵¹ Azzopardi, A. 2002: 111.

Fornaciari is a compilation of Italian Literature of all ages. It must in consequence be an idiomatic book: they think that only mature Latin scholars could succeed in such a task. In England boys of the age of 16 years have to translate at the matriculation examination detached though idiomatic English sentences which are generally taken from the Authors they have been studying: the knowledge of syntax and the idiom of the Latin language is thus tested. If an original composition were added to this, would it not be sufficient to prove the knowledge the candidate possesses?⁵²

Hence we have the inclusion of composition, which the Committee of 1887, for its model syllabus, replaced with unseen translation.⁵³ The Latin examination was now to consist in two papers carrying in total a maximum of 500 marks, as follows:

Paper I

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------|
| 1. Latin Prose (Author) | } | 200 marks |
| 2. Latin Verse (Author) | | |
| 3. Passages from Unseen Authors | | 80 marks |
| 4. Roman History. A period. | | 70 marks |

Paper II Latin Grammar 150 marks⁵⁴

The scheme also featured a long list of acknowledged Latin works from which selections could be drawn for the Matriculation syllabus, Tacitus' *Annals*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Cicero's *De Oratore*, and so forth. The model syllabus determined that, for every edition of the examination, about 1000 lines should be chosen from the listed prose and verse works, inclusively, and that only easy passages would be selected for the

⁵² UMHA, Miscellanea 1880-1886, 10/11/1881.

⁵³ Anon. 1887: xxix (sitting of 12/04/1887). See 9.7.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 'Model Matriculation Syllabus', unpagued.

unseen authors. It was also decided that the period of Roman History should be of about 100 pages of the textbook chosen for the year, and that the grammar paper should contain questions on Latin grammar with easy sentences, set in English and Italian, to be translated into Latin. The acknowledged guidelines to this were the London Matriculation Examination papers.⁵⁵

It was not long before the Matriculation examination became a sort of competition between teaching establishments, the governmental, the ecclesiastical, and the privately owned. Besides the Lyceum of Valletta, the Matriculation syllabus was also taught at Flores College, St Ignatius College, the Seminary College in Gozo, the Bishop's Seminary and by private tuition.⁵⁶ Competition intensified because results were also published by institution. By the end of the century, the rivalry had soared to such a degree that it became a cause of some anxiety for the authorities. In a 'confidential' letter to Gerald Strickland, Chief Secretary to Government, Napoleon Tagliaferro, freshly appointed as Director of Education (and Rector), described this fervour of rivalry as 'a keen competition ... and as such it participates in the advantages and the inconveniences of all competitions'.⁵⁷ By the late 1930s, the Matriculation exam would become 'a fetish of the island'.⁵⁸

Institutions vied with each other not only for the best results, but also for the best teachers and methodologies applied. One of the best private institutions at the time was that of Salvatore Flores, known as 'Flores College', in Valletta, where the language of instruction was mostly English.⁵⁹ In his determination to give his students the best education

⁵⁵ Ibid. xxvi (sitting of 12/04/1887). London exams were used widely through the British Empire and at home. See Whyte 2015: 134-135.

⁵⁶ UMHA, Faculty of Literature and Science 1889-1913, 02/07/1897. In 1897 twenty-nine candidates sitting for Latin had received their instruction from 'Private Tuition'; six passed, one of whom with Honours.

⁵⁷ UMHA, Letter Book 1897-1900, 09/10/1897.

⁵⁸ Anon. 1938: 439.

⁵⁹ Cassar, G. 2000: 63, 65. Cf. Anon. [1907], where the list of current and former teaching-staff at Flores College features teachers of 'Latin through English'. On Flores (1851-1929), see Schiavone 2009: 1.823.

available on the island and to have them fully prepared for the Matriculation and other public examinations, the erudite Flores insisted on engaging excellent and qualified teachers, both local and foreign.⁶⁰ In 1898 Flores defended the benefits of the study of Latin as ‘an unrivalled instrument for stimulating the reasoning faculties (of the student) at an age in which their very existence might always seem open to doubt ... Latin is for all boys a gymnastic exercise of the very best kind, and for the minority it is a great deal more’.⁶¹ This was a time when the notion of Latin as the best mental training for boys was gaining international recognition.⁶² What must have been the result of a bold desire to expose his students to relatively innovative ways of learning prompted Flores to ask Francesco Chiminello to travel to Malta and take over the Matriculation class of Latin at the College. Chiminello was by then a retired professor at the University of Turin in Italy and was especially known for advancing the methods of glottology and logic in the teaching of Latin and Greek.⁶³ Flores granted Chiminello the full liberty to apply his system in the course of his teaching at the College. In a speech delivered at the College in 1895 and published as *Alcune Idee Sull’Insegnamento Classico*, Chiminello could pride himself on some admirable results. ‘In just over thirty lessons,’ he asserted, ‘my young students learnt the scientific theory of the declensions and the conjugations with full conviction’, and in the oral examination ‘demonstrated how every nominal and verbal form is made from the theme, and of which elements it is constituted’.⁶⁴ The students had been examined by Judge Paolo De Bono who, in an address following Chiminello’s speech, referred to the Italian professor’s style of teaching as a potential cure for what he termed a ‘piaga’, the festering wound which scarred the educational system by seeking to exercise the

⁶⁰ Cf. Anon. [1907], promotional epigraph on cover: ‘An Experienced Staff of 16 Masters, including Graduates of English and Foreign Universities and Local Professors, is engaged in preparing Students for all Public Examinations’. Cf. Ganado 1977: 1.261.

⁶¹ Flores 1898: 14.

⁶² Waquet 2002: 186-190. As regards Britain, see Stray 1998a: 202-232, *passim*.

⁶³ Chiminello was especially noted for his *Grammatica Italiana parallela alla Latina* (1896).

⁶⁴ Chiminello 1895: 22

memory of students rather than cultivate their intelligence (see next section), and expressed the hope that, for the good of the country, the teaching methods of the illustrious professor would not be confined to the perimeters of Flores College.⁶⁵

A look at the Matriculation results of the previous year, i.e. 1894, shows that, of the twelve candidates from Flores College who had sat for the Latin exam, ten had passed. This, however, was not as successful a performance as that by the set of twelve candidates presented by the Jesuit-run institution, St Ignatius' College, who had all passed.⁶⁶ In the next cycle of the examination, in 1897, there were nine students from Flores College who sat for Latin, but only two of them passed.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Salvatore Flores remained positively confident in his students' proficiency in Latin: in a 1908 handwritten report compiled for the Rector of the University, Flores remarked, with reference to Latin, that 'this subject does not offer any difficulty to our students'.⁶⁸

9.6 Measures to control cramming

The vice of copying in examinations became alarmingly widespread and seemingly out of control. One form it took, much debated by the educational authorities of the time, was that of 'cramming'. A candidate 'crammed' when he memorized the amount of text needed to obtain at least the minimum number of marks required to pass the examination. Since the pass-mark was often low (35% in the early history of the Matriculation examination) it was fairly easy for a student to apply 'a little artifice' and replicate from memory a ready-made translation of, say, the prescribed Latin authors and a chapter or two from the Roman History

⁶⁵ Ibid. 28. About De Bono (1848-1906), a Professor of Criminal and Commercial Law and of the History of Legislation and Jurisprudence at the UM, see Schiavone 2009: 1.685.

⁶⁶ Anon. 1895: 8.

⁶⁷ UMHA, Faculty of Literature and Science 1889-1913, 02 /07/1897.

⁶⁸ UMHA, Miscellanea 1908, Flores' report on the Royal Military Academy Syllabus and the Local Examinations, dated 22/04/1908.

textbook.⁶⁹ This practice did little to encourage the study of the more challenging aspects of the syllabus that required real intellectual commitment, such as the application of the rules of grammar and syntax.⁷⁰

The actual Matriculation course and the extensive nature of the syllabi presupposed enormous amount of memory work; this, and the fact that the examinations were, at least after 1887, held wholly in writing, rendered the system of cramming inevitable. Salvatore Flores described the situation rather whimsically in 1898: ‘The geese whose livers provide pâtés of succulent fame are not more systematically crammed for the Strassbourg [sic] market than our pupils are crammed for the fair held under the auspices of the Matriculation Board’. The consequences, continues Flores, ‘are often not less injurious to the mental digestion of the pupils than they are said to be to the internal organs of the geese’.⁷¹ The continual concern to check the habit of cramming led to a redistribution of marks in the Matriculation examination on a number of occasions. In 1890,⁷² the distribution of marks was altered and set as follows:

Authors	(Cicero <i>Pro rege Deiotaro</i> and Virgil <i>Aeneid</i> 6.1-702)	120 marks
History		60 marks
Grammar	(10 questions with sentences to be translated into Latin ⁷³)	220 marks
Passages	(five unseen passages for translation)	100 marks

This scheme still allowed a candidate to obtain the pass-mark of 35% if he scored full marks for Authors and History, and zero marks for the rest of the questions, a stratagem all too common according to Judge De

⁶⁹ Anon. 1887: 22 (the speaker is A.E. Caruana).

⁷⁰ Anon. 1897: 25. Judge Luigi Ganado (1833-1903) also observes cribs were also bought and studied for cramming purposes. On Ganado, see Schiavone 2009: 2.897.

⁷¹ Flores 1898: 18. Interestingly, the metaphor is taken from a cartoon by the French caricaturist, J.J. Grandville, published in 1846; cf. Waquet 2001: 14.

⁷² Anon. 1898: 59 (sitting of 06/05/1890).

⁷³ Cf. Anon. 1898: 113, where Senate modified the syllabus for the 1893 Matriculation exam, deciding that ‘Grammar Paper will contain not more than eight easy sentences set in English and Italian to be translated into Latin, besides questions bearing on Syntax on the sentences given’.

Bono, who believed that, had the examiners been from the University of London, less than fifty percent of candidates would have passed their Matriculation.⁷⁴ The same admission was made by the Director of Education, Napoleon Tagliaferro, when, writing to the Chief Secretary to the Governor, Gerald Strickland, he stated: 'In 1894 soon after the Matric. Exam. I was informed by the Examiners that there were several cases in which candidates succeeded in passing in Latin although they have not obtained a single mark in composition'.⁷⁵

This practice was thought to have a markedly degenerative effect on the standard of students admitted to the Course of Arts and Sciences.⁷⁶ The 1887 Commission was to be blamed for removing the oral examination, which had hitherto provided the opportunity to test a candidate suspected of cramming in the written examination.⁷⁷ Judge De Bono, after calling this elimination 'un danno immenso', describes an experience he had had during an oral examination:

It concerned a student for the Notary Course. The examiners were Canon Bonnici and myself. The candidate had written a magnificent version of the Virgilian extract. I was the first to examine him orally. After he had read four or five verses, Mr Savona, at the time the Director, said 'Enough?' I answered, 'No'. Having continued to read the selection, I was convinced the candidate did not even know how to read Latin. Being examined next by Canon Bonnici on elementary things, he was found to know nothing and we failed him. With today's system that young man would have passed.⁷⁸

This was a common scenario at oral exams in other countries too, as Professor Chiminello, in his 1895 speech at Flores College, showed

⁷⁴ Anon. 1897: 57.

⁷⁵ UMHA, Letter Book 1897-1900, 09/10/1897; by 'composition' he means translation into Latin.

⁷⁶ Cf. Anon. 1897: 25, where Judge Ganado declares that 'persone che passarono la Matricola non sanno niente'.

⁷⁷ For the contemporaneous removal of oral examinations in Britain, see Stray 2005.

⁷⁸ Anon. 1897: 56.

when he related a similar experience during an examination at a Gymnasio in Como in Italy.⁷⁹

One subject that was affected in the fight against cramming was that of History, which featured in the examinations of English, Italian, and Latin. From 70 marks in 1887, the marks allotted to History of Rome were reduced to 20 in 1896.⁸⁰ Revd Hornyold,⁸¹ as a member of the Senate, did not have any qualms about voting for this remarkable downgrade in the marks allotted to History, because he felt that 'the Senate were not disposed to recommend that History should be taught on a system [he] could approve of'.⁸² While giving evidence to the Select Committee on the Education Department in 1897, Hornyold was taken to task by Sigismondo Savona for his compliance in the treatment of History:

Mr Savona Do you think that fixing to 20 marks out of 500 for history would tend to raise the standard?

Fr Hornyold I was so disgusted with the condition to which the study of History has been reduced that I myself voted for only 20 marks. The way they study the subject does not deserve more than 20 marks. If they study it properly then let the marks be raised.

Mr Savona The consequence of those 20 marks is that in no institution is History studied.

Fr Hornyold The Senate had no power to cut it out of the syllabus.

Mr Savona I think that's very bad. History is a very important study; by cutting down the marks

⁷⁹ Chiminello 1895: 23.

⁸⁰ UMHA, Faculty of Literature and Science 1889-1913, 12/06/1896.

⁸¹ The expatriate Revd V. Hornyold, S.J., was Rector of St Ignatius College (1886-1898); see Azzopardi, A. 2002: 115-117.

⁸² Anon. 1898: 233 (sitting of 1/06/1896).

to 20 they have simply discouraged the study of History everywhere.⁸³

9.7 Prescribed Authors and Unseen translation

As an antidote against cramming in examinations, the authorities adopted the practice of unseen translation. This was based on the system operating at the University of London, with its emphasis on unseen translation in preference to prescribed authors and translation into Latin.⁸⁴ Such a procedure found a few local detractors who actually felt it contributed to the decline in the proficiency of Latin and, therefore, in the general educational level of University students. One of the vociferous critics was Judge Luigi Ganado who, during the evidence given to the Committee of 1897, alleged that in his student days (i.e. 1850s), candidates were so superior to the present ones in their Latin dexterity:

Whatever the system is in London, in Malta it has not been successful and I believe that the present situation of instruction is partly the result of that system. The reason is this - I know it from experience because I am a son of the Lyceum and the University - when we presented ourselves for the exams, we were able to translate any book, since teaching was efficacious, and one who knows the language can translate any book that is taken to him. We translated Caesar, Julius Caesar, even Tibullus and other classics, Tacitus perhaps not, because Tacitus is most difficult, but all of us could translate, and with such a confidence that some of us engaged in compositions in Latin ... the examiner would even use Juvenal so as to assign a new piece: that demanded the knowledge of Latin.⁸⁵

⁸³ Anon. 1897: 36.

⁸⁴ Anon. 1897: 25; Stray 1998a: 62.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Ganado's sensible solution against cramming was to have examinations constituted of excerpts taken from the entire *oeuvre* of Caesar, Cicero, and Virgil, a translation of which would be beyond the ability of any student to study by heart.⁸⁶ Since, according to him, 'whatever it is they do in England, it is certain that the system, as adopted, has brought education to such a low level'.⁸⁷

This seemed to echo the opinion occasionally expressed during sittings of the Council of the Faculty of Literature and Science (the 'Faculty Board' at the time) when the general reorganization of the same Faculty was under discussion and the issue of cramming in examinations, and the redistribution of marks as a counter to it, was often a matter of debate. Daniel Fallon, the Professor of English Literature, voted against a proposal of a substantial rise in the marks assigned to Latin unseens at the expense of set authors, explaining that 'the study of prescribed authors in class fostered the habit of serious and assiduous study while the undue importance given to unseen authors would render the study loose and rambling'.⁸⁸ Fallon's view was subsequently rebutted by the Rector N. Tagliaferro, at the time chairing the Council of the Faculty of Literature and Science, who in defence of unseen translation stated that such application helps 'to foster in the students the habit of industry and self-dependence, by obliging them to seriously apply themselves to authors, other than the prescribed ones, of which they could easily get prepared translations. The unseen author selected at each examination would, naturally, be parallel with the prescribed author for the year'.⁸⁹

The Vice-Chancellor, A.A. Caruana, proposed to the Senate in 1896 that in the case of the Matriculation exam no less than 180 marks should be allotted for translation for unseen authors.⁹⁰ The Senate eventually

⁸⁶ In a similar recommendation made to the Committee of the Council for the Reform of Public Instruction in 1898, the choice of Judge De Bono (1898: 12) is Caesar's *De bello civili* and Horace's *Carmina*.

⁸⁷ Anon. 1897: 25.

⁸⁸ UMHA, Faculty of Literature and Science 1889-1913, 12/06/1896.

⁸⁹ UMHA, Faculty of Literature and Science 1889-1913, 29/05/1897.

⁹⁰ Anon. 1898: 232 (sitting of 01/06/1896).

agreed to reduce this to 160 for the edition of the 1897 Matriculation, which was still a substantial increase from the 100 marks awarded to a similar exercise in 1890. The marks assigned for the prescribed authors, which had been 200 in 1887, were 120 in 1897, the same as 1896: the level of the latter year's Latin exam had been deemed low in a Government Minute released on 8 June 1896 by reason of the fact that only 20 chapters from Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* 3, besides 607 lines from Virgil's *Aeneid* 8, were prescribed.⁹¹ In response to the Minute's critique, Vice-Chancellor Caruana remarked to the Senate that the high number of marks and the consequent greater importance attached to passages from unseen authors had been overlooked, and the proposal of extending the passage from prepared authors would imply the necessity of increasing the number of marks assigned to the authors, thus frustrating the main object the Senate had in view in framing the syllabus.⁹²

With regard to the selection of prescribed authors, beside the importance of an appropriate lingual graduation between authors studied for Matriculation and those for the University course (a distinction at times neglected⁹³), there was of course another consideration to be made. Authors, and especially poets, outside the purported safe range of Caesar / Cicero / Virgil might contain morally unsuitable matter for young minds.⁹⁴ Even though the selected excerpts might be unoffensive, there was no stopping a student from reading uncensored parts of his book. During a sitting in 1893, the General Council of the Faculty of Literature and Science discussed the appropriateness of some of the elegies of Tibullus for the Latin Matriculation examination. Revd Hornyold

⁹¹ *MGG*, 27/06/1896, Syllabus of Matriculation examination of 1897, showing unchanged excerpts from Caesar and Virgil. This criticism from Government is discussed in Anon. 1897: 26.

⁹² Anon. 1898: 235-237 (sitting of 15/06/1896). For the prescribed extracts from Caesar and Virgil, see p. 233.

⁹³ Anon. 1898: 233 (sitting of 01/06/1896). Judge Ganado 'quoted several instances in which the Classics explained in the Classes of Literature were easier than those prescribed for the Matriculation Examination'.

⁹⁴ For a general overview on the expurgation of classical texts, see Harrison and Stray 2013.

remarked that, although the elegies proposed were unexceptionable, he maintained that 'it was not desirable that young men be given erotic subjects for study. Moreover, they take more interest in the heroic'. For this reason, Hornyold said he would prefer a book of Virgil. The Vice Chancellor replied that Virgil had been the author chosen in the previous three Matriculation Examinations and explained that the edition of Tibullus proposed in the syllabus was the 'Salesiana', a collection which, he maintained, expurgated all authors. He agreed that the interest that students take in the textbook should be taken into consideration in the selection of authors. After further discussion, the Senate unanimously decided it would be safer to stick to Virgil, and a selection from *Aeneid* 4 was chosen,⁹⁵ the tragedy of Dido's passion apparently considered innocent enough.

In 1893 Hornyold again objected to the inclusion of Propertius and, after requesting the Senate to be allowed to examine the edition (Vannucci's), it was resolved in the next Senate meeting to replace Propertius with selections from the Salesian edition of Ovid's *Fasti*.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Anon. 1898: 111-112 (sitting of 29/05/1893). During the same meeting, a similar dispute took place about the expurgation of Torquato Tasso, the Italian epic poet.

⁹⁶ Anon. 1898: 147-148 (sittings of 19/08/1893 and 24/04/1894).

CHAPTER 10 – LATIN AT THE UNIVERSITY

10.1 Latin at the University, syllabi and exams

A typical 19th century Latin programme of studies at the University of Malta is that of Professor Salvatore Caruana's Latin for the triennial course commencing in 1864.¹ The programme was divided in three parts, called the Narrative Genre, the Didactic Genre, and the Oratorical Genre.

The first year, the Narrative Genre, was subdivided into prose, verse, history, and exercise. The various styles of prose were to be studied according to the theory of the Neapolitan grammarian and literary critic, Basilio Puoti (1782-1847), while Nepos, Caesar, Sallust, Livy 1, 2 and 4, and Tacitus' *Annals* 1 and his *Histories* 1 were to serve as models for the respective styles. As regards verse, the lyric poets to be studied were Catullus and Horace (*Odes* 1 and 2); elegiac poetry was to be exemplified by Tibullus and Propertius, and narrative poetry was to be illustrated by Phaedrus' *Fabulae* 1 and 2, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1. The History of Latin Literature followed the work of Tommaso Vallauri (1805-1897) and examined the progress of Latin Literature from its beginnings up to Sulla's death in drama, epic, satire, history, rhetoric, philosophy, natural science, jurisprudence, and grammar. The Exercise section comprised the translation into Latin of excerpts from classical Italian literature; narrative composition according to the method propounded by Vallauri in his *Latinae Exercitationes*. This part of the course also included versification, presumably meaning the study of prosody rather than verse composition, as well as the study of critical analysis grounded in classical writers.

The second year of the course consisted of the study of the Didactic Genre, based on the principles of Basilio Puoti. The prescribed prose

¹ Caruana 1864: 25-29. For Caruana, see 6.7.

texts were a number of unspecified letters of Cicero and Pliny, Cicero's *De amicitia*, *De senectute*, and *De officiis*. The poetry studied under this head was to be subdivided into satiric, bucolic, and didactic. The satiric was represented by Horace's *Satires* I, and Martial's *Epigrams* 1-3; the bucolic by Virgil's *Eclogues* 1, 3, and 4; the didactic by Virgil's *Georgics* 4 and Horace's *Ars Poetica*. The History of Latin Literature, again following Vallauri, examined the reasons why literature reached its height at the end of Augustus' rule, and included the biography of the chief Latin literary exponents of the period. The Exercise part trained the students in translation and composition in Latin from examples of Italian literature in the didactic genre, together with more versification and critical analysis.

The study of the prose dimension of the Oratorical Genre, in the final year, followed the theories of Puoti's collaborator Vito Fornari (1821-1900) in their classification of the demonstrative, the judiciary, and the deliberative, the three subdivisions exemplified respectively by the Ciceronian speeches *Pro Marcello*, *Pro Milone*, and *Pro Lege Manilia*. As a textbook to summarize all the work done in the three years on the art of writing, Caruana recommended Paolo Costa's (1771-1836) *Della Elocuzione*. Extracts from Virgil's *Aeneid* 2, 4, and 6 were left to the third year to exemplify epic poetry. As his paradigm of dramatic poetry, Caruana's choice fell on Terence's *Andria*. Vallauri's *Historia critica literarum Latinarum* guided Caruana in his elucidation of the reasons that brought about the decline of literature beginning with Augustus' death and continuing up to Hadrian's reign, and, thereafter, the steady deterioration to the time of Odoacer ('quelle per cui andò sempre rovinando'). Due attention was also given to the biography of the epoch's chief writers. More exercises in translation, this year in the oratorical style, were to occupy the Exercise part of the final year of the course, with still more versification and critical analysis as expected.

Anticipating some criticism that his syllabus framed too wide a selection of classical authors, Caruana put forward three justifications.² Firstly, he explained that students will not be obliged to read the entire works, but only those excerpts that most appropriately elucidate each particular theory. Secondly, he indicated that students would not be given translation of selections from the authors to do at home and to read on the following day in class, as such an exercise was more suitable for an inferior level in the study of the language. Thirdly, that the Classics would be presented as models for students to imitate in their own writing and consequently care would be given to explain the texts in class and also to indicate the best translations to read. It was by a similar method, Caruana insists, that ‘the great Fénelon’ had tutored the future Louis XV of France.³

10.2 The strange case of Emmanuele Amato

In October 1870, the young Emmanuele Amato, formerly a student of Salvatore Caruana’s Latin course at the University,⁴ sat for the examination for admission to the Course of Law that was to start that same October and end in 1873. Extending over the first two days of the month, the subjects under examination were Latin, English and Logic; since Italian was involved in all the tasks, competence in that language was also under scrutiny. For the Latin examination, candidates were allowed six hours to finish their work, without the assistance of dictionaries and other books.⁵

² Caruana 1864: 25-26, n. (a).

³ Archbishop François Fénelon (1651-1715) was a French theologian and writer, and tutor of the Dauphin of France, for whom he wrote *Les aventures de Télémaque*, first published in 1699.

⁴ Amato 1870: 17.

⁵ Anon. 1865: 80, which also reports (p. 79) that, in October 1864, 21 candidates applied for admission to the Course of Law, 4 to the Course of Notarial Studies, and 6 to the Study in Procedure, all within the Faculty of Law.

In a couple of days, the results were published and Amato found that he had been 'disapprovato', rejected. Having taken down exact copies of his answers before handing them over to the examiners, Amato later showed them to his elder brother, P.P. Amato, himself a lawyer. In the conviction that some mistake or irregularity had been committed to the detriment of his brother, Dr Amato spared no effort to get to the heart of the matter and try to discover what had gone wrong. Although his endeavours were not entirely successful, he recorded his investigations in a slim but fascinating publication entitled *Un esame all'università: fatti, documenti ed osservazioni per l' Avv. P.P. Amato*.⁶ According to what the lawyer managed to gather, it was the Latin examination which proved to be 'the reef, where my brother was wrecked'.⁷ His publication, a vehement attack on the deficiency of the whole system of these examinations, is particularly relevant to the present study not only for the interesting details it imparts on the manner of organization of University examinations at the time, but also because it contains copies of the translations made by the candidate during the Latin examination. These provide us with a unique opportunity to form some idea of the skill in language that these young students attained after a full course in Latin at a secondary level (the Lyceum or some other private establishment) and, presumably, after also completing the three-year Course in Literature and Philosophy at the University.⁸

The Latin paper comprised a translation from Latin into Italian of Horace *Carmina* 2.10.1-18, a translation from Latin into Italian of the introductory part of the 'exordium' of Cicero's *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino*, and a translation into Latin of a passage in Italian, whose source,

⁶ Amato 1870.

⁷ Ibid. 4. Interestingly, Rudyard Kipling, in his story 'Regulus' (published in the 1899 collection *Stalky & Co.*), makes use of the same metaphor in much similar context: 'Beetle sat down relieved, well knowing that a reef of uncharted genitives stretched ahead of him, on which in spite of M'Turk's sailing-directions he would infallibly have been wrecked'. For the story's relevance to the curriculum debate current in England at the time, see Leary 2008.

⁸ UMHA, Registro degli Studenti dell' Università 1870-1881, registers Amato's name as student at the 'Facoltà di Filosofia' between January and June 1870. No record of the roll of students seems to exist for the preceding years.

unidentified by Amato, is actually a sermon by the seventeenth-century Jesuit, Paolo Segneri, whose edifying oeuvre must have been considered a fitting source for translation purposes in examinations.⁹ The translations allegedly rendered by the young Amato during the examination are reproduced here.¹⁰

Hor. *Carm.* 2.10.1-18

<p>Rectius vives, Licini, neque altum Semper urgendo, neque dum procellas Cautus horrescis, nimium premo Latus iniquum.</p> <p>Auream quisquis mediocritatem Diligit, tutus caret obsoleti Sordibus tecti, caret invidenda Sobrius aula.</p> <p>Saepius ventis agitatut ingens Pinus, et celsae graviore casu Decidunt turres, feriuntque summos Fulgora montes.</p>	<p>Vivi più rettamente o Licinio, nè sempre poggiando molto alto, nè sempre poggiando molto alto, nè quando cautamente eviti le procelle, ti tieni troppo al lido iniquo.</p> <p>Chiunque sicuro di se stesso ama l'aurea mediocrità, è lontano da vili tetti e da invidiose sale.</p> <p>Grande pino è spesso abbattuto da furiosi venti, e le alte torri cadono per cause più forti e gli alti monti son percossi dai fulmini.</p>
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⁹ One occasionally comes across passages from Segneri in University examination papers: e.g. UMHA, Special Council - Arts and Sciences 1881-1889, 13/04/1882, where a passage from Segneri's sermon 'L'incredulo' was given for translation in the Latin Literature examination in April 1882. However, Forniciari was possibly the favourite source, followed by Machiavelli and his *Discorsi*.

¹⁰ Amato 1870: 5-7.

<p>Sperat infestis, metuit secundis Alteram sortem bene praeparatum</p> <p>Pectus. Informes hyemes reducit</p> <p>Juppiter idem,</p> <p>Summovit. Non si male nunc, et olim</p> <p>Sic erit ...</p>	<p>Chi ad ogni evento è preparato spera nell'avversa fortuna, teme quando è propizia.</p> <p>Giove apporta le intempestive tempeste ed egli le leva. Non perchè male si starà sempre...</p>
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Cicero *Rosc. Am.* 1.1

<p>Credo ego vos, iudices, mirari quid sit, quod cum tot summi oratores, hominesque nobilissimi sedeant, ego potissimum surrexerim qui neque aetate, neque ingenio, neque auctoritate sim cum iis, qui sedeant, comparandus. Omnes enim hi quos videtis adesse in hac causa, injuriam novo scelere conflam, putant oportere defendi: defendere ipsi propter iniquitatem temporum non audent. Ita fit ut adsint, propterea quod officium sequuntur; tacent autem idcirco, quia periculum metuunt - Quid ergo? Audacissimus ego ex omnibus? minime: at tanto officiosior quam caeteri? ne istius quidem laudis ita sum tum cupidus, ut aliis eam preceptam velim? Quae me igitur res praeter caeteros impulit, ut causam Sexti Roscii reciperem?</p>	<p>Io credo, o giudici, che voi vi meravigliate nel veder me in piedi a perorare, mentre altri grandi oratori, non che nobilissimi uomini sono seduti e taciti, a cui nè d'età, nè d'ingegno, nè d'autorità posso essere simile: imperocchè tutti quei che vedete presenti in questa causa, stimano necessario il difendere l'inguria macchiate di nuove sceleraggini. Essi non osano difender perchè temono l'iniquità de' tempi: e così sono presenti per adempire i loro uffizii, tacciono perchè temono il pericolo. A che? dunque io sono fra tutti i più audace? e più civile degli altri? nè desideroso io sono di questa lode che voglia ad altri togliere. Quale cosa adunque mi spinge d'intraprendere prima degli altri la causa di Sesto Roscio?</p>
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(Paolo Segneri)

<p>Chi opera trasportato dall'ira, non opera mai con prudenza ma con temerità. Si finge agevole tutte le difficoltà, sicuri tutti i pericoli, favorevoli tutti gli eventi: e non considera quante volte è accaduto che cada vinto chi si fidava di rimaner vincitore. Quindi Aristotile paragonava l'ira al cane. Avete osservato il cane quando egli sente picchiar all'uscio di casa? tosto egli abbaja, si accende, e corre alla soglia per avventar alla vita di cinque accostisi; e non considera prima se quei cui egli va incontro sieno pochi o molti, se forti o deboli, se inermi od armati; egli molte volte è costretto a tornar indietro col collo chino, e spesso col capo rotto.</p>	<p>Ira moti numquam res agunt prudentia sed temeritate. Utilis simulatur difficultas, tutum periculum, prospera eventa. Illi neque considerant quoties adveniet ut superetur qui victoriam adspirabat. Aristotilis cani iram esse similem dicebat. Vidistis ne canem hostia domi dum pulsantur audientem? subito lantrat, irascitur, ad limen currit, cupidus illorum vitae, quos sibi videbat propinquos, et non considerat si illi sint pauci aut multi, si inermes aut arma ferentes: propterea quod pluribus coactus est vertere terga ac capite fracto.</p>
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The translations feature a number of inaccuracies, but none which can be considered serious or which constitute a truly unacceptable departure from the original. At times we notice that Amato is inexact in number, often translating into the plural instead of the singular (e.g. in Horace, 'per cause' for 'casu'; in Cicero, 'nuove sceleraggini' for 'novo scelere', 'uffizzii' for 'officium'; in Segneri, 'Ira moti ... res agunt etc.' for 'Chi opera trasportato dall'ira etc.', but then 'pericoli' for 'periculum'). Rarely, he alters the grammatical subject of a clause (e.g. in Horace, shifting the subject to 'montes' instead of 'fulgora'). In the translation of Horace, he translates 'pectus' by 'chi', thus missing out the metaphorical significance of the verse. He is often insensitive to lesser words such as pronouns and adverbs (e.g. in Horace, 'idem'; in Cicero, 'idcirco', 'minime', 'tanto'; in Segneri, 'Quindi', 'spesso'). On one occasion, he leaves out a relative clause (in Segneri, 'quei cui egli va incontro'), on another, a participial phrase (in Segneri, 'col collo chino'). At one point in

the last piece he translates a verb in the wrong tense (the perfect 'coactus est' for 'è costretto'). Also in the last text, the usage of the Latin verb 'considerat' as a translation of 'considera' is non-classical.

The list above is not exhaustive, but purports to demonstrate that the level of translation was acceptable enough to qualify the prospective student of Law as possessing the 'competent knowledge of the Latin language' required by Statute.¹¹ On his part, the elder Amato, who being a lawyer must of necessity have been proficient in the language, set to work with assiduity. He compared his brother's attempts with Tommaso Gargallo's translation of Horace (published 1809), and that of Cicero by Placido Bordoni (published 1795), and ascertained from the exercise that the student's translations, although 'mediocre', were certainly not 'malamente scritte in tutte le loro parti';¹² the latter, he discovered to his consternation, had been the verdict of each of the five examiners who had inspected the texts. Amato concedes an amount of freedom to the translations, but justifies this by his brother having been a student of Salvatore Caruana,¹³ who, he says, always insisted with his students not to translate literally.

In a petition addressed to the Rector of the University,¹⁴ written as if by the young student himself, and which he reproduces in his pamphlet, Amato requested a reassessment of the scripts, corroborating this plea by referring to the comparative analysis with the published translations of Gargallo and Bordoni, that had only yielded very few differences mostly in elegance and propriety rather than meaning, and that in the translation of the Italian passage into Latin he had only been able to detect two minor defects rather than any serious errors. To this petition,

¹¹ See 3.7.

¹² Amato 1870: 7.

¹³ See 6.5.

¹⁴ Such petitions were very common and were normally addressed to the Rector. Sometimes, petitioners resorted to higher authorities, e.g. UMHA, *Miscellanea* 1904 (1), undated: F. Debono, a professor at the Faculty of Medicine, whose son had failed the Latin oral exam, thought it sensible to address his petition to the British Governor, Sir Charles Mansfield Clarke, in which he even hinted at possible unfairness from a 'Reverend examiner'.

Amato received no official reply but, after some act of obeisance to the Secretary of the University, he found out that the petition had been rejected. In the meantime, Amato had resorted to the well-known Maltese Latinist, Abate Giuseppe Zammit 'Brighella',¹⁵ for an independent and learned evaluation of the candidate's translations. When he came to write a second petition, this time under his own name, Amato appended the certificate of Zammit, whom he refers to as '[il] moderno Marziale':

I was requested by Mr Emanuele Amato to review the translations he made for the admission exam to the Faculty of Laws; having read them, I found them not only sufficiently good, with some small exception, but I also admired the ability of the said Mr Amato, who without the aid of books was able to write so well, and especially in translating the Horatian Ode, who could not be translated if not by persons continuously exercised in the study of the classics. This I say for the love of truth ...¹⁶

Even to this second petition, notwithstanding the illustrious endorsement, no official reply was forthcoming.

Amato lambasts the examination system operating at this time. He claims that the applications were not vetted and anyone who had the whim ('a chiunque venisse il ghiribizzo'¹⁷) to do so could sit for the exam, even such candidates as could barely read. They often attended the examination heavily armed with translations of the Classics; others smuggled in a dictionary tucked inside their pockets; still others, incapable of making much use of their ready-made translations of the Classics, harassed the serious-minded students who, if only to get rid of the nuisance, ended up doing, besides their own translations, those of the unprincipled ones, thus losing valuable time and energy. The long and short of it, according to Amato, is that those students with a serious intent, who avoid taking any risks that may lead to their dismissal and

¹⁵ See 6.3.

¹⁶ Amato 1870: 10-11.

¹⁷ Ibid. 11.

who accordingly have only their studies to rely on, were the ones who usually failed the examination. This contention is not exactly the exaggeration that it may initially appear to be. Reliable evidence exists of severe cheating and copying in examinations that had gone rife and unchecked for decades.¹⁸

Another criticism levelled by Amato is that candidates were given different extracts to translate from different classical authors. Since, he argues, there exists an obvious difference in the difficulty of the language between the poetry of Virgil and that of Horace, or between the prose of Cicero and that of Livy, why should one candidate be given Horace and Livy to translate, another Virgil and Cicero? The level of difficulty of these exams would be corroborated by Sigismondo Savona who in 1883 asserted that the command of Latin expected from students hoping to gain entrance into the Course of Law had been simply too exacting; these candidates:

were expected to be able to translate off-hand, without any assistance from a dictionary or any book of reference, any extract from any classic, however difficult, in prose and verse; which was in excess of what the London University exacts from candidates for the degree of B.A.¹⁹

Dr Amato's proof, if he ever was in need of one, that something in the whole affair had been amiss finally came when the Special Committee of the Faculty of Law selected the younger Amato for admission to the Course of Notarial Studies on the basis of his performance in the same examination which had so categorically denied him access to the Course

¹⁸ E.g. Savona 1883: 33. Cf. Anon. 1897: 25, where the same Savona stated that 'gli esami si convertivano in una scuola di copiare. Si portavano da fuori caffè e panini e dentro i panini vi era la traduzione'. The vice was certainly not limited to the UM; cf. Oxford in Curthoys 1997: 342, 365.

¹⁹ Savona 1883: 37. Cf. *CG*, 21/05/1879, 868-869, where Savona had made the same argument during a sitting of the Council of Government, including there the high level of Latin required for entry to the Courses of Theology and Medicine.

of Law.²⁰ Since the grade of a notary is the one immediately below that of a lawyer, Amato finds this twist very bewildering. This development could have been a sop to Cerberus, which however did not deter Amato from writing and publishing his interesting denunciation. Although the young Amato did indeed join and follow the notarial course,²¹ no other evidence has yet come to light that might help solve the mystery of why he had crashed in the Latin exam, and we are left in the dark as much as Amato was, or at least claimed to be.²²

10.3 Composition

A proposal from A.A. Caruana and Revd Hornyold that provoked some lively discussion among the Committee members in 1887 was that recommending the omission of Latin composition from the Latin syllabus at the University. This exercise consisted of the writing of an original piece in Latin prose on a subject taken normally from Roman history or Greek legend; surviving examples of titles for such an exercise are 'Raccontate il naufragio di Simonide', or 'The death of Atilius Regulus', or 'Roma salvata da Camillo'.²³ In explaining the rationale behind this suggestion, Caruana said that the reason why the study of Latin was generally acknowledged an important subject of the Arts curriculum was its suitability to train students in their literary studies:

²⁰ Cf. Anon. 1865: 80, where the Latin exam for admission to the Course of Notarial Studies in 1864 consists of a translation from Latin into Italian of an excerpt from *Nepos* and a translation into Latin from an excerpt from *Forniciari*.

²¹ UMHA, Registro degli Studenti dell' Università 1870-1881, where Amato's name appears in the list of students following the Course of Notarial Studies between October 1870 and June 1873.

²² The General Council was the official body that would have discussed the merits of such a request as Amato's. However, no record exists of General Council meetings for the period between January 1851 and November 1873. Vella, A.P. (1969: 83) states that no meeting was ever held during that extensive period. Nor is any reference found to Amato in the University Letter Book for the year 1870 (UMHA, Letter Book 1865-1880).

²³ UMHA, Special Council - Arts and Sciences 1881-1889, 08/01/1883, 03/03/1884, and 18/10/1885. The first two titles, both carrying 20 marks, were for the examinations in Latin Literature for the first year of the Academical Course 1882-1885 (the second one, given in English, being the supplementary examination for students who had failed the original paper); the third subject is for the Honours examination of Latin Literature and carried 30 marks.

It has no other purpose at present. Formerly all books of Law, Medicine, Philosophy, even Physics, Natural History, Chemistry, private correspondence, Notarial deeds, and Public Acts, were written in Latin, though even that was not a Classical Latin. At present, however, with the exception of Theological works, all other books are published in modern languages, and opportunity could scarcely present itself for the students to compose in Latin.²⁴

Once again, the Director of Education, Sigismondo Savona, was the chief contender against this recommendation, holding that although translation was a good test of the knowledge of grammar, original composition tested the ability of students more fully than any amount of translation. Besides challenging Caruana's argument that the only object for the study of Latin was to train students in their literary studies, Savona stressed that his major concern was the intellectual and professional standard of future lawyers and priests: 'Students of Law very frequently need not merely to translate but to interpret the original writings in Roman Law, whilst, in the absence of Hebrew and even Greek, Theology students should possess a thorough knowledge of Latin to enable them to translate and to interpret the Latin translation of the Bible and the writings of the Fathers'.²⁵ In reply, Caruana observed that the Latin Savona was alluding to was 'a vulgar Latin presenting none of the difficulties met with in Classical Authors' and certainly not the kind of Latin students were expected to use in their original compositions which was stylistically much more difficult.

A few months later, in October 1887, Caruana, in his capacity as Vice Chancellor, was to describe composition as 'too difficult to be thoroughly mastered by the Students of the 2nd Year', and would actually go so far as to propose the omission of the exercise from the examination to be held within a few days, assuring the Senate that 'candidates would be

²⁴ Anon. 1887: xxxvi (sitting of 30/04/1887).

²⁵ Ibid.

glad to be relieved therefrom'.²⁶ Savona found this line of argument unconvincing, contending that after four or five years of Latin before Matriculation and three more years of Latin Literature at the University, young men in their early twenties should not find any difficulty to write an original composition in Latin, especially since they were expected to do similar exercises in both English and Italian in the respective courses. Savona drew examples with the status of classical composition in England, where, he alleged, at Eton, Rugby, and other English Public Schools students composed both prose and verse in Latin and Greek.²⁷ Savona insisted that the exclusion of original composition from the course of Latin Literature would render the standard of classical scholarship in Malta much lower than that required for the degrees of BA and MA conferred by the English Universities. Waxing sentimental, Savona lamented the past when the students of the Arts Faculty produced Latin verse of considerable merit.

When put to the vote the resolution was passed. Composition was omitted from the Model Syllabus of 1887 and even failed to feature in Professor F.M. Sceberras' Latin curriculum for the three-year course at the Arts and Sciences Faculty for 1888-1892.²⁸ This was to have a detrimental effect on the prevalence of Latin composition in Malta. 'Now that the system has changed,' Judge Luigi Ganado grumbled in 1897, 'we have discovered there is hardly anyone who knows how to make a verse in Latin or in Italian; poetry has been totally abandoned'.²⁹ A conservatist's pairing of the two languages would not have surprised anyone; nor would Ganado's blaming the intrusion of the British system for the degeneration of education in Malta. Ganado would have probably been aware that the value of Latin and Greek composition, and its

²⁶ Anon. 1898: 7 (sitting of 17/10/1887).

²⁷ Thomas Hughes' novel *Tom Brown School Days*, published in 1857, evokes mid 19th-century life at Rugby School.

²⁸ Anon. 1890: vii-viii, which gives full details of Sceberras' syllabus.

²⁹ Anon. 1897: 25 (evidence given on 30/12/1896).

retention or omission from school and university practice, was currently also a matter of controversy in England.³⁰

Reformists attributed the decline of Latin composition as a natural outcome resulting from the progress of the times. In his contribution to a report on the state of learning at the University in 1889, Caruana, then Director of Education, observed that:

The compensation ... obtained by the progress made in the subjects that have been since included in the Curriculum of Arts and Sciences fully makes up for any falling off in the single subject of Latin. For it must be evident to every one how important it is that Science should now a days claim a large share of the Students' attention.³¹

This is very much in tune with discourses that were currently taking place elsewhere in the continent, but notably in England, on the question of the utility of Classics vis-à-vis the more utilitarian science subjects.³²

10.4 The Italians

The whole profile of classical scholarship and teaching in Malta seems to have received an impressive facelift from the presence of the Italian scholars who dominated the scene for the three decades leading to World War II. Besides gaining international renown either in the field of neo-Latin or through the production of major classical scholarly publications, Alfredo Bartoli, Nello Martinelli, and Umberto Moricca were also excellent and exciting teachers of their subject-matter whose personalities and approaches brought a rush of fresh, secular air to the teaching of Classics on the island. Although Vincenzo Laurenza's proper expertise was Italian, his contribution to the field of Latin pedagogy

³⁰ Cf. Stray 1998: 206-207, on the publicized dispute between scholars Percy Gardner and T.E. Page in 1903.

³¹ Anon. 1890: 10.

³² See Stray 1986: 14-20.

cannot be underestimated. These professors came to Malta equipped with thorough knowledge of Greek, which was more than could be said for many of the previous Maltese professors of Latin, and even the subsequent one.³³

Before succeeding to the Chair of Latin at the University, Alfredo Bartoli had already taught Italian (and perhaps Latin too) for about five years at the Lyceum and continued to do so at Flores College even during his tenure of the Chair. Before he started University, Herbert Ganado took private tuition in Latin from Bartoli, who assigned such bold exercises as a commentary on one of his Latin poems:

The first task he set me on was to translate into Italian and to comment on his poem in Latin about the mother of the Milite Ignoto.³⁴ I had never done anything of the kind at the Lyceum. But I had read many books, in particular literary criticisms ... Therefore, my comments made a fine impression on Bartoli.³⁵

Some of Bartoli's methods can be gathered from the exercises he set as competition for readers of his Latin periodical, *Rosa Melitensis*. These included translation from and into Latin, the reconstruction of verses, the correction of grammatical and stylistic mistakes, and essays on the Latin language and literature.³⁶

A long description of Nello Martinelli in Herbert Ganado's memoirs provides a colourful picture of Martinelli's style, which brought 'a great upheaval' to the Latin course.³⁷ From the very start, Martinelli showed he meant business:

³³ These Italian scholars' impact in Malta is possibly comparable to the effect Eduard Fraenkel made in Oxford upon becoming Corpus Professor of Latin in 1935; cf. West 2007. For knowledge of Greek, see Appendix I.

³⁴ Bartoli 1923.

³⁵ Ganado 1977: 1.261.

³⁶ *Rosa*, various issues. By *Rosa* 15-16, 13/02/1910 (unpaged), Bartoli complains of a dearth of interest from Maltese students and abolishes the competition. See 7.1.

³⁷ Ganado 1977: 1.295.

For his inaugural Latin Literature lecture, Martinelli came to class in morning coat and carried an enormous pile of books. Some considered his presentation rather funny but others more aware of our weakness in the subject, were well and truly awed. He immediately displayed the high level of his intellectual and academic calibre as he rapidly and mesmerizingly took us through a brief history of Latin Literature.³⁸

On the next day, Martinelli gave Ganado and his mates an erudite analysis of the language of Cicero:

Like a pathologist at an autopsy, [he] proceeded to dissect the Ciceronian period. He demonstrated the structural quality of Cicero's writings and how one sentence balanced another, the meaning and precise use of words and how each phrase followed in logical sequence, not least the delicate architecture of every paragraph that Cicero constructed with great ability and binding logic.³⁹

Sight-translation of classical authors featured regularly, while the extent of Latin texts that Martinelli managed to cover in class was impressive:

He made us stand, read and translate whole pages of Virgil, Horace, Cicero and Lucretius. There was a great upheaval in the course but the few who did well in the test had to sweat and study Latin for two to three hours a day ... Our level of Latin improved from week to week. In three years we studied two of Virgil's works, Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, Horace's *Odes*, Cicero's *De Senectute* and his *De Amicitia*, Plautus' comedy *Trinummus*, *Germania* by Tacitus and a whole anthology of Latin Literature.⁴⁰

One of Martinelli's exercises was to convert an extract from one author into the style of another. His exposition of a Latin author was comprehensive and embraced the author's influence on subsequent writers:

³⁸ Ibid. 294.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 104-105.

Before we began our studies on Tacitus he lectured us on the philosophical concepts of history, from the Greek and Roman periods, commented on Gian Battista Vico and concluded with Benedetto Croce. He lectured on the influence of Tacitus on later historians, the brevity of concepts and the manner in which Tacitus expressed his thoughts.⁴¹

Martinelli's enthusiasm for Latin could be infectious among students, an effect mostly seen in his best student who started styling his hair in Roman fashion.⁴²

Umberto Moricca's brief tenure was too much hampered by alleged or suspicious political intrigue to allow him to put into effect in Malta the scholarly capabilities for which he was so well known at home and elsewhere. As Head of a Commission in 1935, he was concerned with the level of Latin at the Matriculation exam, reporting that 'Serious deficiencies are noted especially in the two versions from Latin to Italian, in the interpretation of studied authors, and in the theoretical knowledge of grammar. The Commission undertakes to address these deficiencies for the future'.⁴³ A few months later, however, Moricca had to relinquish his University post. The cheering Maltese students who allegedly 'saw him to his ship and out of the Grand Harbour'⁴⁴ must have been political sympathisers rather than Latin devotees - although, largely, the two amounted to the same thing at the time.

⁴¹ Ibid. 104.

⁴² Ganado 1977: 1.294. The student was J.P. Vassallo.

⁴³ UMHA, *Miscellanea* 1935 (2), letter 22/06/1935, entitled 'Esami di matricola - esami di Latino nella sessione estiva 1935', endorsed by the Commission consisting of Moricca, Revd. Anton Vella, and Revd. Giovanni Formosa.

⁴⁴ Frendo 2012: 547. See 7.4.

CHAPTER 11 – LATIN IN LIVING MEMORY

11.1 Latin in Maltese culture and society

As the language of the Catholic liturgy, Latin continued to be a daily reality in Malta until the mid 1960s. The lads who served as altar boys gained a certain acquaintance with Latin that would later serve them well as formal learners of the language.¹ Every Christmas, one of these boys would deliver the ‘Boy’s Sermon’ during the midnight mass which invariably featured ‘Transeamus usque Bethlehem...’ and other similar Latin phrases.²

Since the study of the language was obligatory at the Seminary, its students boasted the most confident Latin. At the University, many courses in Theology (such as Morality and Dogmatic Philosophy) continued until the mid 1960s to be conducted in Latin.³ Written and, up to a time, oral examination questions had to be answered in that language. Theology students who continued their studies in foreign universities came to value the Latin proficiency they had gained back home,⁴ and perhaps cherish the memory of Theology dons such as Revd Seraphim Zarb and Revd Joseph Sapiano - both rather morose priestly professors who, if ever they condescended to make a joke in class, had to do so in Latin.⁵

Nevertheless, very few Maltese priests could hold a full conversation in Latin, and this was not only the case for young theologians who needed

¹ Interviews: Mifsud Bonnici; Brincat; Vassallo. Cf. Tonna and Galea 1981: 1.11 and Massa 2013: 38, for a similar childhood experience of Archbishop Michael Gonzi and Revd Professor Peter Serracino Inglott respectively. Interestingly, Serracino Inglott failed his first attempt of the Latin Matriculation examination in 1951 (Massa 2013: 64).

² Interview: Brincat.

³ Interviews: Mifsud Bonnici; Felice Pace; Aquilina.

⁴ Interview: Borg, V. (1).

⁵ Interviews: Azzopardi; Vella, A. On Sapiano’s method of lecturing (in Latin), see Massa 2013: 329-332.

to study Latin answers by heart to ensure a pass in the Philosophy and Theology exams.⁶ Revd F.X. Schembri did not recall hearing his uncle and first teacher of the language, the renowned Latinist Revd Joseph Schembri,⁷ ever conversing in Latin. Many priests could at best only manage snippets of Latin in their conversation, or quote a classical author, often as a mild joke, such as murmuring Tacitus' 'Nunc demum redit animus' in relief at the departure of a bore.⁸ In all likelihood, the relationship with Latin of most 20th-century Maltese priests was very much like that described by Oliver Friggieri in his novel *La Jibbnazza Niġi Lura*, where his hero, the virtuous priest Dun Grejbel, struggles to remember the Latin he had painstakingly studied as a student, 'that blessed ablative absolute, and the participle, and the gerund, and the declensions ... Nowadays I can hardly understand the words of the Missal.' Later in the novel, during an interview with the Archbishop, Dun Grejbel confesses his failure to fully grasp a simple sentence in Latin that the latter had thrown at him.⁹ Until the reforms of the Vatican Council II, few of those aspiring to the priesthood ever questioned the need for a painstaking knowledge of the language, over and above the academic requirements, to their vocation and later pastoral work.¹⁰ A Theology student considering Latin antiprogressive, if not an impairment to his calling, would be a *sui generis*.¹¹

Latin was a kind of secret language known especially by priests,¹² but also understood by lawyers and medical doctors. Although they ordinarily spoke to each other in Maltese, lawyers, like priests, would occasionally use an expression in Latin to assert their elitist fellowship and also ensure incomprehension by an uneducated listener (e.g. muttering the Biblical 'notus in Iudea' in reference to someone with a bad

⁶ Interview: Borg Micallef. Cf. Massa 2013: 65.

⁷ See 8.1.

⁸ Tac. *Agr.* 3; Interview: Schembri.

⁹ Friggieri 2006: 174, 218.

¹⁰ Interviews: Mifsud Bonnici; Apap.

¹¹ Interviews: Borg Micallef; Apap.

¹² Interview: Schembri.

reputation).¹³ This was a cause of resentment against Latin among the populace who were in the main totally ignorant of the language.¹⁴ Although every Maltese knew how to mumble through the *Agnus Dei* and the *Sanctus*, most did not know the meaning of the words.¹⁵

Yet such was the pervasiveness of the language that some Latin seeped into the vernacular too, doing so principally in the form of adoption and vulgarisation of several religious or liturgical words and phrases.¹⁶ ‘Ecce homo’ evolved as ‘aċċjomu’, used to describe a bruised or emaciated person. ‘Kyrie eleison’ changed into ‘il-kirjelejs!’, an exclamatory expression meaning something like ‘Good heavens!’. ‘Regġamaterna’ became the name of the prayer of the dead from the words ‘requiem eternam (dona)’. Some other expressions lost all their original meaning in their corruption. ‘Regina prophetarum’ became ‘regina profittarum’, said of a self-seeking person. A word like ‘nobis’, often heard in Latin prayers (e.g. ‘ora pro nobis’), was absorbed simply for its appealing sound and became an emphatic indicating intensification of action, such as ‘tah xebgħa nobis’, ‘he gave him a big thrashing’.¹⁷ busillis

11.2 Discipline of the mind

During the interwar years and the decades following World War II, Latin as a subject continued to feature in the main secondary establishments. It was still a time when ‘the study of Latin was taken very seriously’ in Malta.¹⁸ Since the culture was still prevalently Latin and Italian,¹⁹ students generally did not consider Latin a formidable language.²⁰

¹³ The use of Latin tags was a widespread phenomenon; e.g. Goff 2013: 107-108, for its prevalence in British West Africa.

¹⁴ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici.

¹⁵ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici; Marshall.

¹⁶ Cf. Waquet 2001: 103-105.

¹⁷ Cf. entries in Aquilina 1987 and 1990.

¹⁸ De Marco 2007: 41.

¹⁹ Interview: Xuereb.

²⁰ Interviews: Debono Montebello; Xuereb; Vassallo. Only one interviewee complained about the difficulty of Latin, namely, Borg Micallef.

Prospective Law students tended to find Latin a bore fitting for priests alone, but mostly accepted Latin, sometimes as a necessary evil, but more often as one subject among many.

Moreover, the notion of Latin as the best training for the mind, already espoused in the late 19th century by major educationalists such as Salvatore Flores,²¹ had by now taken root in the common perception. This was especially strong as legitimization of Latin for students who were not Theology ones. 'I found the study of Latin a good discipline of the mind. The way the declensions are formed and the syntax make of this language an exercise in logic', reminisced Guido De Marco, lawyer and politician.²² His University mate and lifelong companion on the political front, Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, described the classical languages as 'dixiplinati u dixiplinanti', disciplined and disciplining.²³ Their political leader for many years, although slightly their junior in age, Eddie Fenech Adami - arguably one of the most successful politicians in recent Maltese history - stated in his memoirs that 'rational thought has always appealed to me, so I was particularly fond of Latin.'²⁴ The three of them served Malta as Presidents of the Republic (in successive terms between 1994 and 2009). Even among some of the island's major scholars and literary figures the concept of Latin as mental training prevails. 'Latin fashioned my *forma mentis*', asserted Oliver Friggieri, Professor of Maltese and a successful poet and novelist since the 1970s.²⁵

This ideal could justify those endless hours spent on Latin grammar in secondary schools and the requirement, until the late 1960s, of a Matriculation pass in Latin to enrol in the BA Course. The cultural dimension of the ancient world continued to suffer general neglect, making the paradoxical 'Latin without the Romans', to borrow

²¹ See 9.5.

²² De Marco 2007: 28.

²³ Mifsud Bonnici 1993: 3.

²⁴ Fenech Adami 2014: 8.

²⁵ Interview: Friggieri.

Christopher Stray's telling expression,²⁶ no less a reality than it had been to previous generations of students.²⁷ This was an ambiguity best manifested in the contradictory situation where, in the mid 1930s, Latin Matriculation candidates could be criticized for showing 'a complete lack of certain indispensable cultural elements that are essential for the full and comprehensive grasping of ancient thoughts and ideas',²⁸ but at the same time the *Lyceum Quarterly* could still feature a Latin poem in elegiac couplets composed by a current Lyceum student.²⁹

A secondary course would normally last six years, leading the student all the way up to his O Level examinations. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici started Latin aged 10 when in 1942 he entered the Lyceum on the island of Gozo where his family had taken refuge during the war. He recalled that his teacher there was an Englishman and Oxbridge graduate, by the name of Leach:

We studied Latin with him for 3 years ... We did verb conjugations, noun declensions, and some syntax, how to construct simple sentences, where to place the verb, and other simple things. I remember we used to have two lessons of around three quarters of an hour each per week, during which we embarked on the very first steps ... We started doing some short translations from Hillard and Botting, and we had *Latin for Today*.³⁰

Hillard and Botting's *Elementary Latin Exercises* and the *Latin for Today* series would be the regular Latin textbooks in all secondary teaching establishments for many decades to come, the latter often providing a basic cultural context for the Roman world that was sorely missing from

²⁶ Quoted by Goff 2013: 160. This was an all-too-common scenario in British public schools; see Stray 1998a: 277-281.

²⁷ For a lone voice in the desert, see [Lupi] 1948.

²⁸ *ARU* 1933-1934, 5. Out of the 59 candidates who set for the Latin exam in 1934, only 6 passed.

²⁹ 'Ver', a 26-line poem by Vius. Ciappara, a Class IV B student, in *Lyceum Quarterly Magazine: Easter Number*, 1/3, April 1936, 16.

³⁰ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici. On the popularity of *Latin for Today* in Britain in 1930s and 1940s, see Stray 1998: 278.

the Latin drill in class.³¹ Kennedy's *Latin Primer* was the grammar book held in quasi-biblical reverence.³²

The first Latin lesson would often leave a lasting impression on the young student's mind. Herbert Ganado recalled the day he started learning the language around 1915 at the Lyceum, describing it as his entry into 'Latin's long tunnel':

Fr Karm Buhagiar taught us Latin, and on his first day in class walked in, sat down with a thud and immediately gave a display of his intelligence by reeling off "*rosa, rosae, rosae, rosam, rosa, rosa, rosae, rosas, rosarum, rosis, rosas, rosae, rosis,*" in one long, single breath. We were highly impressed and nearly burst into applause as one does with a tenor who holds and prolongs a high note.³³

A more creative teacher than Buhagiar might attempt to instil some vital liveliness into his explanation as a compensation for the heavy-going grammar. He might introduce the first declension by humourously declaring that 'today I shall be teaching you how to address a table',³⁴ generating in the boys a similar sense of bewilderment that famously struck a young Winston Churchill on his first encounter with the declension of 'mensa'.³⁵ Another teacher might start off by asking the class the meaning of the word 'classis', that would unvaryingly elicit an inaccurate answer, at which juncture etymology would come to the teacher's aid.³⁶ An innate storyteller, such as the Jesuit poet Ġużè Delia, taught the peculiarities of grammar using invented stories, as he did for 'obsequor', the only verb governing a dative in the whole family of composites of 'sequor'.³⁷ When it came to the inconvenience of irregular

³¹ Interview: Aquilina; De Martino; Farrugia; Bugeja etc.

³² Interview: Vella, A. On the origins of Kennedy's *Latin Primer* in the 1870s, see Stray 1998: 191-196.

³³ Ganado 1977: 1.173.

³⁴ Interview: Ellul.

³⁵ Churchill 1930: 10-11. Cf. Goff 2013: 159, 164, revealing also how 'mensa' was generally students' first acquaintance of Latin even in West Africa.

³⁶ Interview: Borg, V. (1).

³⁷ Mifsud and Ghigo 1981: 33-34.

verbs, a teacher's reference to a particular church ceremony could provide some philological enlightenment: 'the verb 'fero' was the one which confused students considerably. The teacher tried to explain the idea of 'fero' by referring to the 'Translation of the Cross' church ceremony on Good Friday, where the crucifix *is carried across* ('translatum') from one end to another.'³⁸ This was one way of making students aware of the cultural relevance of Latin.

When his family returned to Malta in 1945, Ugo Mifsud Bonnici followed the last two years of the secondary course at the Lyceum in Malta. His first teacher there was Revd Edward Coleiro who covered more complex syntax, such as uses of the subjunctive and the deponent verbs. For the last year of the course, Mifsud Bonnici's teacher was Revd Salvino Farrugia, popularly known by the nickname 'Per Se' from the incessant use he made of the Latin expression.³⁹ He was a master of grammar who taught them more difficult aspects of syntax, such as 'quin' and 'quominus', and 'oratio obliqua', giving the latter topic the necessary emphasis: 'sometimes he used to give us a passage in English to translate into Latin and then to turn into 'oratio obliqua', so that we may understand ... how the mood of the verb changes.'⁴⁰ A well-respected Latin teacher for generations of Lyceum students, Farrugia never shied from espousing a strong Italian and Fascist allegiance that could irk some of the learners in his class.⁴¹

The yearly curriculum of Latin grammar reasonably shifted according to institution. Alfred Ellul, a former teacher of English and school-headmaster, vividly recalls the distribution of grammar along the six years he spent at Flores College in the 1950s, where exercises in prose composition were already assigned by the third year using North and Hillard's *Latin Prose Composition*. 'There was a lot of parsing and analysis of sentences ('mark the verbs, mark the nominatives, mark

³⁸ Interview: Ellul.

³⁹ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Interview: Zerafa.

which verb goes with which noun, etc.').⁴² Memorization formed the backbone of the initial years of the study of Latin wherever the language was taught. As an aid to memorize the declension and gender of a noun, the general rule was to study the word with its genitive (e.g. 'rosa, rosae').⁴³ The first ten minutes of every Latin lesson would unvaryingly consist of grammatical recapitulation, with individual students chosen at random to decline words to the rest of the class - in the ecclesiastical pronunciation, of course.⁴⁴ "You there! *Qui quae quod*. Start!" If he committed one mistake, the student was penalized to write the declension fifty times for the next day'.⁴⁵ Conversely, a student might be asked to name a noun from a particular declension, or a noun belonging to the same declension as the noun given by the teacher, e.g. 'Give me another word like 'deus'.⁴⁶ This exertion on memory could be taxing on the mind of some students. Peter Vassallo, later Professor of English at the University of Malta, provoked his teacher's ire by trying to alleviate the obvious boredom:

Once we were doing 'hic, haec, hoc' with Mgr [Salvino] Farrugia, and he turned round and said, "Do you know what this is?". And I, who was witty at the time, or used to think that I was, said, "It is how the Romans used to hiccup." And he sent me out of class. He was very angry, you don't laugh at these things - not at the glorious Romans!⁴⁷

As if rote learning in class was not enough, at home on a Sunday morning Vassallo's father would make him go over the long list of principal parts of verbs found in Kennedy's *Primer*.⁴⁸ At Flores College, Alfred Ellul recalls that students were expected to know the same list 'backwards and forwards'.⁴⁹ As a Seminary student, Revd Arthur Vella

⁴² Interview: Ellul.

⁴³ Interview: Felice Pace.

⁴⁴ In an email communication with the author on 27/06/2017, Biagio Vella stated he was the first schoolteacher of Latin in Malta who used the restored pronunciation based on W. Sydney Allen.

⁴⁵ Interview: Pace.

⁴⁶ Interview: Ellul.

⁴⁷ Interview: Vassallo.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Cf. Kennedy (2009), 98-106.

⁴⁹ Interview: Ellul.

knew all the footnotes in the *Primer* (mainly expounding exceptions to rules) by heart.⁵⁰ In the morning before Guido De Marco left for school, his mother tested him orally on the declensions: ‘Although she had never studied Latin, she did her best to ensure that I studied them properly’.⁵¹ A great deal of memorization was indeed a *sine qua non* for success in Latin, but, as Ellul explains, ‘the whole educational system [still] was one ‘by rote’’.⁵²

Again, the best year to introduce literature in class seems to have been a prerogative of the institution, and might even depend on the personal inclination of the individual teacher. Mifsud Bonnici recalls that it was only in the fourth year of his Lyceum course that he was introduced to Caesar and Latin poetry by Revd Coleiro.⁵³ Roughly at the same time, however, Revd Carmel Grech at the Seminary would already be reading some Phaedrus with his second-year students.⁵⁴ Flores College in the 1950s also exposed students to original classical Latin from an early age:

At Flores College, the teaching of Literature commenced in Year II. *De Bello Gallico* was read in Year II (we used to read Book 1 of *De Bello Gallico* in two-three months), *De Bello Civili* in Year III. *In Catilinam* 1 in Year III. We did Virgil 6 in Year IV and Virgil 2 in Year VI. We started with Caesar *De Bello Gallico*, then moved on to Cicero, and finally to Virgil.⁵⁵

With this amount of literary reading, it is no surprise that every student at Flores College was expected to carry around a Latin dictionary with him!⁵⁶ In his last year at the Lyceum under Revd Salvino Farrugia, Mifsud Bonnici read the selections from Caesar and Virgil prescribed for the Matriculation: the frequency with which the text was read ensured that,

⁵⁰ Interview: Vella, A.

⁵¹ De Marco 2007: 28.

⁵² Interview: Ellul.

⁵³ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici.

⁵⁴ Interview: Borg, V. (1).

⁵⁵ Interview: Ellul.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

sixty years later, he could still recite the first lines of *Aeneid* 2. Eddie Fenech Adami, who studied Latin at St Aloysius College, could years later still declaim some of Ovid's poignant lines from *Tristia*: 'Students were not meant to learn lines by heart, but I at least took Latin very seriously.'⁵⁷ The elucidation of poetry would include acquainting students with the basic rules of prosody.⁵⁸ As a mnemonic aid, J.P. Vassallo insisted with his son Peter on studying Latin poetry in scansion. To this day, in fact, the latter can still recite whole chunks from *Aeneid* 6.⁵⁹

The flair that a teacher could give to his presentation of Latin poetry would considerably enhance the students' appreciation of it. Revd Farrugia was convincing in his messianic interpretation of Virgil's *Eclogue* 4.⁶⁰ His successor at the Lyceum, the Revd Ġużepp Camilleri, had enough charm to make students 'appreciate the beauty of the language' even through the grammatical explanation of a few lines from Virgil at a time.⁶¹ At the Seminary, Revd Joseph Schembri ('Iċ-Ċimpla') found Lucretius's atheism difficult to attenuate.⁶² He was much more at ease with Virgil, often amusing students with a Maltese idiomatic rendering to capture the flavour of a verse. 'Facilis descensus Averni ... hic labor, hoc opus est',⁶³ would informally become 'Kemmm trid tbasbas!', ensuring an enduring impression of the Virgilian admonition on his students' mind.⁶⁴ Schembri's recitation of excerpts from his own Latin poetry, or his regular updates on the progress of his long Latin poem on

⁵⁷ Interview: Fenech Adami.

⁵⁸ Interview: Felice Pace.

⁵⁹ Interview: Vassallo. On J.P. Vassallo, see Schiavone 2009: 2.1572-1573. As a student, Vassallo is described as an 'accomplished Latin scholar' in Ganado 1977: 1.294. He was President of the Virgil Society (Malta Branch) during 1947-1948. He read Classics at Oxford University, and briefly taught Latin at the Seminary and the Lyceum before becoming Director of Education. His fervour for Latin Literature is evident in, e.g., Vassallo, J.P. 1947.

⁶⁰ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici.

⁶¹ Interview: De Martino.

⁶² Interview: Borg, V. (1).

⁶³ Verg. *Aen.* 6.126-129.

⁶⁴ Interview: Schembri. The Maltese: 'the exertion will cause you severe diarrhoea'. Cf. Interview: Ellul, for a similarly bold interpretation in Maltese of Cicero *Cat.* 1.1 that, however, earned Ellul a taste of the rod at Flores College.

soccer, made the young seminarians aware of Latin's versatile capacity to express modern-day topics.⁶⁵ His nephew and later teacher of Latin at the Seminary, Revd F.X. Schembri, took after his uncle in eliciting parallels with Maltese, as Oliver Friggieri recalled: 'He used to see the logic of the language and enjoy comparing it with the logic of Maltese, to my great delight'.⁶⁶ For Friggieri, Latin at the Seminary was an encounter with great poetry:

It was also at the Latin class of the Seminary that I had the good fortune to discover Virgil and Book IV of his *Aeneid*. Revd Nicholas Dobono Montebello and Revd F.X. Schembri both had an extraordinary ability to delve into its heart. We knew the text word for word, and we could translate it in English as well as in Maltese.⁶⁷

Schembri and Debono Montebello, according to Friggieri, went into the historical and mythological backgrounds of poetry, and examined its moral implications in spite of a pagan religion.⁶⁸ Lino Farrugia and Albert Marshall, two of Friggieri's peers, were less enthusiastic about Seminary Latin. Luckily, their encounter with the letters of Pliny the Younger inspired them to start to pass each other secret 'naughty messages' in Latin during their classes.⁶⁹ Such messages understandably disregarded grammatical correctness and proper vocabulary, but served to enliven the asperity of learning Latin at a time when, according to Marshall, 'absolutely no attempt was made to 'push' the language out of the textbook and demonstrate how Latin (and Greek) were once spoken by people of flesh and blood'.⁷⁰ When the young Farrugia came to design set and costumes for his first-ever production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, he had to turn to the illustrations of the *Latin for Today* volumes, having done very little of Roman culture during Latin. Horatio Vella, who commenced his secondary schooling at the Seminary a few years later, in 1964, found the Seminary no better than a 'Grammar School' where

⁶⁵ Interview: Vella, A. Cf. 8.1.

⁶⁶ Friggieri 2008: 279.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 170.

⁶⁸ Interview: Friggieri.

⁶⁹ Interview: Farrugia.

⁷⁰ Interview: Marshall.

the teacher 'explained the authors line by line, verse by verse, but said nothing else besides'.⁷¹

That most Maltese students sat for the Oxford GCE exam must have further diminished the cultural dimension in the Latin class. Since the Oxford paper excluded questions on historical or mythological backgrounds of the set authors, it was commonly considered a safer bet than the local Matriculation paper, which contained such questions (including some on basic prosody).⁷² Thus, it was not uncommon that a young man might be studying the 'Sabinus and Cotta' episode from *De Bello Gallico* 5 thinking that the two Romans were fictional characters; it took Paul Xuereb many years before he realized they were historical.⁷³ Peter Vassallo, on the other hand, felt confident enough to sit for the Oxford scholarship-level paper, which included verse composition, and in which he was successful, earning a distinction. This shows that the extraordinary student could, even until the mid 1950s, put together some verses in Latin, and under examination conditions for the matter.⁷⁴

Generally, however, the absence of examination questions on thematic aspects of texts facilitated the possibility for students to cram their way to a passing mark, as Victor Bonnici remembered: 'as regards to the literature section, I have to say that I learned all of Virgil Book 1 selections by heart. You get the hang of the Latin passage and then simply roll off the English from memory and try to stop at the right place'.⁷⁵ Despite the well-meaning measures undertaken by Sigismondo Savona and his contemporaries in the last decades of the previous century, cramming obviously had not quite lost its hold on the Maltese system of education.

⁷¹ Interview: Vella, H.

⁷² Interviews: Borg, V. (1); Vella, B.; Xuereb; De Martino; Vella, H.

⁷³ Interview: Xuereb. This was an experience shared, e.g., by West African students; cf. Goff 2013: 159-160, for a similar complaint by Robert Wellesley Cole about Classics at the Sierra Leone Grammar School in the 1920s.

⁷⁴ Interview: Vassallo. In the 1950s verse composition in Latin and Greek was still an option in the BA Hons paper at the UM.

⁷⁵ Interview: Bonnici.

11.3 Latin and civic virtues

If Latin drilling contributed to the development of logic and grammatical structure in students, as well as to an increase in their self-discipline, then the acquaintance with the heroic tales of patriotism from Greece and Rome was supposed to inculcate in them a sense of selfless duty and devotion to the *patria*.

As a regular reading experience of every student of Latin, the adaptations of Livy's narratives of the archetypes of Roman virtue, or the tales of intrepid battles fought by the Greeks against the Persian invaders, even when serving mainly as a pedagogical exercise in grammar still managed to impart an ideal which could not but leave an indelible mark on sensitive minds developing at a time of increasing national consciousness.⁷⁶ In true Humboldtian way, such an impact resonated especially among individualistic students bent on politics and statesmanship, rather than on those who studied the Classics as part of their route to the priesthood. It was a 'heroism for the country and for the state: that you are a 'civis' - 'civis Romanus' in their case - a citizen of your country and you have an obligation towards it', as Ugo Mifsud Bonnici put it.⁷⁷ A successful lawyer and politician who in 1994 was elected to the headship of the state, Mifsud Bonnici (Fig. 25) has often extolled the study of Latin as a moralistically formative influence on his career and general philosophy of life. Two other former Presidents of the Republic, Guido De Marco and Eddie Fenech Adami, have also spoken about Latin with a deep sense of respect.⁷⁸ That the three lawyers had each a very successful political career within the Nationalist Party is a

⁷⁶ Classics' influence on nationalism is not, however, particularly evident in Malta as it is in other countries, e.g., in Ireland (Stanford 1976: 202-221), South Africa (Lambert 2011: 31, *passim*), or Ghana (Goff 2013: 169-180).

⁷⁷ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici.

⁷⁸ See also 11.2.

proof of how durable was the connection between the Maltese conservative sector and Latin.



Figure 25 - Mgr Edward Colerio and Ugo Mifsud Bonnici in 1990

The mention of the language stirs up in Fenech Adami the memory of his humble and devout father who used to spend long hours at home reading Latin, especially religious books. Although he had never been to University, and had only studied the language as a secondary student at St Aloysius College, the elder Fenech Adami still believed that 'he is not cultured who does not know Latin'.⁷⁹ Guido De Marco's recollection of his mother helping her son with the memorisation of Latin declensions revives the epitome of the traditional Roman 'matrona' overseeing her children's education.⁸⁰ Clearly, to these Maltese politicians Latin evokes a sense of Roman 'pietas', the devotion for home, family, and religion, which merges into, and finally becomes one with, Christian morality and ethos. De Marco paid a short but significant tribute to Latin in his autobiography written towards the end of his life.⁸¹ He considered the study of Latin and its culture as an encounter with the history of Europe and the Mediterranean that to him drew the inevitable analogy between

⁷⁹ Interview: Fenech Adami.

⁸⁰ E.g. Cornelia Africana, mother of the Gracchi, being the classic exemplar: cf. Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 1.4-5.

⁸¹ De Marco 2007: 40-41.

Rome and Christianity, personified in the figure of Dante. 'Through the study of Latin, and its Roman belongingness', concluded De Marco, 'one can well understand what *Mare Nostrum* meant. Latin literature and culture bridge Rome from Classical times to the Christian era. How right Dante is in his Canto XXXI of the *Purgatorio*, 'Roma onde Cristo è Romano'.'

To De Marco, the links between Rome and Christianity underline a sense of historical continuum that extends meaningfully down to our own times. In the passage below, it is interesting how his double use of the word 'mandate' ties the fateful, grand purpose of Rome, as expressed by Virgil's memorable words,⁸² to the fulfilment of his own public career, symbolically expressed even by a particular choice of public event. One's personal contribution to the 'res publica' is in fact part of the great scheme that was, and continues to be, Rome's destiny.

The study of Roman history was a constant reminder of the mandate given to Rome, so well expressed by Virgil when he wrote in the *Aeneid*, 'Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento (hae tibi erunt artes), pacisque imponere morem, parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.' It was with a particular sense of history in mind when, on the eve of my mandate as president of Malta, I inaugurated a monument called *Enea*, by Ugo Attardi, at the Lower Barrakka Gardens in Valletta.⁸³

The decline in a classical education has not only led to the 'deterioration of grammatical structure (in any language)', according to Mifsud Bonnici, but even more to 'the decline of a culture of the state; what one can do for the state and for the community - your obligation as a citizen' over and above selfish ambition. The reading of the Classics inadvertently nourished 'humanitas' in a student. Cicero's speeches were read as models of oratorical style, but, as Mifsud Bonnici pointed out, 'we were

⁸² Verg. *Aen.* 6.851-853.

⁸³ De Marco 2007: 41. Cf. *KD*, 27/06/1978, 405, where, in parliament, De Marco laments the local and international decline of Latin.

also imbibing the concept [of civic virtues]; for example, that you had to take care of the public goods, of the common good.’⁸⁴ The altruistic benefit of Classics must have been a strong motive behind Mifsud Bonnici’s attempts, upon becoming Minister of Education in 1987, to reinstate the study of Latin in state schools, attempts which were, however, largely ineffective.⁸⁵

11.4 The Roman versus the Hellene

The post-war years were something of a golden age in the history of Classics in Malta. For the first time, Greek took its rightful position alongside Latin in the curriculum of the University, where the two Classics scholars carried their rather heavy lecturing load in high spirits (Fig. 26). Yet, if the Professor of Latin, Edward Coleiro, conjured up in the eyes of his students the personality of a conventional Roman patrician (and, on his death bed, even the profile of Julius Caesar)⁸⁶, his assistant and the lecturer in Greek, Revd Gerald Seaston, rather suggested the broad-mindedness of a Hellene.⁸⁷ It was less the linguistic specialization of the two scholars than their strikingly different personalities that brought this distinction into relief. Such a disparity also characterized their respective teaching methodologies and treatment of students. Although both academics were Catholic priests and enjoyed a good working relationship,⁸⁸ the great difference that existed between the Latinist and the Hellenist must have, at least in their students’ perception, resonated on different levels, and might have given the idea that the imperialist Briton was, in this case, subordinate to the Maltese colonial subject. Evidently, however, Seaston was the more cultured and sensitive person, and his unassuming superiority appeared like an odd

⁸⁴ Zammit, M. and Zammit, M. 2010.

⁸⁵ Interviews: Aquilina; Pace. Cf. Pace 1993.

⁸⁶ Interview: Borg, V. (1).

⁸⁷ Interview: Attard.

⁸⁸ Interviews: Gatt; Attard.

reenactment of the Horatian paradox 'Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit'.⁸⁹



Figure 26 - An archaeological tour (late 1940s or early 1950s): Gerald Seaston, Edward Colerio, and Joseph Schembri, surrounded with students

A great disciplinarian, Coleiro's main concern as a teacher of Latin was grammar and 'the elimination of grammatical mistakes'.⁹⁰ His lectures, reflecting an authoritarian personality, consisted principally on his going through a Latin author and giving a word for word translation.⁹¹ To some students, this rather dry approach to the text, lacking in deep syntactical analysis or broad cultural consideration, seemed limited and uncreative.⁹² In contrast, Seaston's deep-seated and extensive interests in literature and the arts enabled him to move effortlessly from one theme to another. The breadth of his lectures bore a comprehensiveness which students came to admire and often miss in Coleiro's sessions.⁹³ Far from adhering strictly to his area of Greek literature, Seaston liked drawing examples from Roman works: 'he would explain Demosthenes by comparison with Cicero'.⁹⁴ Moreover, Seaston was not finicky about

⁸⁹ Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.156.

⁹⁰ Interview: Busuttil. Cf. Interviews: Vella, A.; Gatt.

⁹¹ Interview: Gatt.

⁹² Interview: Xuereb.

⁹³ Interview: Borg, V. (1).

⁹⁴ Interview: Mifsud Bonnici.

grammar, habitually dismissing a student's mistake in tense, such as would have earned the ire of Professor Coleiro, as simply *lapsus calami*.⁹⁵ Later on in his career, Coleiro's lectures must have become more colourful, often dazzling students with his dramatic declaiming of Latin poets, full of 'panache, alacrity, and pomposity'.⁹⁶ This development might indeed have owed something to Seaston's influence.

There was a mixture of the tyrant and the naïve in Coleiro. Always the strict, overbearing Monsignor with episcopal aspirations,⁹⁷ he could strike terror into Seminarians, whom he habitually treated as mere children.⁹⁸ 'A good Latinist will make a good priest', he asserted.⁹⁹ Yet, Coleiro would turn bashful when coming across a saucy passage in Catullus.¹⁰⁰ His explanation of how the Romans warmed their hands over braziers - a word which he continued to pronounce mistakenly as 'brassieres' - achieved legendary fame among successive generations of students.¹⁰¹ He made it a point to leave the office-door open whenever a female student called, urging his members of staff to follow suit.¹⁰² In an era of a rapidly changing and increasingly liberal world, Coleiro's manners came to be seen as prudishly clerical and ultra-conservative.¹⁰³ Not so with the charming and urbane lecturer of Greek, whose view of the world was uniformly relaxed and moderate.¹⁰⁴ He charmed female students,¹⁰⁵ and was easy with Seminarians.¹⁰⁶ He maintained a certain cool-headed independence that allowed him to be defiant of the Seminary's Rector, and even of the Archbishop himself.¹⁰⁷ Nor did he consider it beneath his dignity to strike up a friendship with, and even

⁹⁵ Interview: Vella, A.

⁹⁶ Interview: Farrugia. Cf. Friggieri 2008: 404-5.

⁹⁷ Interviews: Gatt; Farrugia.

⁹⁸ Interview: Xuereb.

⁹⁹ Interview: Azzopardi.

¹⁰⁰ Interviews: Xuereb; Bugeja.

¹⁰¹ Interviews: Mifsud Bonnici; Farrugia; Felice (i.e. three different decades).

¹⁰² Interview: Zerafa; Xuereb; Apap; Bonanno.

¹⁰³ Interview: Marshall.

¹⁰⁴ Ganado 1977: 4.468-469.

¹⁰⁵ Interview: Cremona

¹⁰⁶ Interview: Schembri; Borg, V. (1).

¹⁰⁷ Interviews: Schembri; Felice Pace. Cf. Lupi 2002: 220.

support, the Leader of the Malta Labour Party, Dom Mintoff,¹⁰⁸ whose leftist and at times anticlerical policies came into conflict with the traditionalist, exclusive members of the clergy, of whom Coleiro was the epitome.¹⁰⁹ Seaston was later to change his opinion about Mintoff,¹¹⁰ but Coleiro was personally at war with the politician from early times.¹¹¹ To be sure, the militant Coleiro held his own even against the redoubtable Archbishop Gonzi, a rare accomplishment among Maltese priests at the time.¹¹²

Something which gave Seaston a definite intellectual and academic edge over the Maltese Professor of Latin was his (Seaston's) equal proficiency in the two ancient languages. Although Seaston established himself at the University as a lecturer in Ancient Greek, a thorough knowledge of which enabled him to sight-translate the language at will, and even to converse in it if necessary,¹¹³ he was also a master of Latin.¹¹⁴ Coleiro, on the other hand, had only a rudimentary knowledge of Greek.¹¹⁵ With the status of Greek in Malta being what it was, Coleiro was indubitably not to blame for this lacuna: 'it was by dint of his great determination that he managed to obtain a working knowledge of the language' by, for example, 'wrapping a small piece of paper containing verb conjugations that he could study on the train' during his studies in London.¹¹⁶

Seaston retired and left Malta in 1965 in perfect time, as it were, with the decision of Vatican Council II to remove Latin from the liturgy. Thus, Seaston did not need to share the aging Coleiro's struggle to keep alive a moribund language and to deal with the frustration of a steady decline in student numbers, which at times forced the Maltese priest into

¹⁰⁸ Interview: Schembri; Felice Pace; Berry. Cf. Massa 2013: 269.

¹⁰⁹ Interview: Zerafa.

¹¹⁰ Interview: Fenech Adami.

¹¹¹ Friggieri 2008: 409.

¹¹² Interview: Apap.

¹¹³ Interview: Vella, A.; Vella, B.

¹¹⁴ Interview: Vella, A.; Mifsud Bonnici; Gatt.

¹¹⁵ Interview: Felice Pace; Azzopardi; Gatt; De Martino; Apap.

¹¹⁶ Interview: Gatt.

'Roman' bullying tactics as a measure to rope in students.¹¹⁷ Although Coleiro retained a fighting spirit to the end, age somehow mollified the Latinist. In the last years of his career, he could afford to set individual work according to a student's level and to mark translations himself during tutorials, for which exercise he made unsparing use of red ink;¹¹⁸ 'anything short of that would reduce the Course to a sham', insisted the Professor.¹¹⁹ A former student, Vincent Borg, remembered how in 1966 he stood aghast as Coleiro corrected his first passage of Latin prose composition, covering the whole paper in red. 'Coleiro turned to me and said, "Son, don't be upset. I am only improving on your Latin. It does not mean that what you wrote is wrong. But you must know that there is good and there is better. And I am giving you the best!"'.¹²⁰ Classics might be in its death throes, but Coleiro would not lower his level or declare himself vanquished. Like Aeneas rushing into battle while Troy burnt, Coleiro could still find courage in the thought that 'Una salus victis nullam sperare salutem'.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Interview: Attard; Bugeja; Borg, F.; Debono, etc.

¹¹⁸ Interview: Bugeja.

¹¹⁹ NAM, PDE Aquilina Papers, "2nd Lectureship in Classics" (1968-1969), 2.

¹²⁰ Interview: Borg, V. (2).

¹²¹ Verg. *Aen.* 2.354.

CHAPTER 12 – CONCLUSION

That Classics, primarily Latin, played a role in the historical development of Malta has generally been taken for granted as an incontrovertible fact. An empirical investigation into the matter, however, for any particular period, has never been attempted. Using a wide range of archival, documentary, and oral sources, this study has attempted to address this issue by placing Classics in the historical context of Malta during the British era (1800-1979). Since the development of education is inextricably bound to political change,¹ the study has delineated the story of Classics within the political framework of a period that witnessed Malta's emergence from long centuries of colonialism as a fully sovereign state. Acknowledging the importance of Classics for the professional and social advancement of individuals, the study has explored Classics' diverse roles as a social marker, a cultural authority, and a politically motivating factor. Prominence has been given to the careers of major scholars and classicists active in Malta both for their biographical value *per se* and as an opportunity to deepen the enquiry into the changing facets and functions of Classics across the period in question. Oral inquiry has thrown light on the reasons behind the decline of Classics in the latter half of the 20th century, and particularly highlighted the sentiment that the loss of Classics is often associated with a deterioration of civic virtues.

In the course of the analysis, a number of key points have arisen. Through most of the British period, Latin (as opposed to Greek) largely maintained its former monopoly on the Maltese notion of classical culture. Further to its hallowed bond with the Catholic Church, Latin continued to be instinctively perceived as an adjunct to Italian, evidenced *inter alia* in the amalgamation for many years of the two languages under one University Chair (1838-1864, 1914-1923). *Latinità* cemented the

¹ Salter and Tapper 1981: 26-29.

three-way kinship consisting of Malta, Italy, and the Church of Rome, a triangulation which, besides constituting the Maltese ideal of Christendom, preserved an elitist *status quo*. It was largely an ideological perception, however, which was corroborated neither by a widespread familiarity with Latin, nor by a general proficiency in Italian. This rendered the Maltese idea of their affinity with Latin culture, tenacious to the point of obstinacy in certain quarters of the educated sector, increasingly unjustifiable in the eyes of the colonial rulers.

One means the British may have resorted to in their early attempts to lure away the Maltese from their Latin sensibilities was the attraction of the 'other' classical language, the unknown and un-Catholic Greek. Although documentary evidence to support this claim is, to say the least, tenuous, this thesis has argued that the deployment of Greek for the University gateway in 1824, with which it opens,² could have been a subtle provocation, an implicit invitation to the Maltese to lower themselves from their haughty Latin pride and adapt to the cultural reform on offer from their new masters. In such a political context, the message imparted through the motto itself would have been highly suggestive, at least to those Maltese curious enough to discover its meaning: learning to acquiesce would open the gateway to fresh opportunities and civil advancement, but an inflexibility in the preservation of tradition could prove a gatekeeper.³ At this early stage of British influence in Malta, Greek may have been used to clear Maltese minds of the Latin miasma, to borrow a later expression by W.B. Yeats that the Irish poet used in a not altogether different context.⁴ Some cleansing of Latinity in Malta, through a suffusion of Hellenization, could indeed have been seen as easing the way to the first attempts at Anglicization under Governor Maitland, which ultimately proved futile. To a degree, the indifference to Greek on the part of the Maltese

² See 1.1; also 3.4. About the gateway's date of construction, cf. 1.1, n. 9.

³ Cf. *ΑΓΕΩΜΕΤΡΗΤΟΣ ΜΗΔΕΙΣ ΕΙΣΙΤΩ* at Plato's Academy, about which see 1.2, n. 37.

⁴ Referring to Yeats's son, Greek 'will clear his eyes of the Latin miasma', quoted by Stanford 1976: 94, who dates it to 1930.

anticipates their resistance to English. It is tempting here to draw a parallel with the situation in British Cyprus, where the islanders considered the imposition of English an attempt to deHellenize, and even to proselytize, them.⁵ Analogously, the Maltese resented the imposition of English as a treacherous strategy to de-Latinize their island, and, if not exactly to convert it, at least to make its people more secular. By 1920, when the full Anglicisation of the island was not yet an attainable reality, the Greek maxim on the University entrance was enough to kindle in Eric Shepherd, an Englishman and the new Professor of English Literature, a 'very reassuring, not to say improving' sentiment (presumably for its suggestiveness of academic prestige but also of the existence of a culture that was not exclusively Latin),⁶ but in the Maltese generally it still failed to stir any significant interest.

Unlike the case of Cyprus and other countries where classical themes were often deployed in political discourses as a spur to foment nationalistic sentiments,⁷ Classics in Malta was generally a low-profile, rather innocent affair. Latin was a language largely appropriated by a Church whose safeguarding of power depended on the conservation of an unruffled relationship with the colonial government. For all its steadfast presence in the curricula, Latin rarely broke through its scholarly grammatical encasement to exercise any real political effect. The closest it ever came to do this was at the height of the 'Language Question' rivalry (1920s-1930s) when Latin was employed in the manoeuvres of local politicians and exploited as political propaganda by Italian scholars. With WWII bringing about the downfall of the Maltese Italophiles, and a solution, if a partial one, to the embittered Question, Latin continued to thrive as an academic pursuit - until, that is, it was sentenced to death by the Roman Church itself. Paradoxically, the humiliation of *Italianità* coincided with the official establishment of Ancient Greek as a University subject around 1950, as if the appearance

⁵ Persianis 1978: 63, 162, *passim*

⁶ See 1.1.

⁷ See, e.g., Persianis 1978, Stephens and Vasunia 2010, Lambert 2011, Goff 2013, and Vasunia 2013.

of the language could only be possible should the old Italian connection be severed. With Italian fallen temporarily into ignominy, Maltese students could now understand the inscription as they walked through their University's gateway. The few who did so, however, were invariably young Seminarians.⁸

Classics in Maltese academia has also been, except for relatively short spells of time, the firm domain of the Church. We saw how the career termination, in 1844, of the first professor of Latin and Italian Literatures, the lay Maltese scholar Lorenzo De Caro, initiated a tradition of clerical tenancy of the Chair that was to remain unbroken until 1914. Whether ecclesiastics or not, Maltese intellectuals of the 19th century were imbued in the Italian scholarly tradition, and generally resented the perceived intrusion of English systems in classical pedagogy (e.g. the replacement of Latin composition by unseen translation towards the turn of the century) as the cause of a deterioration of Latin, and Italian, studies. The secular Italian professors of Latin during the interwar period, however, being widely erudite and equally versed in Greek, revealed a clear academic advantage over their Maltese clerical predecessors and raised the benchmark for subsequent Maltese classicists.⁹ In fact, a good knowledge of Greek remained an uncomfortable lacuna for Edward Coleiro whose election to a professorship in 1947 marked the return of a clerically dominated Classics scenario at the University. Yet, the Latinist Coleiro was unconventional in many ways. He followed postgraduate studies in England. He recognized the need to staff the new Classics Department with lecturers trained in England possessing Greek as well as Latin. He broke away from the mould of Latin versification and inscriptional composition typical of his predecessors. He organized an international Latin congress whose scale will be very hard to surpass. With his edition of Virgil's *Eclogues*, he produced the first work of substantial classical scholarship by a Maltese scholar. Finally, he showed much foresight when, as a means to dispel the notion that Latin

⁸ Interview: Debono Montebello.

⁹ See Appendix I.

belonged to the Church,¹⁰ he sought a lay scholar for a successor. Notwithstanding a conservative frame of mind, Coleiro must still be credited with a certain ability to move along with the times, a quality which would at least partly account for his long and prolific career.

It is surprising that the untiring Coleiro never attempted a translation of his beloved Virgil into Maltese, the native language of which he prided himself on having an excellent command.¹¹ As a matter of fact, none of the Maltese classical scholars and neo-Latin poets mentioned in this study are known to have tried their hand at translation into the vernacular.¹² Such a passivity in a 19th-century Maltese context is not surprising, but when it extends over the first half of the following century, a period especially notable for the great strides achieved by the Maltese vernacular as a literary language, then it becomes a matter of perplexity. Translation of the Classics into national languages have elsewhere been part of the route of nation-building and the quest for a cultural identity.¹³ Malta, however, had to wait until 2006, already in her second year as a full EU member, for her first translation of the 'classic of all Europe'¹⁴, Virgil's *Aeneid*, a work penned by Revd Victor Xuereb (1930-2017) who had earlier also translated Homer's epics.¹⁵ This indifference must be seen in parallel with an astonishing lack of classical allusions in Maltese poetry and creative literature of the interwar and post-war periods, whose causes have never been seriously examined.¹⁶ Oliver Friggieri,

¹⁰ Interview: Borg. L.

¹¹ For his study on Maltese grammar published in 1936, Edmund Sutcliffe included a piece by Coleiro as one of the excerpts illustrating Maltese prose (Sutcliffe 1936: 227-229), a testimony that made Coleiro proud (Bonanno 1998: 19).

¹² H.C.R. Vella must be accredited with the first-ever translation into Maltese of a classical author (Propertius) by a Maltese professor of Classics: Vella, H.C.R. 2012.

¹³ Cf., e.g., Stray 1998a: 16, for Catalan; Martirosova Torlone 2009: 8-22, for (classicized) Russian; Güthenke 2010 for Modern Greek; Takada 2010: 293, 297 for Japanese; Lambert 2011: 35 for Afrikaans; Goff 2013: 149 for Fanti; to a lesser extent Stanford 1976: 87 for Gaelic.

¹⁴ T.S. Eliot's famous description of Virgil in his presidential address to the Virgil Society in 1944; cf. Eliot 1957: 70.

¹⁵ Xuereb, V. 2006, 1989 (*Odyssey*), and 1999 (*Iliad*). ASCD houses an unpublished translation into Maltese verse by Revd. Albert M. Grech of *Aeneid* 1-6, dated 1936-1942.

¹⁶ In his opening address at the Latin Congress of 1973 (Coleiro 1976: 28), Anton Buttigieg, poet, politician, and, at the time, the President of the Republic, made sure

a Professor of Maltese Literature, thinks that this apathy came from a reluctance in the Maltese to shake off the aged notion that classical literature is pagan and anti-Catholic.¹⁷ He cited as an example the poetry of Dun Karm Psaila (1871-1961), Malta's national poet, where the few references to Greece and Rome feel inordinately hackneyed and superficial, redolent of neoclassicism.¹⁸ According to Friggieri, the glories of classical literature remained alien to the Maltese, while Latin was only relevant as the language of the Church.¹⁹ This is no doubt a worthy consideration, but other factors may have contributed to this insensitivity. That Latin was generally taught through a foreign medium (Italian, and later English), and rarely in the mother-tongue, could have deprived the Maltese student from real interaction with the Classics at an emotional level.²⁰

Besides the ambivalent engagement with the Classics by Maltese artists and writers, there are several areas which the framework of this study could only allow it to touch upon and which merit further investigation. Maltese neo-Latin and inscriptional composition is a large, rich field which demands due appraisal, linguistic and cultural. The work of some of the major proponents in the area, such as Revd Luigi Farrugia, and their collaboration with Italian counterparts, has never been studied. To this matter one may also add the use of Latin in ecclesiastic celebratory and funerary speeches. On the civil front, a study of the usage of Latin and of classical references in journalism, parliamentary debates, and political rhetoric may offer stimulating pathways into this branch of Maltese classical reception. On a biographical level, future research

to refer to the imitation of Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* in one of his poems, while citing Ovid and Martial as other influences.

¹⁷ Private conversation with the author on 16/02/2018. See further Friggieri 2007. In 1975, Friggieri published a Maltese translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* (Friggieri 1975).

¹⁸ See Friggieri 2007. For similar "implantation" of the classical tradition in [Russian] literature', cf. Martirosova Torlone 2009: 21.

¹⁹ Cf. Ellul Mercer's *Leli ta' Haż-Żgħir* (1938), the first psychological novel in Maltese literature, where the eponymous anti-hero's love for Latin and ancient philosophy is given as one of the main causes triggering his loss of Christian faith and eventual mental illness.

²⁰ Cf. South Africa in Lambert 2011: 35.

could help to disentangle 19th-century teachers, such as Ziongo and Solomos, from their relative obscurity, and perhaps shed more light on Greek's struggle to attain an academic presence in Malta alongside that of Latin.

As a final word, it is pertinent to observe that Malta's road to EU membership and accession in 2004 appears to have helped reviving in the Maltese nation the classical consciousness that certain socio-political groups in the course of the island's modern history had feared to lose irretrievably. It is as if the rejection of Classics together with colonialism in the post-Independence period gave way to a gradual recovery of Classics with EU membership. The Malta Classics Association, germinating at the University in the wake of this decisive development (2010), had for its fundamental objective the propagation of Classics outside academic parameters. This has returned encouraging outcomes, such as an increasing number of students with enthusiasm for the serious study of classical culture.²¹ With a group of young Classics students taking Latin to primary schools as a literacy programme,²² and the Greek myth of Orpheus strongly contributing to the theme of a major interdisciplinary project that Valletta will host later this year as part of the city's celebrations as the European Capital of Culture for 2018,²³ Classics in Malta is set to look towards the future with optimism.

²¹ Between 2013 and 2017, 163 candidates sat for the Intermediate Level examination in 'Classical Studies' (<https://www.um.edu.mt/matsec/reports/statisticalreport>). The subject was introduced in 2011, featuring basic grammar of Greek and Latin, besides classical history and culture. Student intake at the UM is also encouraging for Classics in Malta: 20 new students for 1994-2004, 34 for 2004-2014, and 25 for 2014-2017 (official data provided by the Faculty of Arts).

²² http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/81753/kids_give_life_to_a_dead_language_latin > 19/02/2018

²³ For 'Orfeo & Majnun', <https://valletta2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Valletta-2018-Cultural-Programme-2018.pdf> > p. 121 (accessed 19/02/2018).

APPENDIX I

List of Professors

Name	Nationality	Professorship	Years of Tenure	Greek
Lorenzo Da Caro	Maltese	Latin and Italian	1839-1844	?
Salvatore Cumbo, Revd	Maltese	Latin and Italian	1844-1853	yes
Lorenzo Pullicino, Revd	Maltese	Latin and Italian	1853-1863	?
Salvatore Caruana, Revd	Maltese	Latin	1864-1877	?
Michele Albanese, Revd	Maltese	Latin	1877-1885	?
Francesco Sceberras	Maltese	Latin	1885-1914	?
Alfredo Bartoli	Italian	Latin and Italian	1914-1923	yes
Vincenzo Laurenza	Italian	Latin (acting)	1923-1924 1927-1933 1936-1939	?
Nello Martinelli	Italian	Latin	1924-1927	yes
Umberto Moricca	Italian	Latin	1933-1936	yes
A. H. Armstrong	English	Latin and Greek	1939-1943	yes
Edward Coleiro, Revd	Maltese	Latin	(1943-1947) 1947-1979	?
Gerald Seaston, Revd	English	Greek	c.1958-1965	yes
Horatio C.R. Vella	Maltese	Latin and Greek	2006 to date	yes

APPENDIX II

List of interviewees (in alphabetical order)

Name	Date of birth	Date of interview	Main Reason/s
Colin Apap	1950	020114	Priest; studied Greek and Latin at Seminary and UM.
Nicholas Aquilina	1939	180115	Priest; studied Greek and Latin at Seminary and UM; taught Latin at Seminary.
Karm Attard	1940	180813	Priest and Biblical scholar; studied Greek and Latin at the Seminary and UM.
John Azzopardi	1937	050313	Priest and historian; studied Greek and Latin at Seminary and UM; Taught Greek at Seminary.
Joseph Berry	1933	090913	Priest; studied Greek and Latin at Seminary and UM; taught Greek and Latin at Seminary.
Anthony Bonanno	1947	140314	Professor of Archaeology; studied Greek and Latin at UM; lectures in Latin at the UM.
Francis Bonnici	1945	200713	Priest; researcher on Maltese ecclesiastical history; studied Latin at UM.
Joseph Borg Micallef	1923 d. 2017	260514	Priest; studied, and disliked, Latin at Seminary.
Louis Borg	1951	280613	Veterinary surgeon; studied Latin at St. Aloysius College, Latin and Greek at UM; part-time lectured in Latin at UM; MA Degree in Classics from UM.

Vincent Borg (1)	1929	241113	Priest, historian, and former Dean of Faculty of Theology; Studied Latin at the Seminary, Latin and Greek at UOM.
Vincent Borg (2)	1950	261113	Educationalist; studied Latin at St. Aloysius College, and Latin and Greek at UM.
Gerald Bugeja	1950	200613	Lecturer of Italian; studied Latin and Greek at Seminary, Latin at Junior College and UM.
Joseph Busuttil	1935 d. 2014	120213	Priest and archivist; studied Latin at St Aloysius College, Latin and Greek at UM and King's College London. Taught classics at UM and Lyceum.
Narcy Calamatta	1939	160713	Theatre director and actor; directed Plautus' <i>Menaechmi</i> for 1973 International Latin Congress.
Ena Cremona	1936	191213	Former Judge at the European Union General Court; studied Latin at UM; part-time lecturer of Latin at UM in mid-1960s.
Raphael De Martino	1949	181113	Priest; lecturer, Faculty of Theology UM; studied Latin at Lyceum and UM.
Mario Debono	1954	280816	Teacher of Italian; studied Greek and Latin at Seminary, Latin and Junior College; Zammit 'Brighella' the subject of his MA dissertation in Italian.
Nicholas Debono Montebello	1933	130812	Priest and classical scholar; studied Latin and Greek at Lyceum, UM, King's College London; Senior Lecturer of classics at UM.
Alfred Ellul	1941	090114	Educationalist; studied Latin at St Aloysius College and UM.
Lino Farrugia	1947	211113	Theatre and TV director; studied Latin at the Seminary and UM.

Mario Felice	1953	220813	Secretary of Prof. Coleiro in early 1970s.
Joseph Felice Pace	1933	250314	Linguist; studied Latin at the Lyceum, Latin and Greek at UM.
Eddie Fenech Adami	1934	191012	Lawyer, former Prime Minister, President of the Republic; studied Latin at St Aloysius College and UM.
Oliver Friggieri	1947	020213	Professor of Maltese Literature; studied Greek and Latin at Seminary and UM.
Lawrence Gatt	1937	191113	Priest, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Malta; studied Latin at the Lyceum and Greek at UM; read BA (Hons) in Latin at UM.
Ugo Mifsud Bonnici	1932	310712	Lawyer, politician, President of the Republic; studied Latin at Lyceum and UM.
Frank Mifsud Montanaro	1925	080513	Lawyer; studied Latin at St Edward's College and UM; co-founder of the Virgil Society (Malta branch); directed classical plays; editor of <i>The Classical Journal</i> ; Rhodes scholar.
George Mifsud Montanaro	1927	200812 240913	Priest; studied Latin at St Edward's College and UM; co-founder of the Virgil Society (Malta branch); acted in classical plays; Rhodes scholar.
Dionysus Mintoff	1931	260613	Priest and philanthropist; studied Latin at Seminary; brother of Prime Minister Dom Mintoff.
Carmelo Pace	1943	170214	Educationalist; studied Latin at Lyceum, Latin and Greek at UM, University Toronto,

			Canada, and La Sapienza, Rome.
Alfred Sant	1948	171213	Author and playwright, economist, former Prime Minister.
Francis X. Schembri	1924	030613 290613	Priest; nephew of Latinist Rev. Joseph Schembri; taught Latin at Seminary.
Angelo Seychell	1933	240214	Priest and philanthropist; studied Latin and Greek at UM.
Peter Vassallo	1941	010313	Professor of English Literature; Rhodes scholar; studied Latin at the Lyceum and UM.
Arthur Vella	1930 d. 2018	060214	Jesuit; studied Latin at Seminary, Latin and Greek at UM.
Biagio Vella	1935	310114	Educationalist and classical scholar; read Classics at University College London and La Sapienza, Rome; taught Classics at the Upper Secondary School, Valletta, and UM.
Horatio C. R. Vella	1952	210415 050515	Professor of Latin and Greek, UM; studied Latin and Greek at Seminary, Thornley Salesian College, and UM; taught Classics at the University of Rhodesia.
Cecilia Xuereb	1939	201114	Teacher and music critic; read BA in Latin at UM.
Paul Xuereb	1936	200114	Lawyer, theatre critic, and former Librarian at UM; studied Latin at Lyceum and UM.
Roza Zammit Salinos	1948	030114	Secretary of Prof. Coleiro at UM, late 1960s.
Marius Zerafa	1929	191213	Priest, art historian, and former Director of Museums; collaborator of Prof. Coleiro.

The following interviews were conducted by email:

Victor Bonnici	1949	030615	Lectures in Classics at UM; studied Latin at Seminary, Classics at UM.
Frederick Borg	1950	300816	Teacher of Italian; studied Latin at Lyceum and UM; MA in Italian with a dissertation on Abate Rigord.
Joseph Brincat	1944	190613	Lawyer and politician; studied Latin at Seminary and London University
David J. Frendo	?	180313	Former Head of Department of Classics, University of Cork, Ireland; lectured in Greek at UM in mid-1960s.
Albert Marshall	1947	270817	Poet and theatre director; studied Latin at the Seminary and UM.

APPENDIX III

Sample of questions asked during interviews

1. When did you start to study Latin?
2. When did you start to study Greek?
3. Did you use to study Classical Culture?
4. What methodologies of teaching were applied in that time?
5. Which books were used?
6. How many hours in the week?
7. Who were your teachers?
8. What level of Latin and Greek was reached?
9. What profile did Latin and Greek enjoy at the time?
10. Did you study Classics at the University?
11. Who were the professors and lecturers?
12. How was the course divided?
13. Some university mates you can mention...
14. Have you ever taught Classics?
15. How did Classics influence in your professional career?
16. Do you think Classics had any role in Maltese history of the last two centuries?

APPENDIX IV

Transcripts of interviews (see enclosed CD)

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