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of money**

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CONTENTS

Gold and Silver Coinage in Malta, 1530-1798: The Order's stand against falsification of money Michael A. Sant	233
"Great Expectations": An Introduction Peter Mayo	245
A Simple Guide to the U.K. Companies Act 1981 E.A. Fava	253
La Composition Francaise Alfred Falzon / Frank Gatt	269
Dun Karm; Il-Lehen Poetiku ta' Nazzjon Oliver Friggieri	273
General Index: Volume III (1981-1983)	280

GOLD AND SILVER COINAGE IN MALTA 1530-1798:

The Order's stand against falsification of money

Michael A. Sant

As soon as the Order of St. John set foot on Maltese soil it had to contend not solely with problems of a financial nature which every constituted Government has faced before or since, but with peculiar problems of a monetary nature which, happily, are alien to most nations today. Hardly had the first hurdle, that of being granted the sovereign privilege of minting coins as had been the case in Rhodes,¹ been successfully overcome, than the Order was faced with other monetary problems. There was the very thorny question resulting from the over-circulation of fiduciary copper coins² which the Order, at least for some decades, attempted in vain to redeem,³ and which brought much economic and social harm in its wake. There were complex problems resulting from the debasing of the standard coinage in the 18th Century and there were almost endemic problems due to the surfeit or scarcity of fractional⁴ and other currencies in the Island. Nor were these and other problems simply just of local concern; it sometimes happened that echoes of these problems reverberated beyond Maltese shores and, at least temporarily, strained relations between the Order and other powers, usually Sicily, the Vatican and, on some occasions, Venice. One problem which the Order of St. John attempted to solve was the frequent circulation of

1. See M.A. Sant, *Coinage Problems Facing the Order of St. John in Malta* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Malta, 1967), Chap. II, pp. 29-50.
2. According to Neil Carothers, *Fractional Money — A History of the Small Coins and Fractional Paper of the United States* (London, 1930, p. 5) the not uncommon use of the term "token money" to distinguish fiduciary coins from standard money is unsatisfactory and even misleading since it conveys the idea that the coins are not money but mere substitutes for money. Carothers (p. 3) defines fiduciary coins as "coins whose money value is greater than their metal value."
3. M.A. Sant, "Minting and Attempted Recalling of Fiduciary Copper Coinage in Malta", *Melita Historica* VI, 1 (1972), pp. 60-80.
4. Fractional currency may be defined as small change or small coins generally used to effect exchanges of goods and services in retail trade and minor economic transactions.

false coinage in the Maltese Islands. This included foreign as well as local currencies; gold and silver pieces as well as copper.

Circulation of counterfeit coinage in Malta, or abroad for that matter, was no prerogative of the post-1530 period. More than fifteen centuries before the knights had set foot in Malta we meet with a possible case of falsification of money⁵ and in 1517, thirteen years before the arrival of the Knights, the Island was flooded with a large quantity of false copper pieces which, on the request of the Università, was converted into artillery-pieces.⁶ Many were the cases of falsification of money in the post-1530 period which are richly documented in the Maltese archives. Here I will deal exclusively with the noble metal.

As soon as the Order began exercising the sovereign privilege of minting money in Malta it must have immediately legislated in an effort to protect its coinage from would-be falsifiers.⁷ Unfortunately no actual document of this nature has been traced by the present writer. The first constitution of which we are aware, wherein clauses against money forgers are inserted, is that of Gregory Carafa (1680-90).⁸ The constitutions of Antonio-Manoel de Vilhena (1722-36)⁹ and that of Emanuel-Marie de Rohan (1775-97)¹⁰ have also been preserved. But numerous *Bandi* and *Prammatiche* attest to the care taken by other Grandmasters to keep false or suspect money out of circulation.¹¹

Since the first days of the Order in Malta, foreign currencies, especially Sicilian, circulated freely together with the local coins. In 1533, for example, probably before the Order began exercising its right of mintage, Sicilian money, classified under old and new, was serving as

5. For a discussion of this question, consult Sant (1967), pp. 216-217.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

7. So had previous rulers done. The Romans, though prone to debase their currency, took measures to protect it in their empire. The Norman William I (1154-66) and the Aragonese King, Martin (1402-1409) had clauses against falsifiers of money inserted in their constitutions. See P.P. DeBono *Sommario della storia della Legislazione in Malta*, (Malta 1897), pp. 148-150.

8. NLM, Libr. 1216, *Leggi e Costituzioni pragmaticali ordinati dal Ser. Ecc. Gregorio Caraffa... pubblicati sotto li 11 Settembre, 1681. Titolo Vigesimo Quarto "Delle Monete, Alchimia, et altre proibitioni spettanti all'arte delli Orefici"*, pp. 103-104.

9. *Leggi e Costituzioni Prammaticali Rinuovati, riformati, ed ampliati dal Serenissimo, ed Eminentissimo Signor Fra D. Antonio Manoel de Vilhena ecc.* (Malta, MDCCXXIV), p. 131, XXIV, XXV and XXVI.

10. *Del Dritto Municipale di Malta. Nuova Compilazione con Diverse Altre Costituzioni.* (Malta MDCCLXXIV), *Libro Settimo, Capo Settimo*, p. 300 ff., "Regolamenti Riguardo agli Orefici, Argentieri, monete, ed Alchimia", Para. XXVII, XXVIII and XXIX. See also DeBono, p. 236. "Falsification of money was punished according to the gravity of the crime, but the maximum penalty was temporary imprisonment". This, as we shall see, is not entirely correct.

11. This hardly applies to the Order's gold and silver currency which in the 18th Century became badly debased in weight and standard. See Sant (1967), pp. 263-280.

the medium of commercial transactions in these Islands.¹² Sicilian coinage, as might be expected, never disappeared completely from Maltese shores. But in time other foreign currencies augmented the local and Sicilian stock. By 1609, but probably even earlier,¹³ one finds in local circulation German, Hungarian and Dutch Thalers ("Tallari") whose provenance was normally Turkish vessels falling prey to Maltese or Knightly corsairs.¹⁴ Before being allowed free circulation such coins were usually assayed and hand-stamped with the emblem of the reigning Grandmaster as a guarantee of their genuineness. On 20 August 1609, G.M. Aloph de Wignacourt (1601-22) informed the Venerable Council of the Order that a large number of German and Hungarian thalers in local circulation were counterfeit pieces and, what was even worse, some of the fraudulent coins had been cheekily hand-stamped with the fleur-de-llys, emblem of the reigning Grandmaster.¹⁵ It was agreed that the Grandmaster issue a *Bando* decreeing that all suspected coins would be taken to the *Castellania* for a general assay, after which all counterfeit pieces would be destroyed. A Commission was nominated to see to the discharge of the Council's decrees and was urged to do its utmost to bring the guilty person or persons to book.¹⁶ Members of the Order had within a period of three days, in virtue of their vow of obedience and against penalty of confiscation, to report to the Commission the quantity of thalers in their possession.¹⁷ We are unfortunately unaware

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12. A. Mifsud, "L'Approvigionamento e l'Università di Malta nelle Passate Dominazioni", *Archivum Melitense* III, 5 (1918), pp. 207 ff.
 13. Though it was customary to countermark thalers and possibly other foreign coins with the emblem of the ruling Grandmaster, no earlier countermarks than Wignacourt's have been discovered. See V.F. Denaro, "Dutch Coins and Maltese Countermarks", *Numismatic Chronicle*, Seventh Series, Vol. III, 1963.
 14. The negligence of the Turkish Government in the 16th and 17th centuries in matters concerning currency was notorious. As commerce required a stable monetary standard, the European merchants trading with the Levant had recourse to the expedient of introducing European currency into Levantine commerce. Coins were imported mainly from Venice, Spain, Austria, Germany, Poland and Holland. See F.W. Hasluck, "The Levantine Coinage", *Numismatic Chronicle* (1929), 49. Quoted after Denaro, *op. cit.*
 15. Though Wignacourt mentions only German and Hungarian Thalers, none of these coins have so far been traced countermarked with the arms of the Grandmaster. The only such pieces so far discovered have been Dutch Thalers, which by the middle of the 17th century had ousted from the Levant the currency of other countries as money of account. See Denaro, *op. cit.*
 16. NLM, AOM 103, ff. 86v-87. The Commission was made up of the Prior of Navarre, Fra Bernardo d'Espeletta and the Bailiff of Santa Euphemia, Fra Centorio Cagnolo. They had "...chiamati li esperti, e periti, che pareva a loro più a proposito, eseguischino quanto di sopra, e procurino di sapere, trovare e provare li colpevoli delli gigli impune nelli tallari falsi, e faccino risarcire il damo e spese delli colpevoli, e trovando, che siano degni di maggior castigo ne facino relatione a Sua Sig. Illus. che provedera di giustitia..."
 17. *Ibid.*

whether the offenders were in fact traced for the archives are strangely silent. One suspects that the culprits were themselves members of the Order for it was much easier for them than for anyone else to gain access to the Grandmaster's countermark. Indeed one often finds members of the Religion prosecuted for tampering with coinage. In February 1539, for example, Giacomo Blades was indicted with the falsification of money and duly deprived of his habit.¹⁸ On 22 June 1584 the knights C. Pompeo Mormillo and Muzio de Ligorri were also deprived of their habits for circulating false currencies.¹⁹ The same sentence was passed on 29th July 1604 on the Knight C. Elida Solima who in February of the same year had been charged with having coined false money in Sicily²⁰ and on 2 September 1605 on Cesare Gravina who was found guilty of falsifying money and committing theft in Catania, Sicily. A Servant-at-Arms, Alexander Price, was also imputed on 20 May 1609 with clipping gold Zecchini pieces. He was likewise deprived of his habit and handed over to the secular arm for further punishment.²² More members of the Order were in later years involved in the falsification of monetary pieces.²³

Clipping the circumference of gold pieces was not a custom alien to the unscrupulous. On becoming Grandmaster, Antoine de Paule (1623-36) found that most of the gold pieces circulating in the Maltese Islands were filed and thus below the standard weight. He duly proclaimed in a *Bando* dated 10 July 1623 that no person was to accept in payment Maltese Zecchini, Spanish Doubloons or other gold pieces without previously weighing the coins. Owners of filed coins had, within a period of two weeks, to take them to the Mint²⁴ and exchange them for

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18. NLM, *Libr.*, 390, "Nota dei Delitti principali registrati nei Libri dei Consigli dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano".
 19. *Ibid.* See also W. Porter, *A History of the Knights of Malta or the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem*, Vol. II, (London 1858).
 20. NLM, *Libr.* 390 and 712; NLM, AOM 101, f. 118r. F.G.F. Furse, *If Medagliere Gerosolimitano, ossia Raccolta delle Medaglie e Monete Coniate dai Gran Maestri dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano in Rodi ed in Malta* (Malta 1864), p. 28; E.H. Furse, *Memoires Numismatiques de l'Ordre Souverain de Saint Jean de Jerusalem Illustrees, avec les Medailles et Monnaies Frappees par les Grands Maitres de l'Ordre*, Deux Ed., (Rome 1889), p. 188.
 21. NLM, *Libr.* 390 and 712.
 22. *Ibid.*; Porter, p. 262. In NLM, AOM 228 (a) *Caruso P.I*, Tom II, 1600-1702, f. 160 we also read under 10 September 1604: "Carcerazione d'alcuni secolari per monetarij, et deputatione di commissarij e perche si diceva che uno di essi voleva far tradimento in questa città." See also NLM, AOM 101, f. 79r.
 23. In *Ibid.* 265, f. 52v, for example, under 19 August 1701, we read, "Si da facolta al Luogotenente del Ven. Prior di Messina, Comm. e Fra D. Andrea de Giovanni, di compilar processo, a proferir sentenza diff. a contro il sac. D. Giuseppe Panto imputato per ritagliator di moneta d'argento."
 24. The site of the first Mint of the Order in Malta is unknown, but at some time after 1604 it was installed at the head of Strada San Sebastiano, today Nos. 2

their equivalent weight in good currency. Severe penalties were contemplated for offenders: a fine of 20 ounces or a sentence of two years as convicts on the Order's galleys. Knight Commanders would lose a year's seniority while Knights could be jailed for a period of six months.²⁵

But there was no stopping the fraudulent and the speculative. Many silver coins were found to have been filed as well. A *Bando* enacted on 7 August 1631 by G.M. De Paule ordered that all gold and silver coins of one scudo and over were to be weighed by both parties in a transaction under penalty of confiscation.²⁶

On 18 April 1636, Dr. Montana, the fiscal lawyer of the Castellanania informed the Venerable Council that fourteen counterfeit pieces-of-eight *Reali* had been confiscated from one of the slaves of the Order. The Council instructed Dr. Montana and the Commissioners of the Mint to proceed against those found circulating false coins "even though they might be our brethren". Everything possible had to be done to indemnify the general public and safeguard regular commercial transactions against the spread of such counterfeit coins.²⁷ We are left in the dark on whether these investigations were successful or not.

Twenty-eight years later the pieces-of-eight *Reali* were again in the news, many being found to be below the standard weight. So, by a decree in Council on 15 January 1664 and a *Bando* published three days later, it was ordained that nobody should dare spend, exchange, give in payment or keep in one's possession pieces-of-eight, half-pieces or smaller coins of this kind which were below the standard weight. All such coins were to be taken to the Mint within a fortnight to be exchanged for other currency at the rate of 15 tari-4 grani per ounce of silver. The owners could, if they so preferred, take back the clipped pieces. Anyone intending to send abroad underweight coins had to hand them over to the Receiver of the Università; members of the Order were to hand them over to the *Conservatore*. Owners had the right to claim their money back immediately before they were to embark it for transportation. The *Bando* enacted, on the other hand, that nobody could refuse to accept in payment the new "colonnati" pieces-of-eight as these were of standard weight. They were to pass current for the same value as the

and 3, Old Mint Street, on part of the site of the first Auberge built by the French Knights in Valletta. Of this first auberge we can still see the supports for the standards of the Langue and the Religion. These premises were leased by the French Langue to the Treasury for 65 scudi per annum and here the Mint of Zecca of the Order was set up until it was transferred to the *Conservatoria*, today the National Library, about the year 1788. See V. Denaro, "The Mint of Malta" in *Numismatic Chronicle*, Sixth Series, Vol. XV, 1955.

25. NLM, AOM 255, f. 189v.

26. *Ibid.* 110, f. 106v; Furse (1864), p. 35; Furse (1889), p. 199; H. Calleja-Schembri, *Coins and Medals of the Knights of Malta* (London 1908). Reprinted 1966, p. 83.

27. NLM, AOM III, f. 192v; Furse (1864), p. 35; Furse (1889), p. 199.

old pieces. The penalty for all contraventions against these orders was confiscation of the money and a fine of 10 ounces.²⁸

The introduction of Venetian Zecchini into the Island presented the Order with other knotty problems. There were individuals who refused to accept these pieces for their current value of 41 tari. A *Bando* issued on 27 August 1681 by G.M. Carafa (1680-90) confirmed the old price and threatened offenders with prosecution.²⁹ In 1690 it was found that false Venetian Zecchini were circulating in the Island alongside regular pieces. On 8 July the Grandmaster and his Council urged the officers of the Castellania and the Commissioners of the Mint to investigate the matter carefully. A special Commission was nominated to report to the Council on its findings.³⁰ On 12 August the commission reported to G.M. Adrian Wignacourt (1690-97)³¹ and the Council that the counterfeit Zecchini had not been issued by the Venetian mint at all, but had been minted elsewhere using a fake die. The Commissioners were informed that the supposed Venetian Zecchini had first made their appearance in the Levant, sent there in huge quantities by some merchants. One of the Consuls for Goldsmiths and Silversmiths in the East, discovering that the Zecchini were false, ordered their immediate return. The merchants had then tried to induce a Levantine trader to circulate the money himself, which he refused to do. Other merchants, however, unscrupulously undertook to do so themselves. Soon the counterfeit Zecchini were freely circulating in the East and, in due course, a consignment had found its way to Malta.³²

It was further learned that the Giurati of the Università had been the first to learn of the existence of the fake Zecchini in the Island. Having sent to Messina 4000 Zecchini entrusted to them by the inhabitants to be exchanged for Sicilian silver money, the Giurati were surprised to receive back 124 pieces suspected to be false. Some of these specimens were handed to the Master of The Mint, Carlo Troisi, to be assayed and on close examination it was found that some of the pieces, at least, were not above board.³³ The Commission, therefore,

28. NLM, AOM 260, f. 177v; NLM *Libr.* 439, pp. 449-451; 738, p. 308.

29. NLM, *Libr.* 149, p. 64.

30. NLM, AOM 263, f. 73v. Cf. *ibid.* 1115, ff. 49v-50.

31. Carafa had died on 21 July.

32. NLM, AOM 263, f. 73v.

33. "...Si fece la prova d'un Zecchino col nome di Marc' Antonio di quelli, li quali sono sospetti intorno alla Bontà e caratto dell'oro e fuso una sol volta col solimato, manco grani cinque.

Nel medesimo tempo si fece prova d'un altro vecchio, e di più perfetti, il quale teneva il medesimo peso, e manco quasi un grano, mettendoli la medesimo dose del sopradetto.

Si prese però quello, che fu trovato dove Boananni, il quale era sì basso, e senza colore che perde i venti tre caratti mettendolo quattro volte a purificare, manco cocci sei, che sono di moneta corrente da cinque tari in circa.

advised Council to enact harsh measures for all those individuals keeping in their possession, spending or receiving such defective coins. Owners of suspected pieces had either to take them to the Mint, or at least reveal their existence to the Grandmaster. Council duly decided that in order to forestall the importation of more fake Zecchini pieces into the Island, it was necessary to stop the circulation of the false ones in existence at the moment. All Venetian Zecchini pieces, therefore, were to be taken to the Mint to enable the Order to control the quantity and quality of such coins.³⁴ Council entrusted the Grandmaster with the infliction of penalties for offenders, but on the morrow, suspecting perhaps that members of the Order might be involved in the scandal, Wignacourt informed Council that he was unwilling to shoulder sole responsibility for inflicting punishment. After further debate it was decided that members of the Order, if convicted, were to suffer the loss of two years' seniority and have their money confiscated.³⁵

A week later (21 August 1690) a *Bando* condemned the circulation of low-carat Zecchini. Those in possession of such coins had, within a fortnight, to reveal their existence to the Master of the Mint. It was also established that if any of the two parties in a transaction disagreed on the rate of exchange of the Zecchini, they were both to consult either the Master of the Mint, or the Consul for Goldsmiths and Silver-smiths or the public store-keeper of wheat, Carlo Randon, all three experienced and practical men who would decide on the genuineness or otherwise of the Zecchini in question. Contravention of the said enactments meant confiscation of the money and a condemnation to ten years as convicts on the Order's galleys.³⁶

The story did not end there. On 20 September Carlo Troisi, Master of the Mint, submitted a report to Council, calculating the expenses involved in melting and minting a hundred Zecchini into Maltese currency. He estimated a cost of 16 scudi — 9 tari,³⁷ ie. a loss of about 2 tari for

Nelli primi dui e tanta poco la differenza che appena si conosce.

Nl secondo, che tiene in se il medesimo peso, ma nella Bontà e l'infioriore ai primi, onde stimo che questo sia dell'oro di Barberia senza rafinato, mentre tiene il medesimo colore di quell'oro, non vi essendo dentro specie venuna di lega, perche se ci fosse stata lega dovrebbe mancare più di 36 cocci per il tocco, che fa nel paragone, non havendo mencato, come ho detto più di cocci sei." *Id.*, *ibid.*

34. *Id.*, *ibid.*

35. *Ibid.* f. 74r.

36. *NLM Libr.* 149, p. 64.

37. *Nota del Calo che fanno li Zecchini francesi nel rafinarli:*

Per ridurli alla perfezione di carati venti quattro, calano
uno e mezzo per cento, che sono in moneta corrente cinque
scudi e tre tari

Sc. 5-3-0

Carlo nel travagliarli:

Mancheranno una per cento in circa

Sc. 3-6-0

every Zecchino. But as some of the 2,200 Zecchini found in circulation would surely be of inferior weight or fineness, the expenses were bound to be somewhat higher.

Council decided that all the 2,200 Zecchini pieces were to be reminted into Maltese Zecchini with the stamp of Adrien Wignacourt. Being of finer metal than the old Zecchini pieces, they were to pass current at 43 tari each.³⁸ Those who could not afford to wait until the new Maltese Zecchini pieces would be coined, could, if they so desired, get the equivalent value in other currency for their counterfeit pieces.³⁹

It took the Mint almost a year to complete the assignment. On 8 August 1691 the general public was informed through a *Bando* that the Order had minted enough Zecchini of standard fineness to cater for the needs of the Island and which would be exchanged at the rate of 43 copper tari per Zecchino. Anyone refusing to accept them or pretending a higher value than that stipulated would incur a fine of five scudi.⁴⁰ And that is the last we hear of this protracted Zecchini episode.

Not long after this, in 1694, the Order discovered that some of the Spanish Doubloons in the Island were below the standard weight. These were withdrawn from circulation and kept in the Palace Tower. Soon after the number was augmented by light Doubloons sent to Malta by the Receiver of the Order in Marseilles, Commendator Bousset. Experimenting with ten such pieces, the Master of the Mint found out that the Order would make a profit by melting the said Doubloons and reminting them into Maltese Zecchini.⁴¹ The Venerable Council gave the necessary instructions to this effect.⁴² More Spanish Doubloons and other old Catalan coins kept in the Tower were reminted into Maltese

Spesa per ridurli nella perfezione tra solimato, acqua forte, ferramenti et altre	1-6-0
Per aggiustarli secondo il peso della Zeccha, quali devono uscire con il peso a tutto rigore ci andera un altro per cento	3-6-0
Per manifattura di cento Zecchini	3-0-0
	Scudi 16-9-0

(NLM, AOM 263, f. 75v.; cf. *ibid.* 1115, f. 76r).

38. It was therefore Adrien de Wignacourt and not his successor Perellos who, contrary to what is believed by many a writer on the coins of the Order, first struck his Zecchini of finer metal.

39. NLM, AOM 263, f. 75v. cf. *ibid.* 1115, f. 76r.

40. NLM, *Libr.* 149, p. 65.

41. See NLM, AOM 264, f. 38 v. for the detailed calculations made by the Master of the Mint.

42. *Ibid.* It is probable that the light Spanish Doubloons were minted into four-Zecchini pieces, the first time ever these coins were minted in Malta. In fact, Wignacourt's four-Zecchini pieces bear the date 1695, i.e. the year after the Council's decree.

Calleja-Schembri (p. 8), says that the gold coinage of Adrien Wignacourt marks a decided improvement on the numismatic art of the days of his predecessors. It differs from the earlier issues of ducats or Zecchini; in as much as these coins are thicker and the rim assumes a greater importance.

Zecchini following Council's decision on 26 February 1705 during the grandmastership of Ramon Perellos Y Rocafull (1697-1720)⁴³.

Commerce flourished in Malta during the tenure of office of this Grandmaster. One result was a crop of foreign coins — Genoan Filippi, Venetian, Milanese and Florentine Ducats, Turin Doubloons, Louis d'Or and other pieces. Some of the Filippi and Ducati, however, were found to be below the standard weight. Accordingly, on 6 February 1715, Council decided *inter alia* that the said coins were to be assayed and classified according to two categories of weight. Those from three to twenty *cocci* lighter than the standard weight would cost their owners extra payment of one and a half grains for every missing *coccio*. But underweight coins by more than twenty *cocci* would be barred from circulation. A *Bando* to this effect was issued on the same day and was confirmed by another dated 19 February. Offenders were to incur a fine of 10 ounces.⁴⁴

The accession of Manoel de Vilhena (1722-36) to the supreme dignity of Grandmaster of the Order in Malta may be said to mark a new era in the history of Maltese coinage. In gold, pieces of twelve, ten, four, two and one-Zecchino value were struck. The perfect execution of the gold coinage of the period has never been surpassed in Malta for decorative beauty and magnificence.⁴⁵ In the first five years alone, De Vilhena struck 200,000 ducats or Zecchini. A complete alteration in the silver coinage is also to be imputed to De Vilhena. The silver standard was raised and coins of various new denominations were issued. Very artistic and exquisitely-finished pieces of two scudi, and tari pieces, ranging in value from one to five, were struck and placed in circulation and they gradually replaced the old type.⁴⁶

It had been originally intended to mint the silver eight-tari piece as well, but strangely enough in minting this coin the same die which had been employed in minting the gold four-Zecchini pieces was used. This could have been a genuine mistake, but, more probably, it was the result of a fraudulent act by one or more craftsmen at the Mint. Soon enough various individuals were circulating the silver pieces for Zecchini. The Grandmaster was therefore obliged to issue a proclamation dated 22 May 1728 ordering the immediate withdrawal from circulation of the silver eight-tari pieces and their conversion into other coins, under penalty of confiscation plus a fine of 10 ounces.⁴⁷

43. NLM, AOM 265, f. 132r.

44. *Ibid.* 266, f. 138r; NLM, Libr. 641, pp. 293-294; *ibid.* p. 297.

45. Calleja-Schembri, p. 129.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

47. NLM. Libr. 429, p. 147; *ibid.* 142, p. 236. The silver eight-tari pieces which were returned to the Mint were re-minted into other silver coins. That is the reason why these Vilhena pieces are indeed very scarce. Consult Furse (1889) p. 256.

No gold coins of Grandmaster Raymond Despuig (1736-41) are known to have been minted,⁴⁸ but foreign pieces were in free circulation. In 1740 some of these were found to be below the standard weight. A Bando of 6 June, therefore, ordered that: (a) gold pieces which were no lighter than five *cocchi* were to pass current at a loss of one *tari* per missing *coccio*, whereas they could be refused if the debasement was more pronounced; (b) pledged pieces were to be taken back irrespective of their weight, otherwise they could be refused even if the deficiency was just one *coccio*; (c) every collector of the Order or the Università could refuse to accept underweight pieces; (d) the weights used for assaying gold coins had to conform in every respect with those preserved in the *Conservatoria* of the Order; (e) in case of any disagreement upon the weight of gold pieces, the parties concerned were to abide by the decision of the Consul for Goldsmiths and Silversmiths; (f) notaries were prohibited from keeping in their offices other gold weights except those stated under (d). A fine of 10 ounces was stipulated for contravening any of the clauses of the *Bando*.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding this *Bando*, however, confusion still reigned as a result of the different gold weights employed in commercial transactions. The Grandmaster therefore decided to take firmer measures. On 10 September he ordered all those in possession of such weights, whether for private or public use, to take them to the Mint within a period of three days, there to be checked and controlled in confrontation with the standard weights kept in the Conservatory. To keep control of the situation the Master of the Mint was requested to keep a note of individuals taking their weights for examination. A fine of four ounces was inflicted for contravention.⁵⁰

The Portuguese Grandmaster Emanuel Pinto (1741-1773) minted numerous coins during his long tenure of office, but these show not only a marked decadence in artistic taste but a pronounced deterioration in both weight and fineness. The story of the debasement of the standard coinage in the eighteenth century cannot be recounted here,⁵¹ but foreign coins, too, were not always above board, and some were occasionally found to be underweight or patently false. In 1748 the Sicilian *Piastre*, a new coin which had been introduced to make up somewhat for the scarcity of coin at the time, was found to be very irregular in weight. On 26 September the Grandmaster decreed that such coins, if standard in weight, were to pass current at 26 *tari* each.⁵² Between 1756 and 1764

48. Calleja-Schembri, p. 145.

49. NLM *Libr.* 429, p. 102. See also Archives of the Inquisitor of Malta (AIM), "Memorie di Mons Ludovico Gualtieri" II (1739-43), f. 609.

50. NLM *Libr.* 429, p. 106.

51. See Sant (1967), Chap. VIII, "Debasement of the Standard Coinage", pp. 263-295.

52. NLM *Libr.* 429 (1744-56), p. 74.

various quantities and qualities of light and counterfeit foreign coins were withdrawn and together with some of the Order's gold pieces, were coined into Maltese money; largely in new *Louis d'Or* and its half-value (20 and 10 silver scudi respectively).⁵³ On 9 December 1765 a *Bando* fixed the rate of exchange of foreign coins and in the same proclamation it was enacted that those pieces which were not of the correct weight were to lose 14 grains, Maltese money, for every missing *coccio*.⁵⁴

During the reigns of Francesco Ximenes de Texada (1773-75), Emanuel-Marie de Rohan (1775-97) and Ferdinand Von Hompesch (1797-98) we find no record of any false or underweight gold or silver money in circulation. On 11 June 1798 the Order capitulated to the French, but in just over two years, Great Britain became the new mistress of the Island.

The problem of false money in circulation, however, continued to exist. Counterfeit coins of varied provenance and denomination were circulating in 1802. Most common, however, were copper tari and silver six-tari pieces of the Order.⁵⁵ On 23 October, Alexander Ball, Chief of the Maltese, issued a *Pragmatica* warning the inhabitants to be on their guard against counterfeit money.⁵⁶ Hardly two years later, however, more false pieces were again in circulation, this time Sicilian two-scudi silver pieces and gold ounces. Ball was obliged to intervene once again on 4 April 1804 but notwithstanding his Proclamation, illicit traffic in false coins continued unabated. In 1805 counterfeit silver scudi of De Rohan made their appearance. On 12 June Ball again warned the inhabitants to be on the alert and report immediately any suspect money appearing on the market.⁵⁷

In 1812 false Spanish Pillar Dollars and other coins were being circulated. A *Bando* of 11 September warned people not to accept any counterfeit money, to hand such pieces to the official authorities and to report offenders.⁵⁸ No record of those brought to book, if any, has come down to us. The coins of the Order remained legal currency well after that date, but with the advent of British rule, however, local gold and silver coins became increasingly scarce. It is no wonder, therefore, that no further cases of falsification of the Order's coinage have come down to us.

Enough has been written in this paper to show that the average Maltese inhabitant during the rule of the Order of St. John was fre-

53. NLM, AOM 6409 b, CONTI.

54. NLM *Libr.* 429 (1765-72), p. 19.

55. The coins of the Order remained in circulation in the Maltese Islands after the departure of the Knights. Copper remained legal currency until 1827, while gold and silver pieces were valid means of payment till 1886.

56. NLM *Libr.* 431, p. 156.

57. *Ibid.* p. 70.

58. *Ibid.* p. 110.

quently exposed to the fraudulent and the unscrupulous, who were intent on making illicit gains by the circulation of false currency. But it has also been demonstrated that the administration of the Order, ever solicitous for the welfare of the people at large as well as for its own good name, never shirked its duty to keep false currency at bay. The Order was even more heavily-taxed by the problem of false copper money in circulation, but the story of this other aspect of falsification, in many ways more illuminating and rewarding, will have to wait for another day.

“GREAT EXPECTATIONS”: AN INTRODUCTION

Peter Mayo

Many consider *Great Expectations* to be Dickens' masterpiece. It is superbly funny, psychologically very penetrating, thematically perfect and morally sound. The novel may be regarded as an indictment of Victorian society at large for its complacency, adherence to false values and its obsession with material wealth.

The theme is therefore serious enough and the setting throughout rather sombre. What really mitigates the atmosphere of bleakness that pervades the novel is Dickens' successful use of humour which many critics regard as the distinctive feature of his work. The author employs humour in various ways. For instance, it constitutes an essential element in his characterization. It is this aspect of Dickens' work which, in G.K. Chesterton's words, enables him to stand peerless "in the art of conveying what a man looks like at first sight". Mrs Joe, Pip's sister and guardian who is constantly 'on the Rampage' and controls the rest of the family 'by hand', is described by her brother as follows:

"My sister, Mrs Joe, with black hair and eyes, had such a prevailing redness of skin that I sometimes used to wonder whether it was possible she washed herself with a nutmeg-grater instead of soap."

Mr Pumblechook, the hilarious impostor, is considered by Gissing to be a "source of inextinguishable laughter". Orlick and his fellow robbers sought to silence him by stuffing "his mouth full of flowering annuals to prevent his crying out". At times, the effect is purely visual. Trabb's boy will linger in the reader's memory as some kind of popular village character, parodying the gentlemanly airs of his social betters. Wemmick will be remembered not so much for his obsession with 'portable property' as for the habit of allowing his arm to steal around Miss Skiffins' waist, only to be gently and decorously unwound again.

Dickens also draws on humour to enliven his description of various scenes. One may point as an example to Wemmick's over-elaborate dwelling. He has ludicrously converted a tiny cottage into what has turned out to be a parody of the Gothic castle. The dialogue is equally humorous throughout. Examples would include Pip's highly imaginative account of his first visit to Satis House, all of which is pure fabrication; the convict's threats in the opening chapter which recall the swaggering, ranting bullies of the Pantomime and the sarcastic statements included in Miss Havisham's will, whereby Miss Sarah obtained

twenty-five pounds a year to buy pills, being bilious, while Miss Camilla got five pounds to buy rushlights "to put her in the spirits" when she woke up at night.

Without such humour, Dickens' work would have been denied much of its vitality. Its function in the novel is that of providing comic relief, a welcome break from the depressing scenes of poverty and crime. Moreover, its strong presence in the opening chapters helps render Dickens' account of Pip's childhood psychologically very penetrating. One may refer to Pip's account of what he considered as the 'rough' treatment meted out to him by the convict:

"The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread. When the church came to itself — for he was so sudden and strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw the steeple under my feet — when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone, trembling, while he ate the bread ravenously."

Pip's account is humorous and here we are provided with a clear example of the Child's tendency to transfer movement on to the surroundings. In this respect, the account is somewhat reminiscent of the following lines from Book One of Wordsworth's *Prelude*: "Yet still the solitary cliffs / wheeled by me — even as if the earth had rolled / with visible motion her diurnal round."

Dickens' insight into the psychology of children is best revealed in the second and third chapters. Pip is a sensitive child and acutely guilt-conscious. As Angus Calder maintains, Guilt rather than Innocence is the moral element of the child. Pip steals the pie from Mrs Joe and is constantly haunted by the spectre of himself as a thief. This is brilliantly brought out in the passage where he imagines the cows, emerging from the fog, to greet him with the words: "Holloa, young thief!" What adds to the significance of these words is the fact that Pip is about to help an escaped convict. His guilt feelings reach their climax in the scene leading on to Mrs. Joe's discovery of the missing pie and the soldiers' inadvertent arrival at the Gargerys':

"My sister went out to get it. I heard her steps proceed to the pantry. I saw Mr Pumblechook balance his knife. I saw re-awakening appetite in the Roman nostrils of Mr Wopsle. I heard Mr Hubble remark that 'a bit of savoury pork pie would lay atop of anything you could mention, and do no harm,' and I heard Joe say, 'You shall have some, Pip.' I have never been absolutely certain whether I uttered a shrill yell of terror, merely in spirit, or in the bodily hearing of the company. I felt that I could bear no more, and that I must run away."

The reader is allowed to feel the tension suffered by Pip throughout. The child is on the verge of panic, gripped by the fear of being found out and the tension simmers to such an extent that he is compelled to run for his 'life'. His escape is halted by a group of soldiers and, once again, Pip's guilt consciousness is so great that he imagines that one of them "held out a pair of handcuffs to me, saying, 'Here you are, look sharp, come on!'"

Pip never rids himself of the guilt complex. When a young man, he rebukes himself for his behaviour towards Joe and Bidley, although he never alters his condescending attitude. On the way to London, his remorse is so great that he contemplates descending from the coach and walking all the way back to the forge for 'a better parting'. However, he spends too much time deliberating and before he reaches a decision, the coach is already half way along the road to London. Guilt feelings are once again aroused when news reaches him of Orlick's attack on his elder sister and of the discovery of a file lying next to her.

These guilt pangs enable us to feel the actual pulsation of Pip's 'inner life'. It would be interesting to remark that E.M. Forster criticized Dickens' novels precisely on the grounds that most of his characters are two-dimensional and therefore lack an 'inner life'. This, of course, cannot be true of Pip. Nor is it true of Miss Havisham, an eccentric lady whose character admittedly verges on caricature. She inhabits a world of her own, the features of which are symbolized by the images of decadence apparent throughout Satis House. Critics regard such images as the 'black fungus' and the 'speckled-legged spiders with blotchy bodies' as a reflection of Miss Havisham's sick mind, symbols of her dark and putrefying emotions. Wemmick is another interesting character. His obsession with 'portable property' and his advocacy of selfish attitudes suggest that he is a mere cardboard figure, a typical inhabitant of 'Little Britain', and an integral part of its legal machinery. But there is another side to his character. Outside 'Little Britain' he is less clinical and therefore more humane. In him, as in Jaggers, we discover a split-personality, and this aspect of characterization once again reveals the quality of the novel's psychological penetration. Characters like Jaggers, Miss Havisham and Wemmick are therefore explored in greater depth than a strictly two-dimensional figure would be.

However, Forster's remark is very true of the majority of the characters in *Great Expectations*. They are flat figures exhibiting one dominant trait. This aspect of Dickens' novels should not be regarded as a weakness. For these 'thumb-nail sketches' serve to provide the work with an infinite variety which is a proper reflection of the infinite variety that is life itself. Through Dickens' sleight of hand, these caricatures create an illusion of life's richness. They people the canvas in such a way as to furnish Pip with a colourful background that throws his own character into sharper relief. The figures are memorable and include the patronizing Pumblechook, boisterous Old Bill Barley ('old gruff and grim'), the fawning Giorgiana ('an indigestive little woman who called her rigidity her love'), the mimicking Trabb's boy, Jaggers, forever throwing his finger around and washing his hands, the stranger stirring his drink with a file, the tough high-shouldered Mr Hubble and Molly, 'a wild beast tamed'. The list is inexhaustible.

It is often argued that quite a few of these characters, including

Miss Havisham, are not realistic. However, few can deny that characters like Pumblechook and Miss Havisham are memorable. Their success is partly due to the imaginative treatment which Dickens affords them, whereby the reader is forced to allow that 'willing suspension of disbelief' that characterizes most works of art. Like the alchemist, Dickens succeeds in turning base-metal into pure gold. One also ought to remark that most of these characters are presented as Pip recalls them. One would hardly expect him to recall much more than their dominant trait. Moreover, the entire novel centres around Pip's education, a process which involves a transition from a shivering child with limited horizons to a snobbish youngster with the world at his feet, finally leading on to his attainment of intellectual humility. As such, the rest of the characters are subordinated to him, the only developing character in the novel. This, however, does not justify Dickens' failure to conceive Estella's character in the round. One cannot help feeling that she, like Pip, ought to have been a developing character.

Estella is, in fact, presented as a straightforward type, a girl devoid of all tenderness and compassion, made to suppress her feelings. She is as cold and detached as the stars which her name suggests. The name 'Estella' may, therefore, be regarded as typically Jonsonian. The Estella theme is quite unconvincing since it is founded on Miss Havisham's eccentricity and her transition to a sympathetic person is too sudden. It is the result of her odd decision to marry the tough, parasitic and sulky Bentley Drummle. Yet her relationship with Drummle is not explored. We are therefore debarred from witnessing a process which brought about such an important change in character. The Estella theme may therefore be regarded as highly artificial and attests to the presence of a strong element of melodrama in Dickens' work.

Great Expectations abounds with passages which may be dismissed as pure melodrama and a case in point would be the showdown between Estella and Miss Havisham in Chapter 38:

" 'So proud, so proud!' moaned Miss Havisham, pushing away her grey hair with both her hands.

'Who taught me to be proud?' returned Estella. 'Who praised me when I learnt my lesson?'

'So hard, so hard!' moaned Miss Havisham with her former action.

'Who taught me to be hard?' returned Estella. 'Who praised me when I learnt my lesson?' "

The rhetoric is highly artificial, in a passage which provides one of the very few instances where Estella gives vent to the frustrated passions lurking beneath her surface of ruthlessness, pride and propriety.

The Estella theme inevitably leads to the consideration of another aspect of Dickens' novel — Plot. It is often argued that Dickens' plots constitute one of the least successful features of his work. For instance, Estella's tragic melodrama does not lead to its logical conclusion. She was born out of tragedy, lived tragically and should therefore have come

to a tragic end. She is also the primary source of Pip's illusions. Therefore, one feels that a regenerate Pip, admittedly a sadder but wiser person, should have had her completely banished from his life. Moreover, their final meeting, which is purely accidental in that Pip visits a derelict Satis House following an absence of sixteen years, is hardly convincing and may be regarded as a concession to public taste. Dickens had been publishing the novel in serial form and acted on the advice of his publisher, Bulwer Lytton, who believed that the happy ending would satisfy the taste of the Victorians better than the more appropriate tragical conclusion which Dickens had originally planned. Dickens can therefore be taken to task for having prostituted his art.

One can point to other shortcomings in Dickens' plot. As with Hardy, it relies too heavily on coincidence. For instance, Estella, the object of Pip's desire and the source of change in his aspirations, happens to be the daughter of that very same convict who is Pip's benefactor. Compeyson, the man who finally betrayed Magwitch and who had originally fought him on the marshes, was the suitor who jilted Miss Havisham. The *deus ex machina* element is employed freely as when a note discovered by Herbert Pocket allows Trabb's boy to turn up unexpectedly at Sluice House and rescue Pip. Coincidences such as that involving the relationship between Estella and Pip allow Dickens to make ample use of irony, a very important element in *Great Expectations* since it is closely related to the novel's theme of false pride. It is ironic that the excessively proud Estella, the evil source responsible for activating the dark spot in Pip's character, was the daughter of none other than a jail-bird and a murderess.

Critics point to a further weakness in Dickens' novels. His excessive use of pathos prompted them to accuse him of sentimentality. Many of his characters sob freely. One may refer as an example to the many convicts who, like Magwitch, received their death sentences at the Old Bailey. Their contrasting feelings and emotional states are evocatively described and such pathos may be excused on the grounds that it enhances the scene's realism. Equally touching is Dickens' description of Mrs Joe's death which somehow parallels another famous description of his, that of Stephen Blackpool's rescue and passing away in *Hard Times*:

"They carried him very gently along the fields, and down the lanes, and over the wide landscape, Rachel always holding the hand in hers. Very few whispers broke the mournful silence. It was soon a mournful procession. The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his redeemer's rest."

Such pathos may be too explicit to satisfy the modern taste which demands subtlety in the conveyance of feelings. However, there is pathos of a graver kind in this novel. The peaceful death of Magwitch, a man more sinned against than sinning, has a subtle dignity which gives the entire scene a tragic air. The hulks, graveyard, Newgate and the overall

bleak setting also suggest sadness, which is the prevailing mood of this novel. This aspect of Dickens' art is no doubt spoilt by the novel's conventional ending.

The distinguishing note of sadness provides a clear indication as to the seriousness of the novel's theme. Throughout this novel, Dickens exposes the inhumanity and complacency of a Victorian middle class wholly given to materialistic values. It is a society which places great importance on money, or 'portable property' as Wemmick calls it, sought through the efforts of the labouring classes of which characters like Biddy and Joe Gargery are representative. In London, Pip and his fellow parasites thrive on money which is not the product of their own endeavours but someone else's. The idea of 'portable property' (social historians prefer the term 'movable property') was very much an illusion which even members of the oppressed classes harboured. Mrs Gargery, for instance, enjoys asserting her dignity in public, carrying sundry articles on her trips to town "much as Cleopatra or any sovereign lady on the Rampage might exhibit her wealth in a pageant or procession". Magwitch, for his part, aspires to the ideal of that very same social class which rendered him an outcast. Instead of contributing to its overthrow, since its interests run contrary to those of his down-trodden class, he imbues its own false values, cherishing the ambition of making 'a gentleman', in the Victorian sense of the word, out of Pip. If there need be proof that society brainwashes its own outcasts, then Magwitch provides it.

Closely linked with 'portable property' is the idea of acquisitive gain which inevitably breeds selfishness. And selfish characters abound throughout *Great Expectations*. Miss Havisham is ready to putrefy a young girl's emotions to satisfy her perverse whims. Pip is selfish in pursuit of material gain, to the extent that he almost renounces his close relations who become mere country cousins in his eyes. Part of his moral improvement rests in the selfless attitude shown towards Herbert and Magwitch. The theme of selfishness is best expressed by Wemmick, inside Little Britain:

"Choose your bridge, Mr Pip ... and take a walk upon your bridge, and you know the end of it. Serve a friend with it, and you may know the end of it too — but it's a less pleasant and profitable end."

Selfishness is related to other vices in this novel, particularly exploitation. Dickens must have regarded the vice as a hallmark of Victorian society at large. This was a period when criminals were deported with a view to peopling the new colonies. Children were often victims of exploitation in a society rendered infamous through the establishment of several workshops which thrived on child-labour (cf *Oliver Twist*). Estella is exploited by Miss Havisham to suit the latter's whims. Pip is likewise exploited by this woman who derives immense

pleasure from seeing Estella break his heart. Pumblechook is equally guilty of exploitation. An impostor, he poses as the source of Pip's newly-acquired gentlemanly status.

This status renders Pip a rather proud youngster. False Pride is a very important theme in this novel and both Estella and Pip are guilty in this respect. Ever since Estella deplored his coarse hands, Pip aspired to become a gentleman, feeling dissatisfied with his proletarian background. His work at the forge became an embarrassment. His newly-acquired pride as a gentleman eventually turned sour on him as he discovered that Magwitch was his benefactor. Estella's haughtiness is likewise unfounded, a murderess and a man of violence being her parents. The point Dickens is trying to make is that any society which prides itself on its unearned prosperity has no legitimate cause to do so.

The 'Little Britain' theme sheds light on another unsavoury aspect of Victorian society. It is a society which shows no mercy towards those individuals it rejects and starves to death. Whatever his good intentions, a criminal is regarded as a criminal and is judged accordingly. While he would have accepted Miss Havisham as his benefactress, Pip recoils at the idea of being patronized by a jail-bird. Herbert reveals a similar prejudice when refusing to occupy the chair Magwitch had just vacated. And yet criminals like Magwitch and Molly and all those who sobbingly received their sentence at the Old Bailey were hardly more guilty than the Compeysons, Havishams and Pumblechooks of the Victorian world. Molly was a murderess, literally taking someone else's life. Miss Habisham's crime was hardly less hideous in that she destroyed the soul of a destitute young girl, denying her all those qualities characterizing a human being. If anything, the convicts' guilt is extenuated by their own poverty. Reading through the novel we become aware that, in Victorian society, only the rich can enjoy justice. The poor are nearly always hard done by. But they can always suffer their misfortunes with dignity as Magwitch does when he is formally doomed: "I have received my sentence from the Almighty but I bow to yours."

Dickens' denunciation of Victorian complacency and brutality is naturally motivated by positive principles of conduct, suggested by a regenerate Pip, ready to help Herbert and to devote himself entirely to Magwitch's cause. But perhaps these principles find their perfect embodiment in Joe Gargery, an 'honest-to-goodness' character. He has no notions of artificiality, looking like 'a scarecrow' in his Sunday best and appearing quite at home in his working clothes. He may be looked upon as the personification of moral dignity and humble worth. In Biddy's words, he is "a worthy, worthy man ... who ever did his duty in his way of life, with a strong hand, a quiet tongue, and a gentle heart". He was tolerant towards the shrewish Mrs Joe and the insolent grown-up Pip.

When the recaptured convict admits to having eaten the pie, he replies:

“God knows you’re welcome to it — so far as it was ever mine ... We don’t know what you have done, but we wouldn’t have you starved for it, poor miserable fellow-creatur — would us, Pip?”

Perhaps Fyodor Dostoevsky had Joe Gargery in mind when he acknowledged Dickens as “that great Christian’.

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO THE U.K. COMPANIES ACT 1981

E.A. Fava

With the aim of harmonising company accounting in Europe, the European Economic Community published a document known as the Fourth Directive. This Directive is binding on all member states. As a result, the 1981 Companies Act was enacted in order to bring into U.K. Law the requirements of the Fourth Directive. The 1981 Act introduces some fundamental accounting changes. The chief changes may be summarised as the:

- (1) setting of accounting principles.
- (2) laying down of detailed valuation rules in U.K. for the first time.
- (3) setting out of fixed formats in which accounts are to be drawn up.
- (4) requiring of additional disclosures.
- (5) increase in information in the directors' report.
- (6) allowing of less detailed accounts by medium-sized and small companies.
- (7) giving of financial assistance for the purchase by a company of its own shares.
- (8) purchase and redemption by a company of its own shares.
- (9) disclosure of interests in shares.

1. Accounting Principles:

(A) The Act sets out the accounting principles to be followed in the preparation of all accounts. These are:

- i) The company is to be considered as a going concern.
- ii) accounting policies are to be consistently applied.
- iii) all items are to be prudently determined; in particular
 - (a) only those profits which are regarded as realised by generally accepted accounting principles are to be included in the accounts.
 - (b) all liabilities or losses which have arisen or are likely to arise should be taken into account.
- iv) revenue and charges are to be included irrespective of the date of payment.
- v) component parts of each asset and liability are to be treated separately and not as a whole.

(B) As one can see the first four of these principles agree with the fundamental accounting concepts already in practice, namely, the going concern concept, the consistency concept, the prudence concept and the accruals concept. The fifth principle (v above) is almost new since its forbids items being treated in aggregate. Henceforth, fixed assets and investments will have to be treated separately. This principle is familiar with regard to the valuation of stock, where individual stock items were valued separately and not as one global stock.

2. Valuation Rules:

(A) The Act lays down two sets of detailed rules for the valuation of particular assets and liabilities, namely,

- i) The historical cost accounting rules. Here valuations are based on purchase, or in the case of manufacturing, on production cost.
- ii) The alternative accounting rules. Here items are stated on a current cost basis, or in a more limited way, on a revaluation basis, or on other bases.

(B) Historical cost rules provide that assets are recorded in the accounts at their original purchase price or production cost. These may be reduced by appropriate depreciation provisions. Production cost means the purchase price of raw materials, plus other direct costs, plus a reasonable proportion of indirect costs that relate to the period of production, plus any interest on capital borrowed to finance the production of the asset in question.

(C) Fixed Assets must be reduced by provisions for depreciation computed in such a way as to write off their cost or price, less the estimated scrap value, over their useful lives. Fixed assets include intangible assets, long term investments with limited useful economic lives, and purchased goodwill. As regards purchased goodwill, this must be written off over a period estimated by the company's directors as its useful economic life. The directors must state the reasons for their estimated period.

(D) Stocks are to be valued under one of the following, whichever is appropriate to the company concerned.

- i) First in, first out (FIFO)
- ii) Last in, first out (LIFO)
- iii) Weighted average
- iv) Any similar method

(E) In addition to historical cost, assets may be valued at current cost or any other acceptable valuation. The rules allow companies to use current cost accounts as their main accounts. Also, they permit tangible fixed assets to be valued at market value, while investments at market value or at directors' value. If the revaluation creates a surplus (or deficit) this should be transferred to a revaluation reserve. This seems to be in direct conflict to the treatment of write downs under the historical cost rules, where any permanent reduction in value of any fixed asset has to be provided for by being charged to the profit and loss account and disclosed in the notes to the accounts.

(F) Where the alternative rules are used, depreciation based on the revalued amounts is to be used. However both the equivalent historical cost amounts (or any difference between historical cost and the revalued amounts) and the depreciation based on the historical cost must be disclosed.

It is accepted that some difficulty may be encountered when it

becomes necessary to identify the historical cost of assets which had been revalued in the past.

3. Fixed Formats:

(A) Companies are free to use any one of two fixed formats, provided that once a particular format has been adopted it is not to be changed unless there are special reasons to do so. If a change does take place, then details of the change and the reasons for it must be disclosed in the accounts. These formats give the minimum details to be disclosed; thus, it is left at the discretion of the directors to give more, if they so wish. Comparative figures must be shown and no set offs are permitted between assets and liabilities or revenue and expenditure.

(B) The two basic formats for the profit and loss account are: one suitable for a retailing business and the other suitable for a manufacturing concern. Both formats may be presented either in a vertical or horizontal form. The two formats, in vertical form, are reproduced hereunder. In general, a profit and loss account must show:

- i) profit or loss from ordinary activities before amounts transferred to or from reserves, and
- ii) total amount of dividends paid or proposed.

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT

Retailing

1. Turnover
2. Cost of Sales
3. Gross Profit (Loss)
4. Distribution Costs
5. Administrative Expenses
6. Other operating income
7. Income from shares in group companies
8. Income from shares in related companies
9. Income from other fixed asset investments
10. Other interest receivable and similar income
11. Amounts written off investments
12. Interest payable and similar charges
13. Tax on profit (loss) on ordinary activities
14. Profit (loss) on ordinary activities after tax
15. Extraordinary income
16. Extraordinary charges
17. Extraordinary profit (loss)
18. Tax on extraordinary profit (loss)
19. Other taxes not shown under above items.
20. Profit (loss) for the financial year

MANUFACTURING

1. Turnover.
2. Change in stocks of finished goods and work in progress.
3. Own work capitalised.

4. Other operating income.
5. i) Raw Materials and consumables.
ii) Other external charges.
6. Staff costs: i) Wages and salaries
ii) Social security costs
iii) Other pension costs
7. i) Depreciation and other amounts written off tangible and intangible assets
ii) Exceptional amounts written off current assets.
8. Other operating charges.
9. Income from shares in group companies.
10. Income from shares in related companies.
11. Income from other fixed asset investments.
12. Other interest receivable and similar income.
13. Amounts written off investments.
14. Interest payable and similar charges.
15. Tax on profit (loss) on ordinary activities.
16. Profit (loss) on ordinary activities after tax.
17. Extraordinary income.
18. Extraordinary charges.
19. Extraordinary profit (loss).
20. Tax on extraordinary profit (loss).
21. Other taxes not shown under the above items.
22. Profit (loss) for the financial year.

(C) The two basic formats for the Balance Sheet are one in vertical form and the other in horizontal form. There is basically no other difference between the two formats. Hereunder is the Balance Sheet format in vertical form.

BALANCE SHEET

(A) Called up shall capital not paid.

(B) Fixed Assets:

1. Intangible Assets:
 - i) Development costs
 - ii) Concessions, patents, licences, trade marks and similar rights and assets.
 - iii) Goodwill.
 - iv) Payments on account.
2. Tangible Assets:
 - i) Land and buildings.
 - ii) Plant and machinery.
 - iii) Fixtures, fittings, tools and equipment.
 - iv) Payments on account and assets in course of construction.
3. Investments:
 - i) Shares in group companies.
 - ii) Loans to group companies.
 - iii) Shares in related companies.
 - iv) Loans to related companies.
 - v) Other investments other than loans.
 - vi) Other loans.
 - vii) Own shares.

(C) Current Assets:

1. Stocks:
 - i) Raw materials and consumables.

- ii) Work in progress.
 - iii) Finished goods and goods for resale.
 - iv) Payments on account.
2. Debtors:
- i) Trade debtors.
 - ii) Amounts owed by group companies.
 - iii) Amounts owed by related companies.
 - iv) Other debtors.
 - v) Called up share capital not paid.
 - vi) Prepayments and accrued income.
3. Investments:
- i) Shares in group companies.
 - ii) Own shares.
 - iii) Other investments.
4. Cash at bank and in hand.
- (D) Prepayments and accrued income.
 - (E) Creditors: amounts falling due within one year.
- i) Debenture loans.
 - ii) Bank loans and overdrafts.
 - iii) Payments received on account.
 - iv) Trade creditors.
 - v) Bills of exchange payable.
 - vi) Amounts owed to group companies.
 - vii) Amounts owed to related companies.
 - viii) Other creditors including taxation and social security.
 - ix) Accruals and deferred income.
 - x) Hire purchase, current instalments.
- (F) Net Current Assets (liabilities)
 - (G) Total assets less current liabilities.
 - (H) Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year.
- i) Debenture loans.
 - ii) Bank loans and overdrafts.
 - iii) Payments received on account.
 - iv) Trade creditors.
 - v) Bills of exchange payable.
 - vi) Amounts owed to group companies.
 - vii) Amounts owed to related companies.
 - viii) Other creditors including taxation and social security.
 - ix) Accruals and deferred income.
 - x) H.P. liabilities after one year.
- (I) Provisions for liabilities and charges:
- i) Pensions and similar obligations.
 - ii) Taxation, including deferred taxation.
 - iii) Other provisions.
- (J) Accruals and deferred income.
 - (K) Capital and reserves:
- i) Called up share capital.
 - ii) Share premium account.
 - iii) Revaluation reserve.
 - iv) Other reserves:

- (a) Capital redemption reserve.
- (b) Reserve for own shares.
- (c) Reserves provided for by the articles of association.
- (d) Other reserves.
- v) Profit and loss account.

4. Disclosures

(A) The disclosures required under the previous Companies Acts are restated in the 1981 Act. In addition, the Act lays down that the following disclosures are required by way of note to the accounts, and not merely stated in the directors' report.

- i) the accounting policies used in the accounts.
- ii) the replacement cost of stocks at the balance sheet date, if this is materially different from the historical cost as shown in the accounts.
- iii) the analysis of turnover both by geographical market and by class of business activity.
- iv) details by movements of all fixed assets, including intangible assets and long term investments, during the year.
- v) details of shares and debentures allotted during the year.
- vi) the period within which development costs are to be written off; also the reasons for capitalising such costs.
- vii) the aggregate market value of listed investments: if, however, the market value is higher than the Stock Exchange value, both values have to be disclosed.
- viii) details of any security given to creditors.
- ix) details of any pension commitment, disclosing any amounts not provided.
 - x) details of other financial commitments not already provided for, and which are relevant to the company's affairs.
- xi) the average number of employees in total and for each category. Also, wages and salaries, social security and other pension costs have to be disclosed.
- xii) the historical cost of revalued assets.

5. Directors' Report

(A) With regard to the Directors' Report the following changes need to be known:

- i) the report must contain "a fair review of the development of the business of the company and its subsidiaries during the financial year ... and of their position at the end of it ..."
- ii) details of any acquisitions of the company's own shares made during the year must be disclosed in the report.
- iii) statements, probably in broad terms, have to be disclosed, showing:
 - (a) particulars of important events occurring since the end of the year.
 - (b) an indication of likely future developments.
 - (c) an indication of research and development.

(B) Details of (a) turnover, (b) profit, (c) shares and debentures allotted during the year, and (d) employee numbers and costs are no longer required in the directors' report as these have now to be included in the notes to the accounts. Also, the disclosure of exports is no longer required. Furthermore, directors' interests in the company's shares can be included in the notes to the accounts, so that all financial information

may be presented as one whole.

(C) The Act requires auditors to report any inconsistencies between the directors' report and the accounts.

6. Modified Accounts

(A) Small or medium-sized companies are allowed to file modified accounts with the Registrar of Companies; however, full statutory accounts must still be prepared for shareholders.

(B) A company is considered to be either small or medium-sized for a financial year if it satisfies for that year and the previous year at least two of the following:

SMALL		MEDIUM-SIZED
under £1,400,000	TURNOVER	under £5,750,000
„ 700,000	TOTAL ASSETS	„ 2,800,000
	AVERAGE NUMBER	
	OF EMPLOYEES ON	
„ 50	A WEEKLY BASIS	„ 250

(C) A small company needs to file neither the profit and loss account nor a directors' report. It is only required to file a modified balance sheet and notes referring to the following:

- i) accounting policies
- ii) share capital
- iii) details of share allotments
- iv) analysis of creditors and debtors
- v) basis of exchange of foreign currencies.

(D) A medium-sized company enjoys only one exemption; it can file a modified profit and loss account, that is omitting details of turnover margins. A full balance sheet has to be filed.

(E) The auditors have to submit a special audit report confirming that the company in question is permitted to file modified accounts. Also, they have to set out a full audit report on the shareholders accounts.

(F) Public companies and certain other companies (banking, insurance and shipping) are not to be treated as small or medium-sized. Furthermore, certain banking, insurance and shipping companies may still prepare their accounts under the old rules. They are exempt from the Fourth Directive. There are also different rules for investment companies.

(G) A company is considered as dormant if during any period no accounting transaction occurs. Such a company is relieved from having its accounts audited if a special resolution to this effect is passed.

7. Financial Assistance

(A) Previously no company was permitted to buy its own shares or to provide any assistance for doing so. Now the 1981 Act allows, for the first time, a private company to assist the acquisition of its own shares, subject to adequate safeguards for creditors. On the other hand, it is still not permissible for a public company to provide such assistance. The Act, however, sets out general exception to this basic prohibition, followed by additional exceptions for private companies.

(B) The following main exceptions to the basic prohibitions apply to all companies, if:

- i) the assistance is incidental to some larger purpose, is given in good faith and in the interests of the company.
- ii) the ordinary business of the company is the lending of money, and the lending is effected in the ordinary course of business.
- iii) the provision of money for the acquisition of fully paid shares is made under an employee share scheme.
- iv) loans are made to employees (not directors) in order to enable them to buy fully paid shares in the company.

(C) Assistance may be given as in (Bii), (iii), and (iv) above, only if it does not reduce the company's net assets, or if it does, the assistance is covered by distributable profits.

(D) There are also exceptions for those transactions which could be construed as financial assistance but which are allowed or required elsewhere; these are dividends, bonus issues, schemes of arrangement, etc.

(E) The following additional exceptions are granted to private companies, subject to certain safeguards. These exceptions apply where the assistance is given to a third party for the acquisition of:

- i) its shares
- ii) shares in its holding company, provided
 - (a) the holding company is a private company.
 - (b) any intermediate holding company is a private company.

(F) The safeguards referred to in E above are:

- i) the company in general meeting must pass a special resolution approving the assistance. Where the assistance is for the acquisition of shares by a third party in the holding company, special resolutions are also required from that company and any intermediate holding company.
- ii) all the directors must sign a statutory declaration that the company will remain solvent immediately after the giving of such assistance, and that it will remain so for the following year. In the case of a company assisting the acquisition of shares in its holding company, all the directors of the holding company (and all those of any intermediate holding company) must make a similar declaration about their company. The declaration must give details of the assistance to be given, the business of the company and the person to whom the assistance is to be given.
- iii) the company's auditors must make a report stating that they had checked the affairs of the company, and in their opinion, there appears nothing in the director's declaration to be unreasonable.

8. Purchase and Redemption of own Shares

(A) The 1981 Act substantially alters existing company law with regard to repayments or reductions in capital. The new act allows

- i) all companies to issue redeemable shares of any class and redeem them out of distributable profits or the proceeds of a fresh issue.
- ii) all companies to buy their own shares for cancellation out of distributable profits or the proceeds of a fresh issue.
- iii) private companies to redeem or buy their own shares for cancellation out of capital.

(B) Only fully paid shares may be redeemed or purchased by a company. However, a company can pay up any unpaid capital out of reserves, which are available for the purpose. Then the redeeming or purchasing can take place.

(C) Shares of any kind may be redeemed, not necessarily redeemable preference shares, provided that (a) the company has other shares which are not redeemable, and (b) the Articles of Association authorises such redemption or purchase.

(D) The overriding principle governing the redemption is that no loss of capital should take place. Therefore, shares may only be redeemed out of (a) distributable profits or (b) the proceeds of a fresh issue. In addition, if the redemption is out of profits, an appropriate amount must be transferred to a Capital Redemption Reserve.

(E) Any premium paid on redemption must be paid out of (a) distributable profits, or (b) the proceeds of a fresh issue of shares to the extent that the original shares were issued at a premium and that premium has not yet been utilised.

The old rules (now repealed) allowed the premium to be paid out of the share premium account. This is no longer possible, although redeemable preference shares issued before the 1981 Act came into force may still be redeemed under the old rules.

(F) Purchase of shares out of profits or a new issue.

- 1) Previously it was not possible for any company to buy its own shares, the reasons being that such a purchase would reduce the capital available for the protection of creditors, and to prevent a company from "trafficking" in its own shares. Now, under the 1981 Act both public and private companies may purchase their own fully paid shares either out of distributable profits or out of the proceeds of a new issue. As soon as such shares are purchased they have to be cancelled.
- 2) The purchase of shares is conditioned by the following:
 - i) there must be an advance authorisation by the members of the company.
 - ii) the purchase must follow the same accounting rules as for the redemption of shares. However, any costs other than the purchase price has to be paid out of distributable profits.

- iii) the purchase cannot be effected if such a transaction results in the company having only redeemable shares in issue.
- 3) With regard to the advance authorisation by the members, this depends on whether the shares are bought through the Stock Exchange or through an Unlisted Securities Market; that is, a "market-purchase" or bought "off the market".
 - 4) If it is a "market-purchase" the authorisation has to be obtained through the members in general meeting. Such an authority may be general, or specific, and it may be subject to conditions. It may be varied, revoked or renewed by the company in general meeting. It must specify the:
 - i) maximum number of shares to be bought.
 - ii) minimum and maximum prices at which the shares could be bought.
 - iii) expiry date of the authorisation, which should not exceed eighteen months after the passing of the resolution.
 - 5) If it is an "off the market purchase" the advance authorisation must be obtained by a special resolution at a general meeting. 75% of the votes cast at the meeting are needed for the approval of such a resolution. A copy of the purchase contract, or a written memorandum of its terms, must be available for inspection by the members at least fifteen days before the date of the meeting, and at the meeting itself. Furthermore, the names of the members holding the shares which are to be bought must be specified. In the case of an "off the market purchase" by a public company the resolution must set the time limit for the completion of the purchase, which limit should not exceed eighteen months.
 - 6) The Registrar of Companies must be informed within 28 days of any purchase by the company of its own shares. The information must specify the:
 - i) number and nominal value of each class of shares bought.
 - ii) date on which they were received by the company.

In the case of a public company the information must contain the following additional details:

 - iii) aggregate amount paid for the shares.
 - iv) maximum and minimum prices paid for the shares in each class.
 - 7) A copy of the purchase contract must be retained for a period of ten years so that members may inspect it, in the case of a public company the contract is to be available for the public as well.

(G) Purchase or Redemption out of Capital

- 1) The 1981 Act has brought about one of the major changes to existing company law. This is the innovation where a private company can now redeem or buy its own shares for cancellation out of capital. This means that shares can be bought or redeemed even where the distributable profits and/or the proceeds of a new issue are lower than the purchase price of the shares. This difference between the

redemption or purchase price and the sum of the distributable profits and the proceeds of a new issue is termed "the permissible capital payment" and thus it represents a reduction of capital.

- 2) The permissible capital payment has to be approved by a special resolution at a general meeting; its approval depending on a simple majority, but the votes of those shares which are the subject of the resolution have to be ignored, unless they are against the resolution.

The following is a suggested guide as to how the Profit and loss account and the Balance Sheet may be presented.

SUNNY SIDE LIMITED

Profit and Loss account for the year ended 31 March 1983

	Notes	1983 £	1982 £
Turnover	2	600,500	565,000
Cost of Sales		460,000	435,000
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Distribution and Administrative Expenses	3	140,500 101,500	130,000 90,900
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Other operating income	4	39,000 2,000	39,100 1,700
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Income from Fixed Asset Investments	5	41,000 1,465	40,800 1,550
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Interest payable on loan	6	42,465 1,200	42,350 1,600
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Profit on ordinary activities before tax		41,265	40,750
Taxation on ordinary activities	7	20,632	20,375
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Profit on ordinary activities after tax		20,633	20,375
Extraordinary charges after tax	8	2,400	
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Profit for the year		18,233	20,375
Dividends	9	10,800	8,400
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Retained profit for year		7,433	11,975
Retained profit brought forward from last year		22,075	10,100
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Retained profit carried forward		29,508	22,075
		<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

SUNNY SIDE LIMITED

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 1983

	Notes	1983		1982	
		£	£	£	£
Tangible Assets	11		35,995		43,680
Investments	12		14,000		16,000
			<u>49,995</u>		<u>59,680</u>
Current Assets:					
Stock (goods for resale)	13	25,690		20,130	
Debtors	14	18,370		17,954	
Cash & Bank		25,469		5,247	
		<u>69,529</u>		<u>43,331</u>	
Creditors:					
Amounts falling due within one year	15	22,016		18,936	
Net Current Assets			<u>47,513</u>		<u>24,395</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			97,508		84,075
Creditors falling due after one year	16		8,000		12,000
			<u>89,508</u>		<u>72,075</u>
Fixed Assets:					
Capital Reserves:					
Called up Share Capital	17		60,000		50,000
Profit and Loss Account			29,508		22,075
			<u>89,508</u>		<u>72,075</u>

The following notes form part of the accounts:

1. Accounting Policies:

- a. There were no changes in the accounting policies during the year.
- b. The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost accounting basis.
- c. Depreciation is provided to write off the cost, or valuation, less the estimated residual values of all fixed assets over their expected useful lives. Depreciation is calculated as shown hereunder:

Leaseholds	3% per annum
Fixtures	10% p.a.
Vehicles	20% p.a.

- d. Stocks are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

2. Turnover:

- a. Turnover represents sales to outside customers.

b. Analysis by activity:	1983	1982
	£	£
Gents' Wear	451,650	392,000
Footwear	148,850	173,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	600,500	565,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Analysis by market:		
U.K.	326,990	400,675
Europe	273,510	164,325
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	600,500	565,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
3. Distribution and Administrative Expenses:		
Distribution Costs	30,460	25,790
Administrative Expenses	71,040	65,110
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	101,500	90,900
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Distribution costs include:		
Depreciation on Vehicles	2,800	4,000
Administration Expenses include:		
Depreciation on leaseholds	585	585
Depreciation on fixtures, etc.	1,740	1,476
Loss on disposed vehicle	100	<hr/>
Auditors remuneration	3,000	2,600
4. Operating Income:		
Rent received from sublet	2,000	1,700
5. Income from fixed asset investment:		
Dividends received	1,465	1,550
6. Loan Interest:		
The Loan, which carries 10% interest p.a. is repayable within five years.		
7. Taxation:		
Taxation is based on the profits for the year.	1983	1982
	£	£
Corporation tax at 50%	20,632	20,375
8. Extraordinary charges:		
Closing down of a retail branch	2,000	<hr/>
Damages, court case	400	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2,400	<hr/>
	<hr/>	<hr/>

9. Dividends:		£	£
Preference : paid		800	800
Ordinary : interim	5% 6%	2,500	2,400
: final proposed	15% 13%	7,500	5,200
		<u>10,800</u>	<u>8,400</u>

10. Employees:

Staff costs consist of:

Wages and Salaries	70,250	66,293
Social security costs	7,336	7,237
Other pension costs	3,864	3,130
	<u>81,450</u>	<u>76,660</u>

The number of employees averaged 20 per week during the year.

	No.	No.
Office management	8	6
Sales & Distribution	12	8
	<u>20</u>	<u>14</u>

Directors' remuneration consists of

Fees	£ 15,560	£ 14,200
Other emoluments	2,540	3,000
Pensions to former directors	2,000	—
	<u>20,100</u>	<u>17,200</u>

11. Tangible Fixed Assets:

	Leaseholds	Fixtures, etc.	Vehicles	Total
	£	£	£	£
At cost:				
1 April 1982	19,500	14,760	20,000	54,260
Additions	<u>—</u>	2,640	<u>—</u>	2,640
	19,500	17,400	20,000	56,900
Disposals	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	(6,000)	(6,000)
Total at 31 March 1983	19,500	17,400	14,000	50,900

Depreciations:	£	£	£	£
1 April 1982	4,000	2,580	4,000	10,580
Disposals	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	(800)	(800)
	4,000	2,580	3,200	9,780
Provided during year	<u>585</u>	<u>1,740</u>	<u>2,800</u>	<u>5,125</u>
Total at 31 March 1983	<u><u>4,585</u></u>	<u><u>4,320</u></u>	<u><u>6,000</u></u>	<u><u>14,905</u></u>
Net book values at 31 March 1983	<u>14,915</u>	<u>13,080</u>	<u>8,000</u>	<u>35,995</u>
Net book values at 31 March 1982	<u>15,500</u>	<u>12,180</u>	<u>16,000</u>	<u>43,680</u>

12. Investments:

At cost:	£
1 April 1982	16,000
Additions	4,000
Disposals	<u>(6,000)</u>
Total at 31 March 1983	<u><u>14,000</u></u>

13. Stocks:

Stocks would amount to £28,720 if valued at net realisable value (1982 — £22,006)

14. Debtors:

	1983	1982
	£	£
Trade debtors	13,715	12,683
Prepayments and income due	<u>4,655</u>	<u>5,271</u>
	<u>18,370</u>	<u>17,954</u>

15. Creditors:

Amounts falling due within one year:

Trade Creditors	9,761	8,854
Social security	599	632
Proposed dividends	7,500	5,200
Expense Accruals	156	256
Bank Loan	<u>4,000</u>	<u>4,000</u>
	<u>22,016</u>	<u>18,936</u>

16. Creditors falling due after one year:

	£	£
Bank Loan	8,000	12,000
The bank loan is at 10% p.a. interest and is repayable in annual instalments of £4,000 each. The current year's portion is shown under creditors falling due within one year.		

17. Called up Share Capital

	Authorised		Issued (fully paid)	
	1983	1982	1983	1982
	£	£	£	£
8% Preference Shares of £1	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Ordinary Shares of £1	60,000	60,000	50,000	40,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	70,000	70,000	60,000	50,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

18. There is a contract for capital expenditure amounting to £16,000.

 Author's note:

This contribution has been written with the sole purpose of meeting the minimum needs of 'A' level students. It is neither a comprehensive nor an authoritative exposition of the U.K. Companies Act 1981, to which reference must be made. For obvious reasons certain other provisions, the director's and the auditors' reports, and the statement of sources and application of funds have been omitted.

LA COMPOSITION FRANCAISE

Alfred Falzon / Frank Gatt

(Rappel: Oxford Local Examinations, Advanced Level French.

Time allowed: 1½ hrs

Maximum mark: 40

Paper IV

A choice of essay titles, six in number, is provided, with a range which allows descriptive or narrative essays.

Length: Between 250 and 300 words).

Pour rédiger votre COMPOSITION FRANCAISE il faudra:

- (1) *Lire le sujet et le comprendre.* Une lecture trop rapide, une erreur d'interprétation peut conduire à traiter un tout autre devoir que celui qui est proposé: erreur fatale au candidat, car elle est généralement sanctionnée par la note zéro.

Un sujet de composition française est l'équivalent d'une donnée de problème: il contient les éléments qui vous conduiront à répondre à la question posée. Il est donc essentiel de n'en oublier aucun.

Consacrez dix minutes environ à cette étude.

- (2) *Rechercher des idées.* Déjà en lisant le texte vous avez probablement quelques idées sur ce qu'on vous demande d'exprimer. Notez-les telles quelles.

Un mot suffit pour les fixer rapidement (un mot, une note brève, un exemple).

Accordez-vous une dizaine de minutes de réflexion où, sans rien rédiger, vous vous contentez d'enrichir ces notations rapides.

Quand les matériaux sont suffisants, faites-en la critique afin de ne garder que ce qui convient au sujet.

Puis classez, en les numérotant, les idées retenues, afin d'esquisser le plan que vous adoptez.

Ce n'est que lorsque ce plan sera dressé au moins dans votre esprit, que vous pourrez, sur une autre feuille de brouillon commencer à rédiger votre devoir en vous servant continuellement de vos notes.

- (3) *Faire le plan.* Certains sujets comportent l'indication d'un plan. Suivez-le!

D'autres ne l'indiquent que très vaguement (le sujet abstrait, par exemple) ou pas du tout. Il faut, d'après votre étude du texte,

d'après la documentation dont vous disposez, établir un plan qui satisfasse aux exigences suivantes:

- Poser la question à traiter:
 - (a) décrire quelque chose ou quelque'un;
 - (b) raconter un certain fait;
 - (c) expliquer ou prouver quelque chose.
- Exposer les aspects, les faits ou les arguments dans un ordre logique:
 - (a) dans l'ordre croissant d'intérêt et de valeur.

L'Introduction

Elle prépare le lecteur à ce qu'il va lire: elle l'informe du sujet traité, pose le problème, ou annonce ce qui va être démontré. Elle contient donc le sujet, mais ne présente aucune réponse aux questions qu'il pose ni aucun argument permettant cette réponse.

Le Développement

Il doit comporter autant de paragraphes que de points de vue ou d'arguments accompagnés des exemples destinés à les éclairer.

Respectez l'ordre croissant dans l'importance des idées.

Passez d'une idée à l'autre par une transition.

La Conclusion

Elle doit résumer le contenu du devoir en insistant et en terminant sur l'essentiel ou, suivant le cas, sur la réponse à la question posée par le sujet.

Il est prudent de soigner particulièrement l'introduction et la conclusion. Par l'une on s'assure l'attention du correcteur, par l'autre on confirme sa bonne impression.

(4) *Travailler le brouillon.* Quand le sujet est rédigé au brouillon tout n'est pas fini. Il faut corriger ce brouillon avec attention:

- chasser les répétitions (une faute de style)
- choisir des mots précis et expressifs
- respecter les accords de personnes
- respecter la concordance des temps des verbes
- équilibrer les phrases, placer les compléments par ordre d'importance
- éviter les banalités, les "clichés"
- établir les transitions manquantes

(5) *Recopier le devoir.* Rendez sensible la séparation des paragraphes en marquant bien le retrait à l'alinéa. Vous ne sauriez trop veiller à l'écriture, à la ponctuation, à l'orthographe, des qualités qui entraînent le correcteur à l'indulgence, voire à la générosité.

(6) *Relire le devoir.* Une rature de la dernière minute, nettement faite, n'abîme pas un devoir soigné.

(Alfred Faizon)

Votre conception d'une personne cultivée

M. Nodier était bibliothécaire. Trapu comme un montagnard, joues écarlates, l'oeil vif, le sourire bonhomme, Jean Nodier paraissait trente-cinq ans, en avait quarante et un et donnait l'impression d'être centenaire.

Encore très jeune, il avait montré une grande aptitude innée pour l'instruction. Jean avait un faible pour les livres. Plus il lisait plus cette soif devenait inextinguible. Non qu'il trouvât aucune aide de la part de ses parents: entièrement illettrés, ses parents le considéraient un fainéant qui perdait son temps en des lectures inutiles. Le seul encouragement venait du Père Ange, curé de la paroisse où vivait la famille Nodier. Grâce au talent de Jean et à la recommandation du Père Ange, le jeune Nodier continua ses études dans un séminaire. Très tôt il s'était affirmé et distingué comme le champion des jours des prix. En outre, il trouvait le temps de se mêler aux autres étudiants: il aimait beaucoup les sports et le théâtre. Ses études terminées et sa vocation du sacerdoce épuisée, on lui offrit le poste de bibliothécaire dans le même séminaire. Il l'accepta de bon cœur.

On disait que M. Nodier connaissait parfaitement tous les livres de sa bibliothèque. Sans doute ne perdait-il pas le temps de glaner toute sorte d'information. Son plus grand plaisir était d'entreprendre des études personnelles sur n'importe quel sujet. Les étudiants le considéraient comme une vraie mine d'information toujours à leur disposition. On le voyait qui expliquait un problème de mathématiques à un élève ou qui choisissait un livre d'histoire pour un autre. Car, tout en étant très intelligent et cultivé, il était demeuré humble et disponible.

De retour chez lui, il consacrait bien des heures aux autres arts: la musique, la peinture et la poésie. Il passait des heures entières à écouter des compositions classiques. Cela lui chatouillait le cœur outre mesure. C'était, disait-il, comme être transporté dans un paradis terrestre sans tumultes et sans préoccupations où la paix était le seul ordre du jour. En outre il ne perdait pas l'occasion d'assister à des concerts. Après la musique, la peinture. Son œil critique, son goût raffiné lui permettaient de chérir un Rembrandt comme une Divine Comédie; les jeux de couleurs, les nuances artistiques, les lumières et les ombres lui réservaient une sensation surhumaine. Mais son plus grand plaisir était la poésie, car les vers constituaient une vraie quintessence de musique, de peinture, de sculpture. Les Alexandrins souples de Victor Hugo tenaient beaucoup de la douceur de Debussy; le Parnasse avait transformé la poésie en une vraie sculpture où abondent les émaux et camées; l'art d'un Dante ou d'un Arioste réussit à transformer sur la toile de la

poésie les merveilles de l'au delà et des jardins fantastiques. M. Nodier lui même composait des vers; mais sa modestie et sa conscience de manquer de talent, lui interdirent de les publier. Homme parmi les hommes, M. Nodier se sentait au niveau des dieux parmi les délices incomparables des Arts.

Puis, quand il s'agissait d'entreprendre quelque voyage culturel, l'argent lui filait entre les doigts. Pendant ses voyages il attestait ce qu'il avait lu. Les civilisations anciennes de la Grèce et de l'Egypte devaient être vues pour être vraiment appréciées. Il était particulièrement attiré par l'exotisme de la culture orientale. Comme un vrai Marc Polo, M. Nodier visita jusqu'à la Chine y demeurant quelques mois chez des missionnaires catholiques qu'il connaissait. Il parcourut aussi l'Europe: en effet, à ce que je sache, il n'y a pas de pays européen qu'il n'ait pas visité.

Non pour rien tout le monde le surnommait le "Boute-en-Train". Il était réputé comme le conteur le plus doué de son village. Car cet homme cultivé et simple vivait pied sur terre et ne se dédaignait pas d'entreprendre une conversation avec les gens du peuple. Il se sentait à l'aise avec eux comme avec n'importe quel homme érudit. Malgré son érudition, il ne monopolisait jamais la conversation; même il s'attendait à ce que les autres fassent de leur mieux pour s'expliquer et s'exprimer. Tout le monde l'estimait parce qu'il ne faisait jamais bon marché de l'avis des autres. Bien des fois ces mêmes amis l'invitaient à se présenter comme candidat aux élections pour le Conseil Municipal Mais à rien ne valaient leurs insistances: il chérissait trop la liberté pour s'engager dans la politique: libre pour tous les engagements sans jamais s'engager, comme avait conseillé le pédagogue dans Les Mouches sartriennes.

Qu'importaient les honneurs pour lui! Son vrai plaisir il le trouvait parmi les tomes et les élèves de sa bibliothèque, et les airs magiques de sa musique favorite; parmi les paysages sereins de ses tableaux et les vers sculptés de ses poésies. Surtout parmi les voyages à l'étranger et pendant les tête-à-tête avec ses amis.

"Ci-gît M. Jean Nodier, homme cultivé et simple qui vivra toujours dans les coeurs de ses villageois".

(Frank Gatt)

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DUN KARM: IL-LEHEN POETIKU TA' NAZZJON

Oliver Friggieri

IT-TNISSIL TA' KUXJENZA NAZZJONALI

Wiehed mill-persunaġġi Maltin li hađu xejra nazzjonali u li llum jiġbru fihom il-qofol l-aktar magħruf u tipiku tal-gżira huwa Dun Karm Psaila (1871-1961), il-poeta nazzjonali, magħruf bħala Dun Karm, isem li sa minn kmieni kien biżżejjed biex jagħzlu minn kulhadd bħala "il-poeta Malti". Maż-żmien il-lirika tiegħu bdiet tikseb dejjem aktar it-tifsira vera tagħha: dokument siewi ta' identità ta' pajjiż li minn ftit żmien qabel kien beda jiskopri x-xejriet tiegħu biex jasal għal definizzjoni etnika, kulturali u politika tiegħu nnifsu.

Iż-żmien li għex fih il-poeta hu mżewwaq gmielu bl-isforzi kbar li riedu jwasslu lill-kolonja għall-emanċipazzjoni kostituzzjonali tagħha. L-għarfien ta' l-identità kien il-prinċipju ewlieni tal-moviment romantiku Ewropew. Bis-saħħa tal-preżenza kontinwa tal-kultura Taljana bħala l-kultura mirquma tal-Maltin, l-intellektwali Maltin kienu f'qagħda mhux biss li jidentifikaw il-progress tal-kultura Taljana mal-progress possibbli ta' gżirithom ukoll, iżda wkoll li jieħdu minnha t-tagħlimiet meħtieġa f'qagħda politika li għal żmien twil dehret, ftit jew wisq, analoga għal ta' l-Italja. Il-paralleliżmu bejn il-għlieda tat-Taljani għall-helsien ta' pajjiżhom u l-ħtieġa ta' għlieda bħalha mill-Maltin għall-helsien ta' Malta beda jidher l-iżjed bis-saħħa tal-ħidma politika, letterarja u gurnalistika ta' għadd kbir ta' eżiljati Taljani li taw sehemhom fil-programm risorgimentali billi sabu l-għajnuna li offritilhom Malta. Il-kuxjenza ribelli xterdet, ingħaqdet mas-sens eqdem ta' nuqqas ta' sodisfazzjon li kien beda jinħass minn żmien qabel, u qajl qajl tiddlet fi programm politiku-kulturali li jista' jingabar fil-mistoqsija: aħna min aħna, bħala Maltin? Hi l-qalba tal-kwiżtjoni tal-lingwa u tač-čaqliqiet politiċi kollha li riedu jasl għall-wetqa ta' individwalità Maltija fid-dawl tal-wirt tradizzjonali.

Vassalli (1764-1829) kien tkellem diġà fl-1796 dwar il-ħtieġa soċjali u kulturali li l-"lingwa nazionale" tkun ikkultivata u mrawma bil-għaqal biex jinħoloq minnha mezz mirqum u fejjiedi għall-edukazzjoni tal-poplu u biex titrabba u tikber letteratura bil-Malti. Vassalli ha l-edukazzjoni tiegħu f'Ruma fejn xandar uħud mill-kitbiet tiegħu,¹ u kellu

1. Cfr. N. Cremona, *Mikiel Anton Vassalli u żminijietu*, (2 ed., Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1975), pp. 3-4 u *passim*.

fehmiel liberali, mibnija fuq il-htieġa tal-parteeċipazzjoni popolari fil-kultura u fit-tixrid demokratiku ta' l-għerf. L-ispirtu illuministiku tiegħu ġieghlu jaftar importanza partikulari lill-funzjoni ta' l-ilsien tal-gżira: "In un secolo in cui le arti e le scienze han fatto progressi si' grandi ed ammirabili, che quasi non restano fra di esse più dipartimenti da illustrare, pareva che non si dovesse tralasciare incolto, senza dissotterrarlo dall'oblivione, uno de' più antichi monumenti, qual è la lingua maltese."²

It-tbexx ta' qawmien nazzjonali, sa żmien Vassalli, kien għadu aktarx lingwistiku u kulturali. Ir-romantiċizmu, wara kollox, hu moviment li ried iwahħad l-impenn politiku ma' l-impenn kulturali, l-aktar letterarju, u fil-mixja lejn l-għarfien ta' identità — persunali u kollettiva — il-ħsieb romantiku ta fejda ċentrali lil-lingwa tal-post. Izjed 'il quddiem dehret ukoll il-parti l-oħra, li kien jonqos, ta' dan il-programm doppju, il-parti politika. Ġorġ Mitrovich kiteb dan il-messagg nazzjonali fl-1835: "Il tempo della persecuzione è passato. Levate dalla vostra mente ogni minima ombra di timore, perchè si tratta di ricorrere ad un'assemblea di un popolo libero, che vi da' piena facoltà di parlare apertamente, domandare e ripetere. Ora è il momento, miei cari fratelli, e non dovete perderlo... Siate certi che verrà un giorno che il popolo maltese sarà reso felice, sarà liberato dalla sua schiavitù, ben trattato e accarezzato."³

Il-kuntest li daħal fih Dun Karm kien mimli biż-żerriegħa tal-qawmien tal-Maltin li, wara grajja twila ta' ħakma kolonjali li spiċċat biex fl-istess ħin għakksithom u tathom l-identità kumplessa tagħhom, issa ntebħu bi triq ġdida ta' għarfien tar-ruħ lokali lil hinn minn dawn il-punti ta' riferiment. Ir-rabtiet baqgħu, u jibqgħu, iżda għallinqas il-kuxjenza kienet kburiya u l-pjan infassal ried jaasal għas-sedqa tas-setgħat Maltin fuq il-livelli msemmija. Hi sewwa sew din il-kuxjenza storika, miżrugħa fil-ħamrija ta' wirt qadim iżda ħerqana li tifhem il-preżent u tfantas ġejjieni differenti, li tagħti ruħ lill-aħjar waqtiet poetiċi ta' Dun Karm.

IL-LEHMA NAZZJONALI

Bħal kull romantiku ieħor, Dun Karm fehem il-poezija fl-aspett storiku tagħha, fid-dawl tal-qagħda li tnissilha. L-awtobijografija hi mqassma fi tnejn: nazzjonali u persunali. Waqt li, fuq naħa, fil-poeta hemm il-bini ta' verżjoni fantastika tat-tigrib privat tiegħu (li mid-dokument iġġaddi għax-xbiha, billi l-fatt isir metafora), hemm ukoll fih is-sublimazzjoni ta' sensiela ta' grajjiet tal-kotra kollha. Iz-żjara "lejn" l-imbieghed hi żjara wkoll fl-imghoddi; m'ħix ħarba iżda pellegrinaġġ devot

2. "Discorso Preliminare," *Ktieb il-Kliem Malti*, (Roma, A. Fulgonio, 1796), p. VII.
3. *Indirizzo ai maltesi da parte del loro amico*, (Londra, Mills e figlio, 1835), pp. 14-15.

lejn żminijiet imġhoddija li fid-dinja maħluqa mill-awtur jitbiddlu f'xena-
narju mlewwen iffullat minn eroj magħrufa u bla isem, aġenti ta' ġabra
ta' eġhmejjel kbar li jixirqilhom l-apprezzament tan-nies ta' żmien il-
poeta. L-imġhoddi hu maħruġ 'il barra mis-santwarju tal-mewt u moġħ-
ti n-nifs ta' hajja ġdida — dokumentata u mistħajla — li tghodd għall-
qagħda storika tal-preżent. M'hux vjaġġ nostalgiku, iżda mixxa fiż-żmien
li mill-imġarrab jintuwixxi x'għandu jiġġarrab.

Poetikament Dun Karm għamel din il-wirja panoramika billi pin-
ga bil-hila ta' mġħallem persuni, qagħdiet, drawwiet, pajsaġġi, ambjenti,
għrajiet u l-bqija, il-koll elementi li jsawru definizzjoni ta' Malta. Aktarx
li ħadd aktar minnu ma rnexxielu jaġti d-dehra sħiħha ta' nazzjon skond
ix-xejriet magħrufa li jsawru definizzjoni ta' pajjiż. Imrawwem kif kien
fil-kultura ta' żmienu, li thaddan ukoll il-filosofija tan-nazzjon, id-defi-
nizzjoni ta' identità territorjali, Dun Karm wassal lix-xbiha ta' Malta
fejn wassluha l-aqwa ilhna tar-romantiċizmu patrijottiku Ewropew.

IL-POEZIJA TAL-KRIZI

Minbarra t-titwila 'l barra bis-saħħa ta' titwila lejn l-imġhoddi
fid-dawl tal-qagħda preżenti, Dun Karm ta wkoll it-titwila tiegħu 'l
ġewwa, lejn l-eġħluq tal-kuxjenza privata. Hawn tidhol it-taħdita her-
qana, ħienja-mnikkta tiegħu, mal-poeta li gieġħlu jirrifletti l-iżjed, Ugo
Foscolo, l-awtur ta' *I Sepolcri*, il-persunalità mimlija kuntrasti li għall-
poeta Malti fissret sfida kemm lingwistika-letterarja (jiġifieri l-qlib għall-
Malti tal-poema, *L-Oqbra*), kif ukoll filosofika (jiġifieri l-kitba ta' *Il-Jien*
u *Lil Hinn Minnu* bħala twegiġba).

Kontra l-wetqa ta' l-immortalità storika bħala l-hajja waħdanija
merfugħa għall-bniedem herqan li ma jmutx, Dun Karm ma setax ikun
originali billi jippreżenta l-verżjoni persunali tiegħu. Bħala Kattoliku,
il-poeta kellu jirrikorri lejn l-għarfien teologiku u jilqgħu; bħala poeta
kellu jfittex li jsarraf il-kontenut ta' twemmin f'damma ta' dehriet, jew
aħjar xbihat poetiċi. Il-poema tiegħu, fil-fatt, tpingi l-fidi, tagħti xeħta
empirika lit-twemmin, tbiddel f'qagħda 'komuni' lid-destin dejjem tal-
bniedem. Il-poezija tan-natura, it-teologija tal-ħolqien, il-filosofija bħa-
la tfixkil u fl-istess ħin bħala għajjuna biex jintlaħaq l-aħħar stadju tal-
mixxa twila — is-skiet tal-moħħ: dawn u bosta elementi oħra ta' xeħta
letterarja u kulturali (l-aktar biblika) jsawru nisga għanja li turi lill-
poeta f'wieħed mill-aqwa waqtiet tiegħu, u żgur fil-waqt l-iżjed diffiċli
ta' l-isfida poetika bħala sfida letterarja, formali.

Minbarra t-tematika tal-mewt u l-herqa tal-bniedem għall-immor-
talità, il-lirika tal-kriżi thaddan xejriet oħrajn, il-koll mibnijn fuq it-tiġrib
tal-poeta bħala ruħ solitarja u moġħtija għar-riflessjoni. Il-kumpless tat-
tfulija, il-preżenza dejjiema ta' l-omm bħala mara u bħala setgħa, id-
damma ta' tifkiriet imbiegħda li jsieħbu flimkien lill-hajja familjari, lill-
hajja raħlija tal-ġemgħa ta' madwaru, u lill-hajja generali tal-gżira:

dawn huma wħud mill-ispunti li minnhom titnissel il-poeżija tan-nostalġija, id-dokument tat-tbatija “żghira” mbiddla fi kwadru ta’ umanità li qieghda tbatì.

MIXJA KRONOLOGIKA MAL-POEZIJI BIL-MALTI

L-ewwel versi magħrufa tal-poeta huma *La Dignità Episcopale*, innu li jiċċelebra b’ħila teknika lit-temi ewlenin tal-Knisja Kattolika ta’ żmien.⁴ Hi poeżija tal-letteratura, aktar milli tal-lehma, u hi mibnija fuq il-bravura tal-kelma u mhux fuq il-herqa tat-tigrib imbiddel fi kliem. Maż-żmien daħal il-kontenut uman, u l-poeta beda jsir tassew l-artist li jhaddem il-ħila formali biex jagħti sura lill-wirt ta’ ħajtu. Harsa ġenerali lejn l-iżvilupp kronoloġiku tal-kitba poetika tiegħu bil-Malti tista’ tixxet dawl fuq kif immaturat il-lehma fih, liema huma t-temi li telgħu fil-wiċċ fi żmien u ghebu f’ieħor, liema hu l-aħjar perijodu, u x’inhì x-xeħta l-iżjed tipika tiegħu li baqgħet, ftit jew wisq, isserrep matul iż-żminijiet kollha tal-ħajja poetika twila tiegħu. Flimkien mal-poeżija bil-Malti wieħed irid idahħal ukoll il-kitba bit-Taljan li, minħabba li tiftaħ ħafna qabel l-1912 (meta beda jilkteb bil-Malti) u tissoġta ħafna wara, tista’ tagħti kwadru shiħ ta’ persunalità waħda.⁵

Fl-ewwel perijodu tal-ħajja poetika Maltija ta’ Dun Karm jitolgħu fil-wiċċ il-preokkupazzjonijiet tiegħu bhala bniedem solitarju, mogħti għar-riflessjoni aktar fuqu nnifsu milli fuq il-problema eżistenzjali fiha nnifisha. Min-naħa l-oħra jinhass l-iżvolgiment tat-tematika nazzjonali-pajsaggistika, bħallikieku mit-tħassib fuq is-sugġett il-poeta jgħaddi biex jiċċelebra l-oġġett, mifhum bhala ħaġa etnika. Din hi, ftit jew wisq, id-dinja bikrija ta’ bejn l-1912 u l-aħħar snin ta’ l-għoxrinijiet: *Mingħajr Omm* (1912), *Id-Dar* (1912), *It-Tbaħħir* (1912), *Inti ma Targax* (1912), *Waħdi* (1914), *Lill-Kanarin Tiegħi* (1915) u min-naħa l-oħra *In-Nissieġa* (1913), *Lid-Dielja* (1913), *Il-Għodwa* (1914), *Ġunju* (1914), *It-Tifla tar-Raba’* (1915), *Il-Musbieħ tal-Mużew* (1920), *Lill-Miħna tar-Riħ* (1922), *Għanja ta’ Malti fl-Amerka* (1923), *Xenqet ir-Raba’* (1926), *Il-Għanja tar-Rebħa* (1927).

Is-snin tletin, l-aħjar perijodu tal-poeta meta l-problema tas-solitudni persunali waslet b’imaturità biex titbiddel fi xbiha tal-qagħda umana kollha (xhiċda li mill-istħarriġ tad-djarju l-poeta kien isseddaq biż-żejjed biex jasal qajl qajl għall-interpretazzjoni universali ta’ l-istess kriżi), huma żmien il-qofol tar-riflessjoni Foscoljana tiegħu mibdiya snin

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- Din il-poeżija ewlenija hi mxandra fil-ktejjeb *A Mons. Pietro Pace nel suo trionfale ingresso — il Seminario*, (Tipografia Industriale G. Muscat, Malta, 1889), pp. 25-27. Kopja rari ħafna tinsab fil-Biblijoteka ta’ l-Università ta’ Malta, Melitensia, “Miscellanea opere italiane e latine”, vol. IX, no. 23.
 - Għal lista tal-poeżiji Taljani ta’ Dun Karm cfr. O. Friggieri, *Il-Kultura Taljana f’Dun Karm*, (Malta, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1976), pp. 171-178.

qabel u mwettqa bit-traduzzjoni (1936). It-tematika ta' l-eroj immortali (il-fil nazzjonalistiku ta' *I Sepolcri*) setgħet tithallat mat-tematika tal-herqa tal-bniedem biex jegħleb il-kundanna tal-mewt (il-fil eżistenzjali tal-poema). Waqt li dawn il-motivi huma żviluppatti skond ruħ nisranija f'*Il-Jien u lil hinn Minnu* (1938), waqtiet poetiċi oħrajn juru meditazione waħda u twila fuq dik li issa tista' tissejjah l-ossessjoni ewlenija, maqsuma f'żewġ fergħat, ta' Dun Karm: fuq naħa, it-tħeddida tal-qerda umana u t-tiftixa ta' rebħa nisranija fuqha, u fuq in-naħa l-oħra, is-sejba ta' l-immortalità fl-istorja, fil-mit nazzjonali, fl-epika ta' poplu mifdi. Hawn jidhlu *Fil-Katakombi — I* (1927), *Naf u Nemmen* (1933), *Zagħżuġh ta' Dejjem* (1933), *Wied Qirda* (1933), *Il-Ġerrejja u Jien* (1933), *Fil-Katakombi — II* (1934), *Lil Gannina Pisani — I* (1937), bħala dokumenti ewlenin tax-xejra problematika tal-meditazzjoni. Ix-xejra l-oħra, il-herqa biex tinkiseb l-immortalità fil-ġrajja nazzjonali, hi l-qofol ta' *Għal Dun Mikiel Xerri* (1933), *Lil Mikiel Anton Vassalli* (1933), *Dehra tat-VIII ta' Settembru 1565* (1935).

Mill-poezija, bejn intima u bejn nazzjonali, tal-gwerra dinjija — hi wkoll imħaxkna bejn l-epika (*E-Boats*, 1914) u l-eleġija (*Illum*, 1941) — Dun Karm għadda għal-lirika tal-kalma, tal-mistrieħ kważi aljenat u mimli sabar wara l-ħidma mħassba ta' qabel. Hi l-poezija aħharija tarrieda tajba, fejn tixref sikwit il-ħila tal-letterat u mhux is-setgħa ħallieqa ta' l-artist. Xi drabi bit-tkomplija tad-djalogu hiemi-mnikket man-natura, u drabi oħra bir-ritorn lejn il-poezija awgurali (ħjiel ta' nostalgija letterarja għan-neoklassiċizmu formali tal-perijodu bikri tal-kitba bit-Taljan), dan iż-żmien aħhari mifrux bejn wara l-gwerra u nofs is-snin ħamsin hu l-egħluq ta' poeta li issa seta' jħares lejn is-snin għaxra, għax rin u tletin tas-seklu bħala l-mument tal-maturazzjoni tiegħu meta kemm is-solitudni (fiżika u psikoloġika) u kemm il-herqa nazzjonalistika u religjuża sabu s-siegħa xierqa biex jitbiddlu f'figurazzjoni estetika.

Mill-bqija, il-poeta li ried ikun demokratiku u fidil lejn ix-xejriet popolari hu dak li għandu jifittex fil-ħażna ta' innijiet u għanjiet awgurali ċivili u religjużi. Il-kant popolari hu aspett ewleni iehor ta' l-esperjenza romantika Ewropea. Lil hinn minn dawn l-intervalli ta' importanza iżgħar, tibqa' l-figura tal-poeta li beda bid-djarju personali mbiddel fi kriżi ta' l-individwu, għadda biex sieħeb il-kriżi individwali (issa mogħtija l-medda ta' problema universali) mar-rebħa nisranija u mal-mit nazzjonali, u waqt li ssokta t-taħdita herqana man-natura għalaq l-avventura poetika kollha bil-versi tan-nuqqas ta' impenn, ta' l-gheja spiritwali u teknika.

It-tliet iżmna ewlenin (mill-bidu fl-1912 sa madwar l-egħluq tas-snin għoxrin; is-snin tletin; is-snin erbgħin u l-ewwel ftiit snin tal-ħamsinijiet) iridu jittqiesu wkoll fid-dawl tal-kitba bit-Taljan, mibdija fl-1889 u ssoktata għal snin twal wara l-1912. Id-dehra sħiħa tibqa' ta' bniedem marbut mill-qrib mal-kelma poetika, magħluq fid-dinja tal-meditazzjoni.

mistika-eżistenzjali u miftuħ beraħ biex iġarrab id-dinja oġġettiva bis-senswalità mixtieqa-mistmerra tagħha. Il-poeta tal-kriżi ta' l-ġhixien, tat-talba teoloġika, tač-čelebrazzjoni patrijottika hu wkoll l-artist raħli li fisser sa minn kmieni u 'bi kburiġa t-tifsira tad-demokratizmu romantiku billi, fost hwejjeġ ohra, ġhanna l-ħidma tal-haddiema l-iżjed importanti ta' Malta ta' žmien. It-taħdita profonda tar-ruħ tiegħu tibqa', mela, bejn is-sugġett privat (il-qassis, il-ħassieb) u s-sugġett pubbliku (il-profeta nazzjonali, is-sočjologu). Bħal fil-persunalità paradossali ta' kull artist, l-iżjed romantiku, is-sintesi (i.e. il-punt tar-rebħa fuq id-djalettika ġewwiena) aktarx li ma tinstabx.

IX-XBIHA TA' L-OMM

Minkejġa ž-żewġ naħiet imbiegħda minn xulxin tal-persunalità tiegħu, hemm punt čentrali li jiltaqġu fi ħdanu kemm il-poeta tat-tigrib persunali u kemm il-poeta tat-tigrib nazzjonali. Il-lirika tat-tbatija eżistenzjali u l-lirika tal-ġzira mifħuma bħala nazzjon jissieħbu flimkien bis-saħħa ta' xbiha ewlenija li hi l-istess għat-tnejn: l-omm. Meta l-poeta jitkellem fuq il-*jien* (in-nebħa sugġettiva) u meta jitkellem fuq l-*aħna* (in-nebħa oġġettiva), jaasal dejjem biex iqiegħed 'kollox madwar id-dehra materna.

L-omm tal-ħajja privata (ommu, imbidla mbagħad fi xbiha tar-rabta bejn iž-żmien u l-etermità, l-art u s-sema, id-duħju u č-čertezza), u l-omm tal-ħajja komunitarġa (Malta bħala l-omm tač-čittadini li jsawru nazzjon) għandhom bosta xejriet li jixxieħbu; huma mnisslin minn qağħda spiritwali waħda, jidhru bħala varġanti ta' mara waħda, anzi ta' l-istess idea tal-mara. Bħala eżempju ta' dan jistgħu jitqabblu ma' xulxin is-siltiet l-iżjed karatterističi li jiddeskrivu lill-waħda u lill-ohra biex jinstabu fihom l-elementi li fil-fatt isawru kwadru wieħed.

L-istħarriġ ta' din il-figura m'huwiex importanti biss bħala orjentament ieħor fl-istudġi dwaru. Hu meħtieġ skond kemm ħi ta' fejda s-sejba ta' punt čentrali fil-kitba kotrana ta' poeta. Fi ħdan l-ispazju li jifred lill-poezija ta' l-eżistenza mill-poezija tan-nazzjon jixref l-influss ta' din il-mara storika-ideali li tressaq lejn xulxin liž-żewġ dimensjonijiet, it-tnejn espressjoni ta' poeta raġel f'relazzjoni ma' figura li daqskemm hi vera hi wkoll mistħajla, fantazma perfetta li l-poeta għex "magħħa" biex tnebbah minnha.

GENERAL INDEX: VOLUME III - 1981-1983

MELITENSIA

- BOISSEVAIN, Jeremy Seasonal Variations on some
Mediterranean Themes pp 9-15
- CASSAR, Paul The First Documented Case of
Drug Addiction in Malta:
Samuel Taylor Coleridge pp 52-61
- CUTAJAR, Dominic An Interpretation of
Maltese Prehistory pp 176-184
- DELIA, E.P. Return Migration to the Maltese
Islands in the Postwar Years pp 1-8
Maltese Emigration from Malta:
A Liability? pp 141-164
- GALEA SCANNURA,
Charles The Building of the Cottonera
Fortifications: A Maltese Protest
Against Taxation pp 185-196
- LUTTRELL, Anthony Eighteenth Century Malta:
Prosperity and Problems pp 37-51
- MALLIA-MILANES,
Victor The Order of St. John 1793-1797:
Impending Collapse of a Glorious
Heritage. The despatches of Antonio
Miarì, Venetian Minister in Malta pp 89-115
- SANT, Michael A. Gold and Silver Coinage in Malta 1530-1798:
The Order's Stand Against Falsification of
Money pp 233-244

ACCOUNTING

- FAVA, Emmanuel A. A Simple Guide to the U.K. Companies Act
1981 pp 253-268
- FERNANDEZ, John An introduction to Accounting pp 73-77
- MICALLEF, Joseph Accounting Techniques in Business
Management pp 135-140

ECONOMICS

- CONSIGLIO, John A. Inflation and Currency Rates pp 211-214

ITALIAN

- BUGEJA, Gerald Appunti su 'Polikusc'ka' pp 32-36
'La Nuvola di Smog': Ricerca di un Eden pp 205-210

ENGLISH

- ATTARD, Edwin The Romantic Spirit of John Keats pp 165-170

CARUANA CARABEZ, Charles	Macbeth and the Concept of Multiple Futures	pp 24-31
CREMONA, David	The Honest Villain	pp 197-204
MAYO, Peter	Great Expectations: An Introduction	pp 245-252
SCERRI, Louis J.	A Concise Glossary of Critical Terms	pp 62-72
ZAMMIT, Marthese	The 'Murie Tale of Chauntecleer'	pp 126-134

MALTESE

FRIGGIERI, Oliver	Eżempji ta' Estetika Romantika Maltija Dun Karm — Il-Lehen Poetiku ta' Nazzjon	pp 116-125 pp 273-278
SAMMUT, Frans	New Directions in Maltese Poetry	pp 78-88
VELLA, Joseph	Il-Poeżija Maltija: Dak li Jinbidel u dak li Jibqa'	pp 16-23
ZAMMIT CIANTAR, Joseph	The Future Tense in the Maltese Language	pp 215-228

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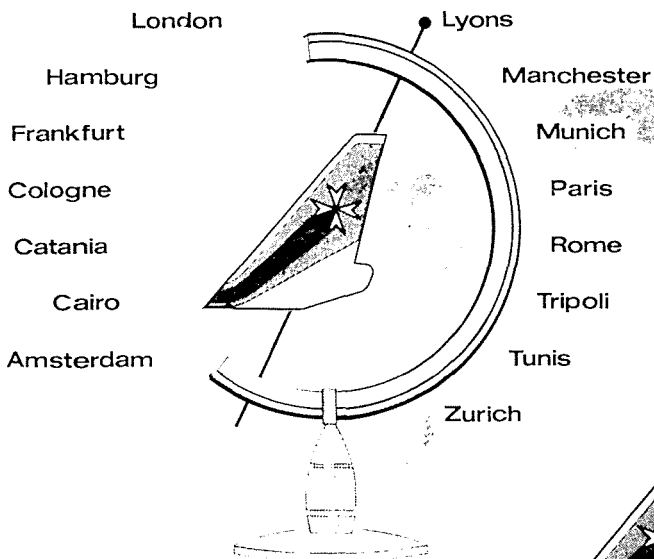
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