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MALTESE FICTIONAL PROSE FORMS

Introduction

The concept of style presented here is primarily descriptive in nature as the investigation attempts to describe the distinctive quality of prose varieties which may be used in fiction.¹ The stylistic identity of literary prose results from conscious and/or unconscious selections of linguistic features. Selections are conscious when the author chooses a linguistic guise with functional suitability (as, for instance, adopting a narrative persona of an introvert to depict the mind style of a potential suicide), and they are unconscious when they show an authorial tendency that reflects the author's character (for example, the use of ratiocination in one's narrative in contrast with another's linguistic humour). Thus the use of rhythm in prose may be the product of both conscious and unconscious measures which are stylistically relevant and interesting in one's perception of language.

A Stylistic Framework

During the twentieth century the novel became a major genre of Maltese literature and although it has attracted some literary criticism, it has not attracted any large-scale stylistic investigation. There have been a few stylistic remarks to identify the novel's essentially narrative scope, but practically nothing beyond that. Stylistic generalisations about its form and content are difficult because of the enormous variations in size and scope—compare, for instance, P.P. Borg's *Minn fuq għal Isfel* (1991), a short sociological novel, with Ġ. Aquilina's *Taht Tliet Saltniet* (1935), a voluminous socio-historical novel; or F. Ebejer's *Il-Harsa ta' Ruzann* (1985), which is extremely short and symbolical, with A. Sant's *Silġ Fuq Kemmuna* (1973), a massive and realistic novel. David Crystal's explanation may be applied to present circumstances:

Part of the analytical problem lies in the way novels contain so much variety mixing. They tap the resources of a language's stylistic range more than does any other genre. In principle, no character, situation, theme, plot, or point of view is excluded. All language varieties might expect to be represented in a novel sooner or later, from the most colloquial to the most formal, from the most mundane to the most arcane.²

1. In this section there is no attempt to analyse forms. The aim is primarily to identify different forms and present a working taxonomy of useful terms. The attempt is to summarise some of the forms which have arisen in the course of my study on *Rhythmic Patterns in Maltese Novels* (1996). Only a tentative list (with a simple explanation of each item) is offered here, since the intention is simply to propound the vastness of the task of describing different fictional prose and of accounting for most of the things that a single novel may be capable of communicating.

2. CRYSTAL, D., *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1987, reprinted 1992), p. 77.

The novel draws in its net even the other major literary genres and takes the structure from non-fictional prose forms also. It is enough to mention some random examples. Ġ. Chetcuti's *Qabel Telghet ix-Xemx* (1987) employs dramatic and poetic elements in its narrative to produce superficial impressions significant for the character's individuality; R. Balzan's *Ilkoll ta' Nisel Wiehed* (1987) makes use of the letter conventions to explore psychological states; C. Catania's *It-Tarf* (1988) touches the documentary film to obtain political objectivity; A.E. Fenech's *Genna fl-Art* (1986) uses the structure of news bulletins, so that broadcasting intermingles with flashbacks (almost with cinematic power) to condemn political abuse in contemporary scenes; and R. Mahoney's *Meta r-Rih Jonfoh Kontra* (1985) mixes lyrical writing in his narrative to represent the stream of consciousness in his character.

The representational aspect of the novel necessitates an examination of the nature of fictional prose which comes "very near to familiar, unfictionalised versions of reality".³ Stylistic investigations of Maltese fictional prose forms could start by examining the several ways of language is used to identify the dimension one would be studying character, plot, setting, and anything that contributes to the illusion of reality; whereas focusing on the exploratory dimension one would be led to study theme, symbol, viewpoint, tension, and any technique or means of presentation that probes into human psychology. Both dimensions are, of course, interrelated but each dimension may receive more individual attention or particular emphasis. However, both may become areas of identifying character by investigating the ways in which a character's consciousness is being portrayed, the devices which represent speech, and the strategies of plot movement and direction.⁴

For the effective existence of stylistic investigation the present study assumes that every novel is a self-contained world, distinct and complete in itself with its own logic and linguistic organisation for which the novelist's selective perception is largely responsible. Although it is an independent unit a novel's prose is still expressive of a perceived reality. It has its own outlook, prospects, tendencies, and expectations that constitute the wholeness and identity of this self-sufficient world whose structural tenacity makes itself manifest in thematic continuity—through relationships (for social coherence) and plot (for coherence of action)—and stylistic cohesion—through language (for rhetorical coherence) and technique (for perceptual and tonal coherence). Novelists make thematic and stylistic choices which have to be recognised to see the logic of the work. The novel's logic appears then as a complete system that must control the reader's perception. However, as part of the stylistician's task is to be selective, in stylistic investigations certain choices may appear more dominant and relevant than others, so that concentration

3. BRADBURY, M., "Novel" in FOWLER, R., editor *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Boston, 1973, reprinted 1978), p. 127.

4. This is mainly the preoccupation of text-linguistics and structuralism.

will vary from one study to another. And so will terminology. But the main point being made here is that provided by A. Ross, that

A discussion of the nature of a narrative and the mode of narration can carry us to the heart of the "meaning" of a work of fiction, and properly managed to an understanding of the culture and context in which it was created.⁵

The stylistician's sensitivity will therefore seek the best interpretation combined with evaluation, a task that will reveal the complexity of the study.

To examine the nature of prose in the novel one needs to be selective but the following questions are fundamental:

What is the broad thematic area of the prose?—FIELD CATEGORIES

What is the aim of the prose?—PROSE FUNCTIONS

How is prose presented?—PRESENTATIONAL MODES

What method of expression is used in the prose?—FICTIONAL TECHNIQUES

What level of meaning is given to the prose?—SEMANTIC SPECTRUM

These are questions that may be asked (perhaps together with others) about any prose text to be scrutinised, but here attention will be given mainly to the different types of prose used in Maltese novels. The answers to these questions provide a wide range of prose forms each with its own distinctive structure and rhythmic patterns. They provide a set of descriptive terms that help the literary and linguistic investigation of the novel. A note of warning at the outset: since each novel is self-contained it has to be treated on its own merits because it is different from any other. There are no set patterns, or formulas, for composition. Bradbury says:

Lacking the metrical-typographical and generic conventions of most poetry and the theatre-audience presentation of most drama, and using the most familiar, open and deconventionalised form of written language, prose novels are open to a wide variety of registers, structures, typologies.⁶

Consequently, what applies to one novel might not (and usually does not) apply to another. Novels are individual. There is no rigid technique to follow as there is in metrical prose or conventional drama. Yet each novel finds its own technique which is not transferable. It is the novelist who must continuously invest his/her technique for the purpose at hand, which means his/her next novel could be different. The following descriptive terms might not be enough to explain a novel. One may add, discard, or adapt the following list as one pleases in attending to the inevitable plurality of the novel form.

5. ROSS, A., "Narrative" in Fowler (1973, 1978), op. cit., p. 124.

6. Bradbury (1973, 1978), op. cit., p. 127.

Field Categories

Within the entire spectrum of prose outside literature one may find field categories that reveal aspects of specialisation and the answer to the first question may be "scientific" if the theme is science, "legal" if the theme is law, and so on. As they probe the human environment novels often touch on non-fictional prose structures, and a dominant field category usually presents itself so that critics feel safe in labelling a novel "historical", for instance, if it chronicles historical facts scrupulously as in A. Levanzin's *Is-Sahhar Falzun* (1908); or "political" if its general tendency is the exposition of politics as in O. Friggieri's *Fil-Parlament ma Jikbrux Fjuri* (1986); or "philosophical" if it assumes a searching approach for underlying principles in people's actions and behaviour (O. Friggieri's *Il-Gidba*, 1977); or "sociological" when its overall interest is social behaviour (P.P. Borg's *Gheluq*, 1991). One field category may even join forces with another as in O. Friggieri's *L-Istramb* (1980) which is a psycho-philosophical novel; or in Ġ. Ellul Mercer's *Leli ta' Haż-Żghir* (1938) which is a socio-psychological novel, or in the socio-historical novels of Aquilina and Galea. In his introduction to the novel, Friggieri calls R. Balzan's *Fiz-Żifna ta' l-Ibliet* (1995) clinical and journalistic because of the narrative attitude of the authoress.

The field category is dependent on the main theme and determines the attitude of the novel. But within a dominant field category other sub-categories may be found: in *L-Istramb*, for instance, religion and morality act as sub-categories; in the sociological novel by J.J. Camilleri, *Ahna Sinjuri* (1965), industry and folklore function as sub-categories; *Minn Fuq Għal Isfel* is a sociological novel with a geographical sub-category; and Kilin's *Tmint Ijiet fi Dragunara* (1981) is basically religious with a technological sub-category to make it science-fiction. Thus, there is a wide spectrum of fictional prose which must be covered in a stylistic definition of the novel. Each prose form has its own function and modes, and uses its own techniques and semantic levels to discover the intended human environment.

Prose Functions

Contextual notions of prose must ultimately lead to the functional aspects of prose communications.⁷ The prose of the novelist requires for the sake of verisimilitude the range of functions to which language may be put in everyday speech. So among the first decisions a stylistician has to take is the type of function/s the prose under investigation is performing. The question asked is: what is the aim of the prose?

The ideational function of prose is to be found throughout a novel whenever the narrator talks about characters or events, or provides circumstantial information or descriptive explanations, or represents conversational exchanges of facts and

7. The following discussion leans heavily on the categorisation of the functions of language as displayed in Crystal (1987, 1992), op. cit., Ch. 4-12. All quoted texts from novels in this supplement are grouped together towards the end.

opinions. The narrator's role is primarily to communicate the author's ideas so that ideational prose is dominant in the novel. But this is not the only function of novelistic prose. Expressive prose often infiltrates the character's speech representations as they use emotive language to express anger, frustration, beauty, fear, and affection. Emotional outpourings, like those used by Mamo and Sammut in (i) and (ii) respectively, signal the reality of the situations. Within the confines of expressive prose one may also find phatic communion for the sake of verisimilitude in the novel. This social function of language maintains rapport between characters.

Emotive utterances may also be found at a more sophisticated level where the narrator uses several literary devices to convey the characters' feelings. For instance, Oliver Friggieri in translating raw experience into creative form works on the metaphoric and metonymic axes of his medium. In *Il-Gidba* he uses a dominant metaphoric style⁸ based on notions of similarity and comparison as when he depicts the traditional village in terms of a cannibalistic tribe that continuously employs the *rebekkin tas-sefsif ... ihaffer bla ma jieqaf* (p. 15). The novel's title itself implies that life can be metaphorically taken as a lie. Friggieri's metaphoric style is essential in the novel to balance his ratiocination, but his prose can also at times be metonymic as it condenses meaning generally by a process of contiguity. "Lie" may also be metonymically interpreted as it moves from being a synecdoche (lying is part of life for the sake of social survival) to a full scale metonymy (when "lie" = "life"). The substitution is heavily dependant on context, on contiguity to sustain interpretation so that expressive prose is carefully assimilated into ideational prose creating a complex case which must mirror personality.

The novelist may even use strategies to exploit the sonic potential of prose as in the case of the rhythm-aided design used in the opening of *Il-Gidba* (iii). The rhythm created by end-focus in (iii) puts end-weight and foregrounds the extra meaning the utterances deliver. This opening passage is reflective of the novel's whole mood. The sonic function of prose in the rhythm-aided design helps to control interpretation by directing attention to a theme or guiding perception. Sonic prose must work hand in hand with other modes, especially with emotive prose.

Close to expressive prose also, but distinct from it, is performative prose. The curse that Rebecca's mother delivers on her daughter in (iv) indirectly illustrates the performative function of prose. The use of language in instances like these involve supernatural belief. Performative prose, evident in a curse, in a prayer, in an invocation, in religious ritual, is a means of controlling the forces believed to affect the lives of the people. Through the curse the mother intends to control reality. The way the utterance is delivered, however, is in the form of ideational communication since the recipient is Rebekka but the utterance's illocutionary force is one of a curse.

8. This is explained in some more detail in BRIFFA, C., *Hassieb Serju* (Publikazzjoni Agius and Agius, Malta, 1994), p. 10–13.

Novelistic prose may also be taken as a record of messages, feelings, and psychology. Sometimes the novel may appear as a kind of record-keeping. Indeed, unless it is read the novel does not communicate anything. It comes to life when read, otherwise there is no response to it. It remains a record of a human story that may be available to subsequent generations on demand—just like law reports and parliamentary acts. This recording function of prose is essential in displaying character's thoughts. Prose in the novel conveys inner speech. It is used as an instrument of thought in techniques like the internal monologue and the stream of consciousness that must reveal perception and worldview. All this is, of course, connected with another purpose of prose, namely that of fostering a sense of identity.

The identifying function of prose in the novel can be a complex process. The distribution of prose varieties, revealing private and public identity, is a complex task that incorporates dialect, sociolect, and register with style—each sphere has units of gradience whose boundaries are not always clearly defined. A review of the complex set of factors that distinguish personal history and social identity and specify their interrelationships should incorporate definitions of linguistic features that signal the author's or character's identity and at the same time relate to the identity of the situation. In other words, there may be considerations of physical, psychological, geographical, social, and contextual characteristics in one's notion of stylistic investigation.⁹

There is no known correlation between anatomical variation and prose varieties in Maltese. Age may be reflected in vocabulary awareness and stylistic quality (one may, for instance, compare Ġ. Aquilina's prose or Ġ. Chetcuti's with P.P. Borg's or T. Zahra's) but narrative skills may continue to grow and reform (as in the case of Kilin's weekly journalistic output). When it comes to gender differences, there are grammatical forms that mark femininity in contrast to the masculine marked language. There are, however, signs of other differences that reflect a tradition of masculinity in conversational dominance strategies that include the contrast of aspects assertiveness and toughness with the emotive use of adjectives, exclamations, and intensifiers. Compare, say Samwel's dominant attitude with Żabbett's supporting role in the cross-sex conversation of *Samuraj*. In the scene depicted in (v) Samwel's speech is full of chivalric masculine tones that establish the value of his manhood, whereas Żabbett's timid speech is characterised by submission to his power structure—this is reflected even in her conversational exchanges with her parents as she violently defends her relationship with him. Sammut had to make use of this male-female attitudinal distinction for thematic purposes.¹⁰

9. In an international language like English there may also be ethnic and national identity factors.

10. It would be interesting to examine the degree of marked rhythmical stress used in the written prose of both sexes.

There is very little psychostylistic research in Maltese that provides answers to psycholinguistic identity questions but one should note that if we analyse Baruk's character in *L-Istramb* which manifests personality traits of introversion and instability it will be observed that the author had to use a rhythm-aided design that reflected a reserved and restless personality. Friggieri's thoughtful personality presents a perception of the world that depends on logical control and pessimistic realism, whereas Trevor Zahra's more outgoing personality seems to reflect a more optimistic realism.

Regional features may be reflected in prose usage (as in some of Vassalli's writings) and may determine context (as in Ozmaltese, i.e. the language developed by the Maltese in Australia). There are some studies of these varied regional dialects as regards speech¹¹ but very little on prose varieties. Within the confines of the Maltese Islands one also finds various regional differences¹² which are at times utilised in the prose of creative writers. In (vi) the rural dialect confirms the geographical information that the speaker is from the Dingli area. It contrasts sharply with the baron's standard use of language, and therefore dialectal features are indicative of both regional and social differences—dialectal features in (i) are more indicative of social status. However, even within the same variety prose may be used to indicate social roles or to mark solidarity or distance. Preca's letter of dedication to the archbishop in his *Storja Sagra* (1895) adopted a prose that marked the social relationship of addresser and addressed—distinctive mode of address and formal manner of writing. The official tone of the prose in departmental circulars is a distinctive indication of authority. On the other hand, in literature substandard spelling is often a mark of a lack of education and/or low class as in *Uljed in-Nanna Venut fl-Amerka* (1930) by Gwann Mamo (1886–1941). More usually prose is used to present an occupational image or a professional role, in which case it uses register features as identifiable characteristics. Further research is required to understand the socialising roles of types of prose that follow restricted codes (as in military instructions and recipes) and others that adapt elaborated codes (as in religious exposition or scientific description).

The contextual identity of the communicative event depends on factors relating to the setting, the participants, and the type of activity that engages the participants. These factors interact with other and produce linguistic constraints that relate to the medium, the code system, the structural form, and the content of the communication, and this is what makes legal Maltese, for instance, distinctively different from religious language and the language of the press. For example, Dun Gorg Preca (1880–1962) wrote six apostrophes to God (1947), each of which is

11. BOVINGDON, R., "In the mould of a new environment: the Maltese language in Australia" (p. 110–115), and SCIRIHA, I., "Language, maintenance and language shift of the Maltese migrants in Canada" (p. 34–41) in FRIGGIERI, O., editor, *Journal of Maltese Studies* (Malta University Press, Malta, 1991, Nos. 19–20).

12. AQUILINA, J., *Maltese Linguistic Surveys* (The University of Malta, Malta, 1976), p. 40–50.

a prayer (activity) set in private communication (setting) between the devoted person and God (participants); they are written down (medium) but can be memorised and uttered orally, and thus the address is in the form of a monologue (code) involving religious patterns of exaltation (form) having the beauty of God as a main topic (content). Contextually distinctive usage in literary prose is often employed for verisimilitude as Ġużè Galea does in his historical novels: *Raġel bil-Għaqal* (1943) is given contextual identity through the copious use of sixteenth century navigational terms (see vii).

Presentational Modes

The function/s of fictional prose cannot be seen in isolation. A piece of writing often adopts a mode or manner of presentation that is relevant to its semantic content. The categories within this descriptive term may be subjective/personal, objective/impersonal, evocative/artistic, reflective/thoughtful, and persuasive/logical. Instances of subjective prose includes all writing that gives personal or individual viewpoints, impressions, or feelings. In *Samuraj* the poet attacks the parish priest with the subjective tirade found in (viii). This personal use of prose is ideational, expressive, and identifying as it explores individuality. The impersonal use of prose, on the other hand, is any piece of writing that is relatively uninfluenced by personal feelings or opinion. Objective prose is mainly utilitarian as it provides information. A case in point is the description and exposition of a foundry in (ix). The function of this objective prose is mainly to record technical Maltese terms and an occupational process, and thus it draws heavily on register which here provides an impersonal and efficient means of exposition for the sake of verisimilitude. When prose is artistic it contrives linguistic arrangements that impregnate the author's message with greater truth, as in extract (x) where the rhythm of the passage, based predominantly on the organisation of the simple sentence and syntactic parallelism regulated by breath units, turns it into poetic prose.¹³ It evokes emotions but at the same time reveals positiveness. This evocative prose helps the character to recognise and organise his experience and to make further plans for action. It is multi-functional: expressive, performative, sonic, and may be used as an instrument of thought. Persuasive prose on the other hand is mainly ideational as it depicts the urge to convey the author's needs effectively to other people. In (xi), Natan ends the first part of the novel with an effective syllogism. The use of persuasive prose is accompanied by a rational consciousness that includes marshalling facts and arguments to gain maximum attention. Reflective prose is very often speculative and contemplative. Extract (xii) is meditative and foreseeing. It is thought-revealing, expressive, and recording, and

13. BRIFFA C., *Zagħżuġ fuq Vjaġġ* (Publikazzjoni Agius and Agius, Malta, 1994), p. 51–54.

it is also very subjective. Prose, thus, can be represented in more than one mode, in fact the other extracts can have one descriptive label besides the ones preferred here.¹⁴

Fictional Techniques

The question now is "What method of expression is used?" Two broad categories present themselves when talking about techniques in fictional prose: those that relate to speech-thought rendition and those that relate to other aspects of the narrative. (For convenience the latter will be called narrative techniques, and the former speech-thought rendition techniques – speech and thought presentation are grouped together because they use similar conventions: they are only linguistically similar because their effects are different however.)

Narrative techniques include description, exposition, argumentation, and account/report which have long been established as constituents of the novel. Some novelists go to great lengths to produce vivid pictures in words (extract vii). As a common technique they use descriptive words and phrases which are precise and meaningful for the purpose of verisimilitude or to represent a world view. Verbal descriptions record observation of people, places, processes, and events, and require accuracy and refinement – though not scientific accuracy and refinement since literature often depends on perception – for which the author has to draw from the flexibility and resourcefulness of the language. A large amount of human experience depends on the descriptive power of prose to attempt to render justice to reality through portrayal, delineation, and word-painting. Akin to description is exposition. Verbal explanations and specifications display information issuing from omniscience (extract ix). Apart from dispensing information, however, expositions control the novel's ambience and when they work with descriptions they can regulate view and movement. They can also be used as transitions to bridge action and character. When it comes to reporting events description is a handy technique to the novelist. Essentially a novel recounts a series of facts or incidents and attempts to establish a cohesive element among them. Among its major aims is the probing of the human environment (see xxii) and therefore it must touch on reportage and history for its structure – passage (vii) may be taken as a descriptive account of a sea voyage. Finally, character needs argumentation (as in xi, xii). Rational investigation is a common

14. The range of functions and modes of presentation to which fictional prose can be put help stylisticians to appreciate the complexity of the novelist's skills. Functions and modes interrelate and sometimes it is difficult to categorise prose selections because different functions and modes are frequently at work simultaneously. Still there is a need for a framework to analyse and describe prose in the novel. The proposal here is one that utilises the above functions and modes in combination with the categorisation of speech and thought presentation as devised by LEECH, G.N., and SHORT, M.H., *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (Longman Group, London, New York, 1981, seventh impression 1989), Ch. 10. It is not enough to say that fictional prose is, say, essentially ideational and subjective because one needs to identify more finely the nature of the prose in terms not only of functions and modes but also in terms of techniques used.

technique that verges on the persuasive and reflective modes. Very often novelists (like Guzzè Aquilina, Oliver Friggieri, Paul P. Borg) use their prose as a vehicle for popularising their social or moral ideas. In novels of ideas argumentation may assume more importance in the prose because the ideas discussed and ratiocination supersede characterisation or plot; yet they depend on the elements of the novel for their effective existence. Novels of ideas contain long exegetical discussions of current social topics, sometimes even in the form of expository digressions. And they are still novels treating probabilities and realities that excite the novelists who must be viewed as serious social thinkers popularising social ideas for an audience who prefer to read about those ideas in a story.

Fictional speech is part of the novel's mock reality. The novelist has various modes of speech rendition that regulate the reader's range of view from the character speaking. In direct speech (as in extract iii) a character's actual words are quoted verbatim and the reader-character distance is narrowed so that the reader is very close to the action, as he/she takes speech information from direct experience. The reader thus obtains extensional knowledge of the action. Indirect speech (xiii), on the other hand, keeps an impersonal relationship between reader and character as the narrator expresses in his/her own words what was said, and the reader thus gains indirect verbal knowledge of the action. When direct speech appears without quotation marks or without the reporting clause accompanying direct speech (as in ii) or without both it seems to be freer. In free direct speech the action seems to be even more immediate than in direct speech because there is no narrating mediator. Where the reporting clause is omitted from indirect speech (xiv), free indirect speech results. Free indirect speech is often used to control attitudes as the narrator intrudes between the reader and the character's speech. Finally, the narrator may simply report that a speech event has occurred (xv). This narrative speech report distances the reader from the character because speech is given entirely from the narrator's perspective.

The novelist's artistic licence also includes access into the characters' minds. Thought rendition reveals psychological realities as it reports a character's thought to render his/her experience more immediate. Various modes of thought presentation are available and they all imply the presence of the omniscient narrator. Direct thought (xvi) is similar to a monologue which makes the character talk to him/herself. In free direct thought (xvii, xviii) there is less intervention from the narrator, and the reader joins the character to watch thoughts march by. In indirect thought (xix), then, the narrator's intervention is greater, but in free indirect thought (xx) readers are put in instantaneous contact with the character's mind so that thoughts appear more vivid and immediate. When it comes to narrative thought reporting (xxi) there is more distance between reader and character's mind because thought and perception are reported by the narrator. It should be observed that slipping from one mode to another is quite a common approach in novels, and furthermore speech and thought rendition may interact in various significant ways to produce relevant mental states. In first-person narratives the situation is similar to that found in thought rendition as the reader is made to view everything from the character's attitude.

Semantic Spectrum

One can also discuss fictional prose on its degree of suggestiveness. It is obvious that certain texts or passages convey more hints than others and theoretically speaking there can be a scale of suggestiveness. In this connection prose may be compared to a computer since in data processing one can use a computer for a simple operation (like sorting data in alphanumeric ascending order) or for a very complex task (like running a relational spreadsheet). Likewise prose: it can be used to present language with very low suggestive power (like writing a simple direct statement) or with very high suggestive power (like a piece of ambiguous writing). For convenience (and for a better term) a prose text with very low suggestive power will be called desuggestive prose, and one with a very high suggestive power hypersuggestive prose.

Extract (xxii) is an instance of desuggestive prose consisting of a series of simple facts which, despite their syntactic complexity by virtue of coordination and embeddedness are semantically undemanding. Desuggestive prose is like a computer's embedded system dedicated to one specific task. In this case the prose has been hard-wired to give a straightforward descriptive account with a high angle shot that makes the viewer scan the physical environment with speed. The prose is not used for anything else: it is only dedicated to straightforward narrative description unlike (xxiii). The latter may be taken as an illustration of hypersuggestive prose fitted to imply ideas that are not directly expressed. The cigarette is here a symbol of virility for the immature Baruk. The prose is programmed on the obsessively detailed description of smoking, or rather of a smoke's anatomical journey to draw attention to the tragically sociological attitude of human society that is indifferent to the individual's needs. Chiasm is here used for defamiliarisation with really dramatic effect as it mingles with the metaphor of the moaning stranger dying lonely in the midst of an indifferent crowd. The notion of death is endowed with multiple significance. Anaphorically it refers to Baruk's existence: drowning, not waving always dying in front of others, crying for human warmth, but is always greeted with indifference and a lack of understanding. Then there is a cataphoric dichotomy suggesting a solution out of this mess: he has to "kill" his past and find a woman to love him, it does not matter how; when this too fails he turns to suicide. Such hypersuggestive prose represents the heavy high-power end of the spectrum as it epitomises Baruk's mind style characterised by introversion and solitude which is the novel's ambience.¹⁵

But a text may also be placed somewhere between the two ends of hypersuggestivity and desuggestivity. In other words, it could suggest something that is not as semantically high-powered as hypersuggestive prose and, since it suggests something, it is more semantically powered than desuggestive prose. This is termed suggestive

15. Uriel Weinrich uses the terms "desemanticised" and "hypersemanticised" for "desuggestive" and "hypersuggestive" respectively: quoted in LEECH, G.N., *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (Longman Group Ltd, London, 1969, third impression 1971), p. 220. Preference for the latter terms rests on the fact that they appear to have more referral quality than the former.

prose. In (xxiv) the anthropomorphic image of the rector suggests strict discipline. This piece of suggestive prose is an immediate reflection of Baruk's impression. The difference between desuggestive and suggestive texts is that the former does not activate any suggestivity. It has an embedded narrative system with a set task to be carried out automatically. The narrator gives a narrative fact, without evoking any extra thoughts, to control narration. Whereas suggestive prose tends to bring ideas by association through contiguity or comparison to assist interpretation, but it does not evoke long-distance significance as in hypersuggestivity.

Theoretically speaking there can be intermediate states between these three major categories in the scale. For instance, a text may suggest more than (xxiv) that relates to a secondary character only but may not be as penetrating and far reaching as (xxiii) that relates to the entire novel. For convenience, this intermediate state is called ambisuggestive to indicate that it may be fitted to imply more than one item. Extract (xxv) is a continuation of (xxii). The ambisuggestive prose in (xxv) refers to Baruk's urgent need for socialising. It implies the way friends can be made in a rather superficial manner and there is fitted the simultaneous idea of a continent with which he has to deal emotionally. It shows, however, how easy it is for a writer to slip from one form to another. Then one can find an intermediate state between desuggestivity and suggestivity, a state that may be called semisuggestive. A semisuggestive text would have a lower degree of implication than a suggestive one, but it does imply something which is not as essential to the novel as in a suggestive text. In extract (xxvi) the historical implication may be irrelevant to the novel's texture, unless one wants to say that it reinforces the idea of gloomy discipline in which case the text will be promoted to the next state of suggestivity. This is a proof of the subjectivity of this semantic scale.

The basis for the present argument is that texts can be semantically fitted to convey suggestions (in the nature of thoughts, ideas, or a course of action) as part of the communicative purpose of the prose. This produces a spectrum of forms ranging from the semantically high-powered end to the low-powered end:

hypersuggestive – ambisuggestive – suggestive – semisuggestive – desuggestive

Conclusion

Each form demands its own rhythm-aided design. Each form is as personalised as handwriting since it depends upon the author's mind style, and this is what makes rhythm a feature of psychostylistics. *L-Istramb's* unique structure contains a variety of fictional forms which are an indication of Friggieri's literary power. To compose effectively fictional prose writers need to be "prose literate", that is they must be able to have a highly detailed and stylistic knowledge of how prose works and understand how their technical knowledge can best be applied to fiction. A tremendous gap already exists between those who can just use prose, and those who can manage the considerably more intellectually intriguing task of devising stylistic

strategies and applying them with great effectiveness. Prose writers in the latter category generally find themselves in a position of considerable power by virtue of their stylistic knowledge.

The descriptive framework just proposed is not exhaustive. It would, however, be inappropriate here to enter a more detailed framework: enough has been said to indicate the importance and/or complexity of description as an aspect of analysis—complexity is enhanced through interrelationships and overlapping of categories. The novelist often slips from one form to another as he/she decides where to pitch the semantic and stylistic power along this taxonomic range. This stylistic spectrum provides the novelist with a large range of choice because so many stylistic features play a part to create the spectrum. This is another means of gaining meaningful insights into fictional prose, insights that can contribute to interpretation.

The stylistic framework below or part of it can be applied to non-fictional prose as well. In a historical view of prose varieties may be plotted within the presentational modes category by using, say, four modes only. The end result would be something like the second table of Maltese prose varieties where one should note that a prose variety can experience a presentational shift from one century to another: a prose variety is relative to its period. Within the same periodic category a prose variety can have more than one mode. The categories are opened and one may add or shift as one requires. Also a prose variety may incorporate another (e.g. narrative and descriptive in literary).

| A FRAMEWORK FOR A STYLISTIC DESCRIPTION OF FICTIONAL PROSE | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Designation | Operative Question | Example of Descriptive Item |
| Field Categories | What is the broad thematic area of the prose? | <i>historical, political, philosophical, sociological, psychological, socio-historical, psycho-philosophical, socio-psychological...</i> |
| Prose Functions | What is the aim of the prose? | <i>ideational, expressive, performative, recording, sonic, thought-revealing, identifying, social (phatic communion)...</i> |
| Presentational Modes | How is prose presented? | <i>subjective, objective, evocative, persuasive, reflective..</i> |
| Fictional Techniques | What method of expression is used in the prose? | <i>narrative techniques (account, description, exposition, argumentation) speech-thought rendition (free direct speech, direct speech, free indirect speech, indirect speech, narrative speech report; direct thought, free indirect thought, narrative thought report)...</i> |
| Semantic Spectrum | What level of meaning is given to the prose? | <i>hypersuggestive, ambisuggestive, suggestive, semisuggestive, desuggestive...</i> |

Another advantage of the stylistic framework is that it contains great diagnostic value which may start serious discussion on a single novel. For instance, the following stylistic summary is a description of *L-Istramb* which may be fodder for further investigation into its interpretation:

A psycho-philosophical narrative that utilises ideational, expressive, performative, sonic, and thought-revealing prose by being presentationally subjective, evocative and reflective for which modes thought rendition techniques (some of which are free and direct, others are reported and indirect) are effectively employed together with an active suggestivity that ranges from high-powered to low-powered semantic value.

| THE VARIETIES OF MALTESE PROSE MODE | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | 18th century (incubation period) | 19th century (fermenting period) | 20th century (ripening period) |
| SUBJECTIVE | dialogistic, plain | narrative, argumentative, conversational, literary, epistolary, dialogistic | literary, narrative, descriptive, epistolary |
| OBJECTIVE | instructional | chronicle, descriptive, expository, instructional | official, industrial, commercial, scientific, technical, expository, instructional, chronicle, administrative |
| EVOCATIVE | baroque | narrative, descriptive, classical, dialogistic, literary | literary, narrative, descriptive, dialogistic, religious, advertising |
| PERSUASIVE | homiletic, expository | journalistic, homiletic, argumentative, moralising | propaganda, homiletic, journalistic, political |

Extracts for illustration¹⁶

- (i) "Zommuni, qett-torok, għax nikillu fwiedew! ... Zommuni ... għax niknes l-art bih! jekk naqbdok b'idejje naghmllek tabakk: noghmlok siprissot."
(Gwann Mamo, *Uljed in-Nanna Venut fl-Amerika*, 1930, p. 101–102)
- (ii) "Ma nafx kemm se ddum! Min jilgħab man-nar ... taf x'jigrilu min jilgħab man-nar, hux, m'hemm x'ghalfajn ngħidlek."
"Jinħaraq, naf, kif nirrah jinħaraq ilsienek! Dil-kantaliena issa ili li xbajt minnha, taf!"
(Frans Sammut, *Samuraj*, 1975, p. 148)
- (iii) "Nishet is-siegha li ltqajt miegħek. Nishetha, siegha kerha, dak li kienet. Spiċċa kulma hlot u min riedni, dak li gara. Iltqajt miegħek u nqridt, qisni mara kerha li ma riedha hadd, dak li qisni", qalet Anna b'lehen li setgħu jisimghuh anki n-nies li ma ridux.
(Oliver Friggieri, *Il-Gidba*, 1977, p. 1)
- (iv) "Alla jishtek, jien u l-familja u n-nies, ilkoll nishtuk!"
(Oliver Friggieri, *Il-Gidba*, 1977, p. 138)
- (v) "Meta se tibda tidhol id-dar?" qaltlu fl-aħħar.
Għall-ewwel donnu ma fehemhiex. Resaq pass lura u qal: "X'jigifieri?"
"In-nies mhux hekk jagħmlu? Issa ara kemm ilna noħorġ flimkien ..."
"Zabett, gralek xi haġa? Hemm x'idejjeq?"

16. References to novels in the supplement and page numbers in these extracts refer to the following editions:

- AQUILINA, G., *Taht Tliet Salmiet* (Lux Press, Malta, 1945).
BALZAN, R., *Ilkoll ta' Nisel Wiehed* (PEG, Malta 1987).
BORG, P.P., *Għeluq* (Sensiela Kotba Soċjalisti, Malta, 1991)
BORG, P.P., *Minn Fuq għal Isfel* (Malta, 1991)
BORN, H., *Mhux il-Faqar* (Klabb Kotba Maltin, Malta, 1972)
BORN, H., *Is-Salib tal-Fidda* (Pubblikazzjoni Cordina's Emporium, Malta, 1971).
CAMILLETTI J.J., *Il-Għar tax-Xitan* (Klabb Kotba Maltin, Malta, 1973).
CAMILLETTI J.J., *Ahna Sinjuri* (Malta, 1989)
CATANI, C., *Ir-Tarf*, (Malta, 1988).
CHETCUTI, G., *Nirien ta' Mhabba* (Malta, 1967).
EBEJER, F., *Il-Harsa ta' Ruzann* (Klabb Kotba Maltin, Malta, 1985).
FRIGGIERI, O., *L-Istramb* (Pubblikazzjoni Gulf, Malta, 1980).
FRIGGIERI, O., *Il-Gidba* (PEG, Malta, 1994)
GALEA, G., *Raġel bil-Għaqal* (A.C. Aquilina & Co., Malta, 1971)
KILIN, *Tmint ijiem fi Dragunara* (Pubblikazzjoni Bugelli, Malta, 1984)
MAMO, G., *Uljed in-Nanna Venut fl-Amerka* (selections found in FRIGGIERI, O., editor, *Journal of Maltese Studies* (University of Malta, nos 21–22, 1991–92).
PISANI, G., *Zerniq fuq l-Għoljiet* (Pubblikazzjoni Bugelli, Malta, 1982).
SAMMUT F., *Paceville* (Merlin Library Ltd., Malta, 1991).
SAMMUT, F., *Samuraj* (Merlin Library Ltd., Malta, 1991)
SANT, A., *Silg fuq Kemmuna* (Pubblikazzjoni Gulf, Malta, 1982).
ZAHRA, T., *Hdejn in-Nixxiegha* (Klabb Kotba Maltin, Malta, 1975).

"Le, m'għedtlek hekk," wiegbet b'lehen baxx, "imma kemm se ndumu qisna namrati friski? Żmien bi żmien kollox jaasal, nahseb li wasal iż-żmien li naghmlu bħan-nies u nitgharrsu, u int tibda tigi għandna."
Dahak dahka qasira u qalilha: "Għal min tahseb li qed naghmel dan ix-xogħol kollu, jekk mhux għalina t-tnejn?"
"Naf, naf, u nħossni ferħana, imma x'fiha li tibda tidhol għandna u kollox isir ... bil-galbu?"
Ma wegibhiex.
"Għidli, Samwel, x'tahseb? Ma taħsibx li jkun aħjar?"
(Frans Sammut, *Samuraj*, 1975, p. 148–149)

- (vi) "Il-barewni Mark-Antunejn qelbu tejbe, ruġol mill-aħjar, umma, ma nufx jien, qejsu qubil kinna aħjur, ma kenniex sew kejj kinna jew? U iwa, noħsob juf x'qid jogħmil duk. Mur gibew bħalussa lill-barewni x-xieħ, il-Mulej iseddqew u jogħtojh is-seħħe u l-puċi ta' dojjim."
(Francis Ebejer, *Il-Harsa ta' Ruzann*, 1985, p. 5)
- (vii) Madankollu l-feluka kienet qabdet rotta lejn nofsinħar, u kienet miexja ġmielha, toghla, qisha gawwija, u taqta' mewġ il-baħar; il-qluġh kienu miftuħin kollha, minn dak ta' kontraflok sa dak ta' kontrapappafik, u r-riħ jonfoħ fihom u jimliehom b'saħħa kbira; l-istrallijiet kienu mgebbdin hekk li malli tmisshom kienu jvennu qishom kordi ta' vjolin, u l-arbli jzaqzqu mat-tefgha tal-qluġh; in-nies taċ-ċorma kienu gejjin u sejrjn 'il hawn u 'l hinn, kulhadd jaf x'għandu jagħmel, kulhadd medhi fuq xogħlu. Dik il-feluka għaddejja bil-qluġh kollha miftuħin, bin-nies iħabirku fuqha, sejra ttir f'wiċċ il-bniedem, iżda li ma jistgħux jifissru bil-kitba.
(Gużè Galea, *Raġel bil-Għaqal*, 1943, p. 82)

- (viii) "M'għandix moħħ iċ-ċajt," reġa' berraq iż-żagħżuġh, "ili granet shaħ nahseb fuq il-ħajja ta' l-umanità u wasalt fil-konklużjoni ċertissima li tagħkom hija biss it-triq ta' l-aljenazzjoni, aljenazzjoni li ma twassal għal imkien ... jekk thalluh waħdu l-bniedem għandu mnejn isalva, jew għall-anqas isib il-poezija f'ħajtu, imqar fl-eqqel dagħbien ta' l-imrar u n-niket isib xaqq dawl, kewkba tiddi fil-bogħod u mid-dwejjajq tiegħu jrampel l-elizir ta' l-eżistenza. Imma intom ma thalluhx. Tgħabbuh b'kuxjenza tinten bil-ħtija u trażżnuh bil-frosta ta' lsienkom ha jinx fiċ-ċpar lejn tarf imwiegħed fil-mitologija li hloqtu b'sengħa kbira imma li fil-verità, fir-realtà m'hu xejn hlief mit, mit li la għandu siwi u lanqas poezija! L-għanqbut li nsigtu hadd ma jista' jsib tarfu u min jithabbell fih bil-ħsieb li jcarrtu jintemm maqbud u maħfun fil-qabda tiegħu. L-għanqbuta tagħkom hija kbira daqs kemm hi kbira d-dinja kif iddur u għax irnexxielkom tinsgu din l-għanqbuta sirtu temmnu fiha, twebbittu li fiha l-verità ta' l-univers u lil hinn minnu!"
(Frans Sammut, *Samuraj*, 1975, p. 188)

(ix) *Il-funderija kienet mahżen imdaqqas. L-ghaxar haddiema kienu kollha tas-sengħa, neħħi 'l Dwardu li kien għadu għid għal dan ix-xogħol. Il-forn kien mibni minn madum tal-fuħħar. Il-fuħħar jiflah hafna shana u ma jixxaqqaqx kif gie u lahaq. Il-forn kien imqassam bħal fi kxaxen, xi sitta jew tmienja, wiehed fuq l-iehor, mibni mill-istess madum tal-ġnub iżda maaqqbin qishom għarbiel. Dawn kienu jimtlew bil-faham tal-kannol li meta jagħtuh in-nar jitrewwaħ il-ħin kollu minn żewġ pompi ta' l-arja li jaħdmu bl-elettriku. Iż-żewġ pompi kienu waħda kull naħa tal-forn iwaddbu riħ bla waqfien u minħabba f'hekk, il-gamar ikun qawwi, b'saħħtu u jtella' temperatura għolja. Il-bċejjeċ tal-hadid imqieghda f'dak l-infern ta' forn jibdew jinħallu, u l-metall maħlul jibda jqattar bil-mod u jnixxi minn bejn is-saffi tal-faham sa ma fl-aħħar, imdewweb jingabar fil-qiegh tal-funderija. Meta jridu jimlew xi forma bil-hadid imdewweb kemm itajru daqsxejn ta' tapp tat-tafal b'virga tal-hadid u l-metall aħmar iċarċar fi grigjol b'żewġ imqabad twal li tista' ggorru minnhom bla tbatija. Wara li thallih joqghod f'it u meħħi n-naqal mill-wiċċ tbatlu qajla qajla fil-lembut tal-forma. L-imdewweb trid tferrgħu bil-mod biex l-arja toħroġ mill-forma u b'hekk il-metall ma jsirx bziezaq meta jiksah.*

(J.J. Camilleri, *Aħna Sinjuri*, 1965, p. 11–12)

(x) *Dan biss nitolbok, Mulej: zommilna mħabbitna shiħa. Imħabti hija ħajti. Qabel, kollox kien bla skop. Tbeghednix mill-ilma jgelgel. Hemmhekk irrid nibqa' ngħix, fejn qed jgħixu t-twajba Ġekam u Afrim. Hemm irrid nibqa' fejn is-Serp ma dahax. Hemm kollox qed ifur bil-hena. Is-siġar iwelldu l-frott is-sena kollha; frott ta' benna saħħarija li ma jafx b'taħsir. Il-ħxejjex ta' l-art, il-ward u l-gilji jfewhu minn tluġ ix-xemx sa nżulha u qatt ma jnixxfu għielhom. Minn nofs il-ġonna jserrep l-ilma kristall li jhenni u li jsaħħar. Ix-xita tinzel bla ma tgharraq, ix-xemx issaħħan bla ma xxawwat, ir-riħ jonfoħ bla ma jahraq, il-beraq ileħħ bla ma jbażża', u d-dlam iroxx bla ma jnikket. L-ebda seker ma jidrob ħamiema biex jitrejjaq. L-ebda ljun ma jċarrat lill-ħrief. L-ebda brimba ma tonsob għad-dbieben. Il-bniedem ma jitrejjaqx bid-dgħif ta' hlejjaq oħra. L-art, bil-ħdura bla qies tagħha, tghajjex lill-hlejjaq kollha u ituqhom bl-aqwa saħħa. Il-bniedem u l-annimal jimxu id f'id.*

(Trevor Zahra, *Hdejn in-Nixxiegha*, 1975, p. 32)

(xi) *"Iż-żwieġ hu mħabba, l-imħabba spicċat, mela iż-żwieġ spicċa. Tara? silloġiżmu tajjeb, sur kappillan."*

(Oliver Friggieri, *Il-Gidba*, 1977, p. 66)

(xii) *U nista' nikkonsla li problema m'hemmx u li qieghed inħammem jien biss kollox kollox f'dan moħħi.*

U sadanittant, Ivan jibqa' bla kuluri u jħares inkwetat lejn haddieħor li minn żmien għal żmien għall-ieħor jiddobba l-kaxxa tal-kuluri u hu xejn. U

jibda minn ċkunitu jitgħallem li qalb il-bnedmin li jrid jibda jgħix fosthom, uħud donnhom ikollhom aktar mill-oħrajn bla ma jagħmlu xejn iżda sempliciment għax wiċċhom helu u għax lewnhom donnhom jaqlagħhom, uħud donnhom dejjem għandhom preferenza fuq haddieħor bħalhom eżatt u hadd qatt ma jintebaħ għaliex ... u Ivan jeħtieġ ukoll jibda jitgħallem din il-qagħda soċjali. U s-soru dahħlet u akkwistat tliet liri minn fuq dahar kull wiehed u waħda li kien hemm fil-klassi u forsi nefqet żewġ liri kuluri.

(Paul P. Borg, *Għeluq*, 1991, p. 126)

(xiii) *Lejla waħda, il-baruni Malti qal lil Gawdenz li kellhom bżonn jagħtu rkaptu mill-iktar fis biex jifih dak il-għar inbarrat bil-gebel li kien hemm f'tarf l-ipoġew ta' taħt il-Ġgantija. Huwa żgurah illi, skond l-istudji u l-kalkoli tiegħu, f'dak il-għar bilfors kellhom jinstabu oġġetti ta' importanza kbira. Gawdenz tah il-kelma illi, jumejn wara, huma setgħu jagħtu b'idu għal dak ix-xogħol. In-Nemsi kien jaf illi, sakemm Lina tibqa' Għawdex, lil Martinu u lil Stejfen ma kellux x'iridhom għaliex dawn kienu dejjem jiġru magħha kull fejn tmur. Għaldaqstant, huwa talab lil huh Mawriz biex imur jgħinim iħottu dak il-bieb inbarrat u, fl-istess ħin, wissieh biex iżomm fomm mitbuq. b'riħet hekk, huwa seta' jressaq ukoll lil huh Mawriz lejn il-baruni Seychell, ħaga li forsi setgħet tiswa biex, 'il quddiem, ikun jista' jseħħ iż-żwieġ bejn it-tifla tal-Baruni u neputih.*

(Ġorg Pisani, *Żerniq fuq l-Għoljiet*, 1982, p. 259)

(xiv) *Il-kappillan tkellem fuq il-mara ħażina tal-Vangelu. Għax dinbet, għax kienet adultera, in-nies kaxkruha barra l-belt bil-herra u f'għieħ is-sewwa u l-moralità kienu ser iħaġġruha. Iżda fiz-zelu u fi tjubithom insew il-mogħdrija, it-tolleranza u l-karità. F'għieħ is-sewwa riedu jagħmlu l-ħaqq u fil-ħaqq tagħhom kien xieraq li jkunu horox. Kollox kien leċitu f'isem is-sewwa! X'ferħ thoss tara l-gilda fina u sabiħa ta' mara adultera tixpakka u tinfetaħ berah ma' daqqa ta' ċpajpella. Kemm naqbzu bil-gost narawha tintrakat fuq saqajha u taqa' għaxja taħt borġ gebel. L-aqwa li l-ħażin jieħu l-ħaqq! Xejn ma ġara billi wiehed juri f'it sadizmu. Min jidneb haqqu l-mewt! Min haqqu l-maħfra, mela? Min qatt ma tbieghed mis-sewwa?*

(J.J. Camilleri, *Il-Għar tax-Xitan*, 1973, p. 86)

(xv) *Carlo bdielu mill-bidu. Semmielu kollox ħaga b'ħaga, bla ma fetax qalbu miegħu fuq il-gibda li ħass għal Emma. Meta temm kliemu, Santoro beda jsaffar u jtambar b'subgħajh fuq wiċċ il-mejda.*

(H. Born, *Mħux il-Faqar*, 1972, p. 84)

(xvi) *Tereż fehmet li hi biss setgħet tghin lil bintha għalhekk ma staqsietha xejn aktar, kompiet biss tghannaqha magħha.*

X'jiswa, ħasbet hi, ċ-ċanfir lil persuna li qieghda ssofri?

(Ċesare Catania, *It-Tarf*, 1988, p. 22)

- (xvii) *Noel sejjah ghal darba tnejn lil ommu. Xeghel id-dawl. hemm kienet is-Sinjura Marija mitfugha ma' l-art, b'rasha mhanxra. X'qatt seta' kien il-motiv: ghira, glied, serq, vendetta? Min seta' joqtol lil din il-mara li l-hsieb wahdieni taghha kien biss f'darha u fil-familja? Frit bghid minnha, fuq tapit mehxen erbat iswaba', dehr u l-marki tal-passi tas-saqajn. Marki, cari biżżejjed, li kellhom iwasslu biex jinstab il-qattiel. Imma min kien il-qattiel? U ghax qatel?*
(Gużè Chetcuti, *Nirien ta' Mhabba*, 1966, p. 373–374)
- (xviii) “*Dażgur, jekk insibu t-Tarf, inkunu sibna wkoll il-bidu, u ma jkollna xejn aktar x'ihabbtna,*” wiegbu l-iehor b'lehen ta' wiehed cert minn kull ma jghid.
Jiena l-Bidu nafu, jew ghall-anqas ghandi hjiel tieghu. It-tmiem, jew it-Tarf—kif sejjahlu dal-guvnott—dak li ma nistax naghraf. mindu gharaf il-Bidu qed naghmel hilti biex naghmel il-bidu tieghi, imma ghandu jkun ghandu ragun, ghax it-tmiem—it-Tarf—ghadni ma nistax nilmhu jew narah. Ghandni mdawwar jien ukoll bic-čpar? ‘X’jigiefiri insalvaw?’ staqsa Samwel herqan.
(Frans Sammut, *Samuraj*, 1975, p. 157)
- (xix) *Beda jahseb qalilhiex xi hadd. Jekk le, ghandu mnejn imeriha u jghaddiha lixxa. Jekk iva, ma jafx x'jaqbad johloq biex iberridha. Jahasra kien ghamel jumejn qisu l-Genna ta' l-Art, kellu jithassarlu kollox!*
(Frans Sammut, *Paceville*, 1991, p. 86)
- (xx) *Kif kien bilqieghda hemm, seta' jahseb aktar ahjar. Kien jaf li kien sejjer ifittex lil Bertu, izda aktar milli joqghod Tas-Sliema ma kienx jaf. Fejn kien sejjer ifittxu? Kif seta' jsibu minn qalb daww in-nies kollha? Ma tghidx kien jaf it-triq fejn kien joqghod, jew ghallinqas in-naħa ta' fejn kien ikun.*
(H. Born, *Is-Salib tal-Fidda*, 1971, p. 124)
- (xxi) *Ghall-ewwel haseb li dak li kien ihoss go fih kull meta jiftakar fiha (ghalkemm kien ghadda xi zmien mindu raha) ma kinetx imhabba, imma tqanqil ta' ruh li jghaddi, tqanqil li jintefa wahdu.*
(Gużè Aquilina, *Taht Tliet Salmiet*, 1935, p. 36)
- (xxii) *Dak ma kienx hin il-mistrieħ. Barra minn kamartu, fis-swali, fil-kurituri, kien hemm id-dawl, l-ghajjat, u l-ferħ storbjuż ta' shabu li hsiebhom kien li jiddieħku, jicčajta, jinxu lil xulxin u jsiru hbieb minn kmieni, hin bla waqt.*
(Oliver Friggieri, *L-Istramb*, 1980, p. 49)
- (xxiii) *F'idejh kellu sigarett, wiehed wara l-iehor, u n-nifs mhux dejjem niżel dritt sa isfel, u mhux dejjem seta' jacčerta ruħu li sidru thammeğ bhal subaghjh, izda f'moħħu kien ghad fadal il-karba siekta ta' min qieghed imut taht ghajnejn kulhadd, bla hoss, bid-duħħan diehel u hiereğ f'halqu.*
(Oliver Friggieri, *L-Istramb*, 1980, p. 95–96)

- (xxiv) *Il-kolonna sewda tbissmet kemm kemm, b'tikmixa ta' frit pulziera tal-wicč, caqalqet rasha u tatu sinjal deciz li seta' jibqa' diehel.*
(Oliver Friggieri, *L-Istramb*, 1980, p. 47–48)
- (xxv) *Hekk isiru l-hbieb, f'ghamza t'ghajn... Kien hemm karattri sbieħ, koroh, komuni, passabbli, umanità shiħa x'jiskopri, xi jhobb u x'jistmerr. Kontinent mimli lwien, sewwa sew kif haseb u xtaq.*
(Oliver Friggieri, *L-Istramb*, 1980, p. 49)
- (xxvi) *Fis-sala storika, hekk kienu jtenu kburin il-qassisin ix-xjuħ, kien hemm madwar mitt ruh jieklu u jithaddtu.*
(Oliver Friggieri, *L-Istramb*, 1980, p. 52)