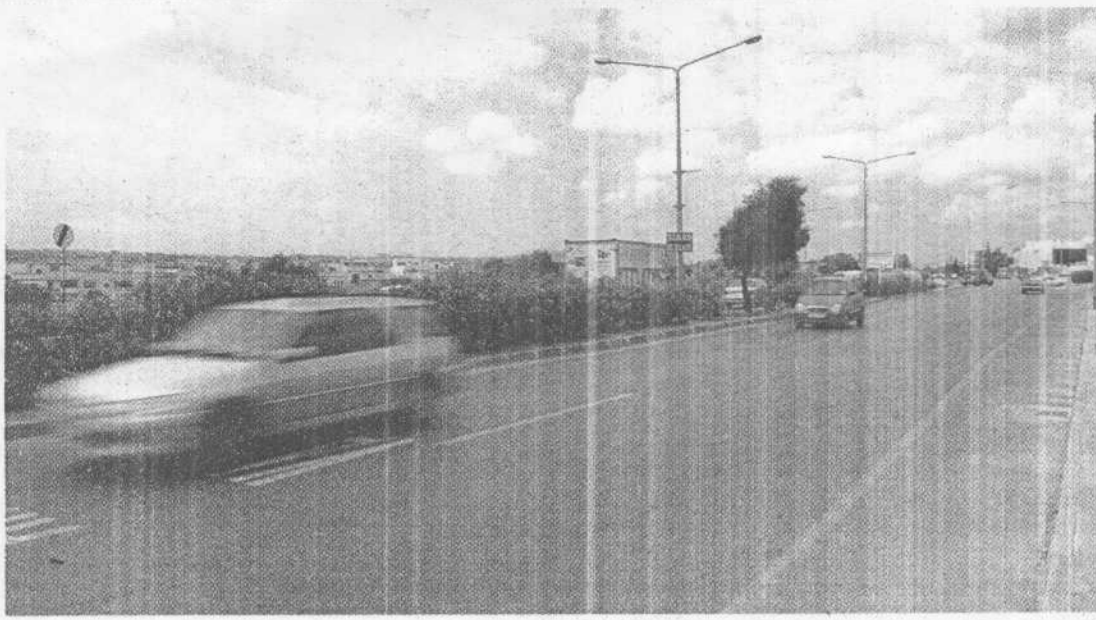


Comment & Letters



Illogical solution for Mriehel bypass

Transport Malta continues to stubbornly avoid modern approaches to protecting pedestrians and seems to make every effort to discourage people from walking.

In the latest twist to the Mriehel bypass saga (Mriehel Bypass Just Got More Dangerous, December 9), TM's response to the death of two young girls on this bypass is to install traffic barriers reportedly on the basis that "...for safety reasons, people have to be discouraged from walking along arterial roads". This is truly amazing: rather than taking steps to encourage drivers to drive responsibly they are now invited to drive carelessly. They will also have barriers to prevent them going off the side of the road if they "lose control" - this will be for nobody else's benefit because the idea behind the barriers is to keep the road clear of pedestrians in the first place.

Installing barriers to deter pedestrians instead of addressing the problem of danger to pedestrians by introducing some form of traffic calming goes against the principle that roads are a public space which belongs to everybody and that there must be mutual consideration for all

those who might need to use it, be it pedestrians, children or cyclists. This misguided decision adds yet another no-go area for humans by giving priority to motor traffic and not people when the needs of both can, and should, be accommodated.

The reasoning behind this decision would be acceptable if this bypass were a long stretch of high-speed motorway, but it is not. It is a short one-mile bit of road which separates a small community from Qormi's centre.

In an earlier letter a suggested solution was to calm the traffic by creating a roundabout at the junction with the side-road leading into the industrial estate and installing one or two well sign-posted zebra crossings with bright Belisha beacon signs at suitable distances from each other on either side of the roundabout.

The zebra crossings would have a slightly raised platform with a central refuge island and clear road markings and possibly a rumble-strip to remind drivers of the crossing ahead. This would exert sufficient traffic calming to slow traffic

slightly and it would make the road safer for people to cross without unduly lengthening the transit time because pedestrian need to cross very seldom.

As things now stand, vehicles must anyway slow down to around 60kph at about halfway along the bypass in order to avoid being caught by a speed camera; this, of course, encourages drivers to drive as fast as they can before they slow down for the camera. If, say, a speed limit as low as 60kph were to be imposed on this short bypass it would cause very little delay. Travelling at 80 kph, a distance of one mile can be covered in 72 seconds; travelling at 60 kph, it will need 96 seconds. Therefore travelling faster at 80 kph it represents a saving of just 24 seconds. The logical and civilised solution is to introduce some form of traffic calming as, for instance, zebra crossings, which would reduce travelling time only by a few seconds. Surely the welfare of pedestrians - and human lives - are worth more than these few seconds?

George Debono
Sliema

Falling standard of the Maltese language

There's been plenty of genuine criticism that the Maltese don't speak their language properly. They use foreign words when there is the equivalent in the vernacular. The main culprits for this sad state of affairs are the media, especially the various TV stations. They are to blame for the bastardisation of our language. The people responsible for the respective stations should exact that the presenters always speak proper Maltese and tell their guests beforehand to do the same if

it's a Maltese programme. Newscasters are not to blame if what they have written in front of them is badly construed or not up to standard. In the old days these were seen beforehand by a man responsible to check the script. The recent unforgivable howler which was repeated a number of times by the different newscasters was *saqajn ix-xellugija* (left feet) as if the writer never heard the singular word *sieq*.

And why are not the telephone numbers and street names in the

commercials not always said in Maltese? Why, for example, use neighbours, bathroom, parents, thank you, Christmas presents when we have the common everyday words *ġirien, kamra tal-banju, ġenituri, grazzi and rigali tal-Milied*? The various TV drama programmes are being extremely lax here. The script writers should be made to pull up their socks. Is nobody responsible anymore?

Tony C. Cutajar
San Gwann

We have recently attended an evening of Italian music at our lovely Manoel Theatre, namely, *Omaggio al Bel Canto*.

Without passing any special comments on the artist singers and congratulating the magnificent pianist, I would like to ask one question.

Where was our beautiful Maltese language during this evening? It was a great disappointment hearing the compère presenting the whole evening in English and he did not seem to be quite comfortable doing it, with a few words here and there in Italian. Had it been an English presentation, I

would have perhaps accepted an English version. But with all the participants being Italian, I see no reason why the presentation was all done in English.

What a shame to our unique Maltese language.
Doreen Borg
Sliema

Car spaces reserved for the privileged

I would like to know what policy is being used by the Siggiewi local council in issuing permits for reserving parking spaces in the village square.

On Sunday, part of the square was reserved from 10.30 a.m. till

noon because a wedding was taking place. Residents who had parked overnight were asked to move their vehicles to make way for the wedding guests' cars. This is an outright discrimination. It seems that some are more privileged than us com-

moners, who do not have the luxury of having our own reserved parking space. I wonder if the council is there to safeguard the residents' rights or otherwise.

Louis Seychell
Siggiewi

'Malta and Gozo' or 'Malta of Gozo'?

I read with interest Joseph M. Brincat's piece *Muslim Malta and Christian Gozo* (December 6) and it is with satisfaction that it concludes with: "The ... documentation that has become available ... can allow us ... to trace a picture inferring some form of Christian continuity under Muslim rule in Malta and Gozo". It is with "the significance one chooses to give it" that I find fault and on which I should like to comment.

Prof. Brincat disagrees with the interpretation of the place name *Melitogaudos* as *Gozo* opted for in my recent joint publication *Tristia ex Melitogaudos* and he reaches this conclusion on a purely textual analysis of the poem. It is, of course, readily agreed that the toponym *Gozo/Gaudos* is never mentioned on its own, whereas *Melitogaudos* occurs three times, and each of *Malta* and *Melite* occurs twice. For the use of these occurrences Prof. Brincat gives his own reasons, but different equally tenable reasons can be adduced: Each of the two times "*Melite*" is mentioned (ff. 85rv) occur in connection with St Paul's shipwreck on Malta. It is clear that the poet here intends to be as faithful as possible to the text in Acts 28:1 - "*tote epegnōmen hoti Melite he nesos kaleitai*" (we then learned that the island was called Malta). "*Malta*" is mentioned twice in marginal notes (ff. 35v, 54) in relation to his exile, in both contexts in connection with *Barbaria*, "the home of the unbelieving Agarenes". This is clearly a generic reference to "the Maltese archipelago" as distinct from his homeland, Sicily, a concept emphasised soon afterwards (f. 54v) when he complains that "his dark-skinned sisters" and his mother are left completely in the dark as to whether he was being led in exile.

The first occurrence of "*Melite-gaudos*" (f. 84) comes in connection with Roger II's attack on the island, the second, soon afterwards (f. 84v), in a marginal note explaining that his place of exile was precisely this same *Melite-gaudos*.

In the third mention, when the poet says that Publius was Governor of *Melitogaudos* (f. 85v), it is obvious that the poet, by using the place name in exactly the same form, is emphasising the link between his own despicable exile with that of the *vas electionis*, Paul, a point he has just made in the text of the poem (verse 11 of f. 84v). This description may be at variance with 21st-century scholarship and our present knowledge of how Malta and Gozo had distinct

municipia and, possibly, different *prōtoi* in the 1st/2nd century. But was this that obvious to a 12th-century exile on Gozo who lacked books he could consult?

Prof. Brincat also questions the book's interpretation of *Melitogaudos* as "*Gozo of Malta*" in favour of his own "*Malta and Gozo*", saying he consulted experts who assured him that this latter interpretation is also acceptable. Be that as it may - although it would be very helpful to know who the experts are and, more importantly, what they said citing parallel examples - the expert opinion followed by the book is none other than that of the Byzantinist, Prof. Theodore Tsolakakis of the University of Thessaloniki who, on p. 56 of his cited paper, clearly identifies *Melitogaudos* with *Gozo*, that is, "*Gozo of Malta*". This, after all, is the standard meaning given to a Greek compound word made up of two nouns, in which the first noun assumes an adjectival - and the second a nominal-function. Although several examples can be cited from Classical Greek literature it is best to let the poem speak for itself, and consider how the poet himself makes use of such compounds. Of the several examples that can be cited one can mention: On f. 115, *brotourgetes* < *brotos* (a mortal man) + *hourgetes* (workman, producer, creator), for "creator of mortal man"; like it, *mousourgetes* (f. 14v) for David, the composer of psalms, *thavina-tourgia* (f. 118), *thymostasia* (f. 100), *kosmosōstos* (f. 2), *phytosporos* (f. 64) etc. Especially significant is how he treats other geminated place-names like "Tyre and Sidon": certainly not as *Tyro(u)sidōnos* (on the model of *Melitogaudos*) but as *Tyrou kai Sidōnos* (f. 110 verse 3).

It must also be said that the poet very deliberately uses *Melitogaudos*, as opposed to *Gaudomelite*, and this for no prosodic reason. All other occurrences of this compound place-name are of the form *Gaudomelite* (cf. *Tristia*, pp. xxii-xxiii for references). The poet wants it to be *Melitogaudos* and not otherwise. Finally, it is to be noted that Prof. Brincat's assertion rests on the single leg of his "linguistic" interpretation. The conclusion in the book *Tristia* that *Melitogaudos* refers to *Gozo* is the result of convergence of evidence from a variety of sources, not least taking into account *Gilberto Abate's* census of ca. 1241.

Stanley Fiorini
San Gwann

Little girl's traumatic experience of big dog

A couple of days ago a huge Rotweiler attacked a soft toy which was in the hands of a little girl at a St Julians restaurant. Thank God it did not injure the girl, although it gave her and her parents the fright of their life.

The owner, who was walking the dog among people, was very apologetic and was concerned about the little girl. This notwithstanding, the girl must have suffered a trauma and it will continue to haunt her for a long time.

The owner of the dog should have known that he should not walk his dog close to people, although it was on a leash. And for the safety of passers-by he should ensure that the dog is appropriately muzzled when he takes him out.

Let us hope that the owner, and indeed all owners of large dogs, will exercise due care in future.

Alfred Griscti
Sliema