



Malta  
Classics  
Association

# MELITA CLASSICA

Vol. 3  
2016

*Journal of the  
Malta Classics Association*

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**Melita Classica**

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**“Magnis nata triumphis insula”**  
**Malta in the *Liladamus* of Jacques Mayre (1685)**

*Heinz Hofmann\**

The 25th anniversary of the reopening of the Faculty of Arts and, together with it, of the Department of Classics of the University of Malta is a most welcome opportunity not only to celebrate this remarkable event, but also to look closer at Malta itself and its classical legacy in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. An example of the Greek and Byzantine literary production on the island is presented to us in this volume by Jerker Blomqvist, Stephen Harrison, and Stanley Fiorini and Martin Zammit in their discussion of the so-called *Trisia ex Melitogaudio*, edited, translated and commented by our host, Horatio Vella, and his colleagues Stanley Fiorini and Joseph Busuttill.<sup>1</sup> Another important Neo-Latin text that was written on Malta by a member of the Order of the Knights of Saint John but published in Lyons in France in 1536 is the *Insulae Melitae Descriptio ex commentariis rerum quotidianarum* by the Frenchman Jean Quintin of Autun (1500-1561), for the first time edited with an introduction, English translation and notes again by Horatio Vella<sup>2</sup> who, in many respects, has rendered outstanding services to the study of the classical tradition and its reception on the island of Malta.

In the present paper I want to acquaint you with some aspects of another important text in which the Order of the Knights of Malta and the island of Malta itself play an important role – a text that so far has been grossly neglected by the students of Neo-Latin literature. In this regard we owe most sincere thanks and respect to Professor Ludwig Braun from the University of Würzburg for his re-discovery of this major work. In his book *Ancilla Calliopeae: Ein Repertorium der neulateinischen Epik*

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<sup>1</sup> J. Busuttill, S. Fiorini, H.C.R. Vella (2010).

<sup>2</sup> H.C.R. Vella (1980).

*Frankreichs (1500-1700)*, published in 2007,<sup>3</sup> Braun thoroughly analysed some 90 Neo-Latin epic poems by French authors between 1495 and 1690, among them the *Liladamus* written by the French Jesuit Jacques Mayre (1627-1694) in Rome, Besançon and Grenoble between 1667 and 1685 and published for the first time in Paris in 1685.<sup>4</sup> Mayre, who never visited Malta himself, was a very prolific poet: we know from him two biblical dramas<sup>5</sup> and eight epics, with a total of 157 books and nearly 100.000 Latin hexameters, on various historical topics from Constantine the Great until the siege and conquest of Budapest in 1686.<sup>6</sup> Only two of these poems were printed: *Liladamus* in 1685<sup>7</sup> and *Reccaredus* in 1690, 22 books on Reccared, King of the Visigoths in Spain (586-601), who converted from Arianism to the Catholic Orthodoxy,<sup>8</sup> the remaining six epics are preserved only in manuscript form.<sup>9</sup>

In the 25 books of the *Liladamus*, the author narrates the history of the Order of the Knights of Saint John from the departure from Rhodes, after that island had been finally conquered by the Turks in 1522, to the foundation of its new headquarters on Malta in 1530. The epic hero is Philippe de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam (1464-1534) – latinized *Liladamus* – who was Grand Master of the Order from 1521 until his death in 1534,

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<sup>3</sup> L. Braun (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Two reprints were published in Avignon in 1686 and in Besançon in 1693. I am using the 1686 edition in a xerox copy of the copy in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna which Ludwig Braun generously put at my disposal. This edition is now also accessible on the web in a digitized version of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

<sup>5</sup> *Eliacim pontifex lustrans Israel* and *Mesa rex Moab*, both performed in Dôle in 1652 and 1654 respectively, and both preserved in manuscript only; cf. L. Braun (2007), 596.

<sup>6</sup> "L. Braun (2007), 596, writes that Mayre's unpublished epic *Europa* tells of the election of Charles of Lorraine as Roman-German king, an event in/of the year 1690 (= 'an event that took place in 1690'), but Charles V Leopold (3 April 1643 – 18 April 1690), titular Duke of Lorraine since 1675, never was elected king. He tried twice in vain to get elected King of Poland. Later, his grandson Francis I (1708-1765), consort of Empress Maria Theresia (since 1736), was Duke of Lorraine from 1728 until 1737, and became Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1737 (until 1745) and Holy Roman Emperor in 1745. He died on 18 August, 1765.

<sup>7</sup> A detailed analysis is given by L. Braun (2007), 608-660.

<sup>8</sup> A detailed analysis is given by L. Braun (2007), 661-686.

<sup>9</sup> A short overview and synopsis is given by L. Braun (2007), 593-607.

and who negotiated and conducted the withdrawal of the Knights from Rhodes and led them, after many adventures and battles, to their new destination in Malta.<sup>10</sup>

Already from this brief sketch it becomes obvious that, in the major themes of defeat, expulsion, wandering and final home-coming, the poem is a gigantic refashioning of the basic structures and many single episodes of Vergil's *Aeneid*. The plot and action are centred around the Mediterranean, but lead the hero Liladamus also to other countries such as Italy, France, England and Spain. In this huge texture of various narrative threads, diverse localities and numerous characters, the island of Malta itself figures mainly in books I, XX, XXI, XXII and XXV and is the new land and home to the Knights of the Order in the West, promised to them by God Himself as was Italy to Aeneas by Jupiter in the *Aeneid* (Verg. A. 1.257 ff.).

This promise is given not far from the beginning of Book I when, after the proem and a short historical recapitulation from the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 until the evacuation of Rhodes in 1522, we find the Knights sailing with a fleet of 20 ships over the Aegean in search of a new home and receiving *en route* a short lesson in the history of their Order from Liladamus himself: however, the reader first has to be informed about the stratagems of the Turkish magician Argante who tries to rouse Discordia and other demons of the Underworld to destroy the fleet of the Christian Knights who are regarded as a threat to Muslims as long as they remain alive. The obligatory epic sea storm scatters the fleet and the adventures of the various units of the fleet are told by the narrator throughout the 25 books until in the end. Shortly before the landfall on Malta in Book XXV, the whole fleet is reunited and the Knights from the different squadrons briefly tell their adventures – briefly, because the reader knows them already from the epic narrator in the preceding books. So far, the model of the opening of the *Aeneid* is quite obvious and need not to be commented on in detail.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On him, see C. Fuzeau (2004) and J.B. Ristori (2013); on the history of the Order, C.-É. Engel (1968), J. Azzopardi – M. Buhagiar (1989), B.G. Flavigny (2006), M. Caron (2006) and J. Sarnowsky (2011).

<sup>11</sup> For the main parallels, see L. Braun (2007), 608 ff.

Different from the Vergilian model, however, is the presence of a seer – here on the ship of Liladamus – who partly fulfils the function of Anchises, partly that of Venus in her role as protectress of Aeneas and his companions. This seer with the name Pastor is introduced as a rather unkempt and ascetic monk, who is, however, well-read in the writings of the Church Fathers and the early eremites (p. 10):<sup>12</sup>

*Forte fuit vates celebri de nomine Pastor  
hirsutus, nemorum cultor patiensque laboris,  
horrentes circum villi, jejunia longa,  
et sitis et lachrymae et nudis vestigia plantis.  
Legerat et priscos patres Pambosque Stylitasque  
et Pachomos,<sup>13</sup> sacri fastigia maxima ruris.  
Venturos aperit casus et fata recludit  
abdita, Christiadis jubar interpresque Magistro.*

He has already earlier given proof of his prophetic gifts and long before predicted the conquest of Rhodes by the Turks. Now, while performing holy rites at the altar, he has a vision of God who reaffirms the loss of Rhodes as a punishment for the sinful and depraved life of many of the Knights, but also promises a new Rhodes, a new and better home for the Order, which they will reach, however, only after many wanderings and battles and victories, as it is befitting heroes (p. 10-11):

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<sup>12</sup> The text of the poem is quoted from the second edition Avignon 1686 (see n. 4 above); since there is no count of lines in that edition, I quote according to the pages.

<sup>13</sup> *Pambos*: Pambus or Pambo was an ascetic eremite of the 4th century (A.D. 375) and a disciple of Antonius, the famous eremite and founder of anchorism in the Egyptian desert. He lived in the Nitrian Desert and, because of his wisdom, was consulted by many eremites and church leaders. There is no *Life* transmitted but he plays an important role in the *Historia Lausiaca* and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. *Stylitas*: monks who spent their life with the ascetic exercise of standing on a column (*stylos*) as, for instance, Simeon Stylites the Elder († 459), Daniel of Constantinople (A.D. 493), Simeon Stylites the Younger (A.D. 592), Alypius (7th cent.) or Luke the Stylite (A.D. 979). They are, however, not known as authors of Christian or ascetic writings but Mayre probably thinks of the various *Lives* of those saints. *Pachomos*: Pachomius (c. 292-346), founder of the coenobitic monasticism in the Thebaid in Egypt, author of a Monastic Rule and several letters.

... “*Rhodus altera surget  
nec procul et melior, nullis superabilis armis.  
Errabunt tamen atque errent pugnentque revincantque,  
et decet Heroes! Veniunt hac dote triumph!*”

Having heard these words, Pastor prays in tears to God, wailing over the loss of Rhodes and the hard lot the Knights have to endure and the uncertainty of where they will find a new home and whether they will find one at all (p. 11):

“*Capta Rhodus! Jam nulla Rhodus! Sed et altera surget  
– altera quae tandem?– et nullis superabilis armis.  
[...]  
Hactenus eversam patriam primosque labores  
solabar, meliorque animum fortuna levabat.  
Ecce iterum et maria et fluctus et praelia et hostes,  
pax nusquam statiove, omnisque excluditur orbis!*”

This lament of Pastor reminds the reader in its overall content and structure, but also, in many single words and phrases, of Venus’ lament before Jupiter in Verg. A. 1.229-253, where the goddess also deplores the bitter fate of the Trojans who have the whole world closed to them and therefore cannot reach Italy either.<sup>14</sup> But instead of an answer of God, in analogy to Jupiter’s answer to Venus in which he comforts her and makes the famous pronouncement of Rome’s greatness and world domination and eternity (Verg. A. 1.257-296),<sup>15</sup> Pastor suddenly has a vision of an island (p. 11):

*Accidit oranti visum: sese insula vati  
objicit, atque oculos animumque tenebat imago.  
Non vasta illa quidem, sed magnis nata triumphis  
insula: laudabant veteres claramque sonabant.  
Hinc scopuli immanes praeruptaque culmina: nulli  
hinc portus, nullis statio accessusve carinis.*

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<sup>14</sup> Verg. A. 1.233. The similarity of Pastor’s prayer and Venus’ speech was already noted by L. Braun (2007), 613 n. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Part of Jupiter’s prophecy will be quoted later in Book I by God Himself (p. 16).

*At geminus patet inde sinus, tum mollis ad aequor  
descensus facilisque, hinc rursus et altera surgit  
insula, conjunctosque sinus tenet altera, duplex  
et minor: hinc geminus se pandit in aequora portus,  
hinc major, minor hinc, majorem tertia complet  
insula, nec magna; haec geminos quoque dividit ingens  
spina sinus portusque et latum excrescit in aequor.*

What Pastor sees here is, of course, a bird's-eye view of the island of Malta; its south-western steep coast with the cliffs and without ports, and then the eastern side with the *geminus sinus*, i.e., the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour, divided by the Sciberras Peninsula which now is largely covered by the city of Valletta and Fort St. Elmo; then the Grand Harbour itself divided again by two peninsulas where today rise the cities of Senglea and Vittoriosa, and Marsamxett Harbour with Manoel Island. Then the description (and Pastor's vision) continues with *turres et moenia et arces*, of which the Forts of St. Michael and St. Elmo are mentioned by name,<sup>16</sup> then *urbs antiqua patet*, i.e., the city of Mdina, and Verdala Palace with the Buskett Garden (qualified as *rex hortorum* "King of the Gardens"), built by Grand Master Hugues Loubeux de Verdalle in 1586 and now the official summer residence of the President of Malta. The geographical ecphrasis is rounded off with the temples of Juno<sup>17</sup> and Hercules,<sup>18</sup> a reference to *antra quoque excesis scopulis et plurimus*

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<sup>16</sup> With the names of these two forts and, a few lines further on, the temples of Juno and Hercules, the narrator leaves for a few moments the strict focalization of Pastor and adds those names from his own omniscience. But already the lines *sed magnis nata triumphis / insula: laudabant veteres claramque sonabant* are not focalizing Pastor, but are an additional explanation aimed at the reader by the narrator.

<sup>17</sup> According to Quintin's *Insulae Melitae Descriptio*, ch. 5, who misunderstood Cicero's remark in *Verr.* 2.4.103, between the *castellum* S. Angelo and Vittoriosa, but H.C.R. Vella (1980), 54, stated correctly that "the Temple of Juno was at Tas-Silġ near Delimara" (sc. at the southern point of Delimara Peninsula) as was "firmly established following the excavations carried out there by the *Missione archeologica italiana a Malta*" in 1963.

<sup>18</sup> Here, too, Quintin seems to have misunderstood Cicero who only refers to the Temple of Juno, whereas a Temple of Hercules is mentioned in Ptolemaeus' *Geography* (4.3.13). On the basis of the archaeological excavations of 1963, one assumes nowadays that "Hercules was venerated along with Juno in the same Classical temple [...] since the Phoenician Melqart, the equivalent of the Roman Hercules, was often venerated along with his consort

*antris / horror et effossis monumenta educta cavernis* (p. 12), huge subterranean constructions – whether those at Tarxien or elsewhere is not made explicit – and numerous inscriptions in Punic, a language which the inhabitants still know “until today” (*usque hodie*).

Having seen so much of the island, its name, however, is not yet revealed to Pastor; instead, his vision now changes from geography to history: in a long row he sees *reges, / et patria et nomen, reges equitumque magistri*, i.e., the series of the Masters and Grand Masters of the Order, beginning with Guillaume de Villaret (1296-1319), the 24th and last Grand Master before the Order settled on Rhodes, and continuing until Jean Parisot de la Valette (1557-1568) and Pierre del Monte (1568-1572) who are mentioned as last ones by name, but there are more to be seen (p. 13):

*Noti omnes, sed quos aetas ventura reservat,  
mirari, non nosse datum: Lombrascus, Jallus,  
atque Omedes et Senglius et Parisot, de Monte Magistri,<sup>19</sup>  
heroesque alios ostendunt fata; neque ultra  
iam fulgere sinunt cunctos, sua proferet aetas  
nomina vera equidem, sed adhuc ignota Prophetarum.  
Miratur numeratque legitque haeretque legendo.*

Pastor’s vision of the Grand Masters of the Order is both a look back into the past and a glimpse forward into the future, i.e., the years after 1522 in which the action of Book I of the poem is set, and to the successors of the present Grand Master Liladamus. He may wonder at them, the narrator says, but he cannot yet know them: thus he looks at them and counts their number and reads the inscriptions and is completely caught up in their sight.

Now, at the latest, will the reader realize that Pastor’s vision so far is partly a refashioning of the ecphrasis of Aeneas’ shield in Verg. *A.* 8.626-728, where Aeneas, too, sees the whole series of the future rulers of

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Astarte” (H.C.R. Vella {1980}, 56) who, in her turn was later identified with Hera-Juno. On Cicero’s remarks in *Verr.* 2.4.103, see A. Lazzaretti ed. (2006) in Cicero’s edition, 291 ff.; on the result of the archaeological excavations in the sanctuary, B. Bruno (2004), 99 ff.

<sup>19</sup> This line is not a dactylic hexameter, but a dactylic heptameter – did Mayre not realize the hypermetron, or was it a metrical joke?

Rome and Italy until Augustus; and Aeneas, too, admires the scenes depicted on the shield but, ignorant of the events, he simply rejoices in their picture (*miratur, rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet* 8.730). At the same time, there are also those parts of the *Heldenschau* in *Aeneid* 6.756 ff. interwoven in which Anchises shows Aeneas the souls of the future great men of Rome, from the Alban Kings right through Augustus Caesar.<sup>20</sup> And, further following the example of Aeneas' shield on which Vulcanus has fashioned *genus omne futurae / stirpis ab Ascanio pugnatque in ordine bella* (8.628 f.), the future generations from Anchises on and the sequence of wars to be fought, Mayre makes Pastor see in great narrative detail the "Great Siege", i.e., the siege of Malta by the Turks from May through September 1565, the flight of the Turks on 11 September and the final victory of the Order (p. 13-15). This part of the vision corresponds, of course, to the battle of Actium, a naval battle as well, that occupies the centre of Aeneas' shield (Verg. A. 8.675-713). And again, the narrator emphasizes that Pastor did not understand the meaning of what he saw (p. 13):

*Restitit attonitus Pastor: quae nomina? turres?  
quae bella? Annorum reputat monumenta priorum:  
nil usquam tale auditum! Quae sera nepotes  
olim fata manent?*

Reflecting upon what he has seen, Pastor gradually falls asleep, but has a new vision: God is again approaching him and explaining to him the meaning of what he has seen (p. 16 f.): *haec ultima sedes*. This will be the last and permanent home of the Order which will grow and become greater and more important through the Masters, a permanent danger for the Turks and a firm fortress for the West; it will protect Italy and the Holy Senate (i.e., the papal Curia), the City of Rome and the whole world (p. 16):

*Nec jam tanta modo haec, sed tantam proxima reddent  
saecula majoremque dabunt per saecula Magistri.*

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<sup>20</sup> Whereas the scenes on Aeneas' shield and in Pastor's vision follow a chronological order, in the *Heldenschau* "Virgil has carefully avoided a strictly consecutive chronology" (R.G. Austin {1977}, 233) in favour of a more systematical grouping.

*Aeternus Turcis scopulus firmumque Latinis  
praesidium teget Italiam sanctumque senatum,  
urbem orbemque simul!*

This bright and glorious future, the important political and strategic role and power which God prophesied for the island, may remind the reader of Jupiter's prophecy to Venus in Verg. A. 1.257 ff.; but the immediately following lines evoke a different context with the words (p. 16)

*... quanquam bella, horrida bella,  
obsidio non una manet, Solymanque Mulassem  
atque Amurath saepe infesti...*

and the names of the Turkish Sultan and military leaders. God specifies in more detail the wars against the Turks in analogy to the warnings of the Sibyl in Verg. A. 6.84 ff.; but He immediately assures Pastor that He will arm the western kings and stand on their side and destroy the force of the enemy so that the Knights will remain undefeated through the glory of their arms (p. 16):

*... sed et ipse Latinos  
armabo reges contra, junctique ferentur  
auxiliis, addamque animos, hostem ipse retundam:  
invicti stabunt Equites florentibus armis.*

The reader who knows his Vergil more or less by heart may wonder why God suddenly switches from the Sibyl to the fury Allecto who, in Verg. A. 7.545 ff., in similar wording announces to Juno her plans and the measures she is prepared to take against Aeneas and the Trojans.<sup>21</sup>

But now, in the immediately following lines, God changes once again His model and His code and speaks, borrowing the well-known words which Jupiter spoke to Venus in Verg. A. 1.278 ff. (p. 16):

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. especially Verg. A. 7.549-551: *finitimas in bella feram rumoribus urbes / accendamque animos insani Martis amore, / undique ut auxilio veniant, spargam arma per agros.*

*His (sc.to the Knights) ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono,  
sed vastum maris imperium jugesque triumphos.  
Aeternae his sunt leges aeternaque pacta.*

In this vein, God's encouraging and promising speech goes on for some verses, culminating unexpectedly (or rather, perhaps, quite expectedly?) in another sequence of well-known Vergilian verses (p. 16-17):

*Tentabunt alii Regnis late addere Regna,  
turbare unanimes populos, armare rebelles  
mutuaque electam per vulnera caedere gentem,  
abjicere ad plebem fasces vilemque Senatum,  
commaculare aras flammasque inmittere templis:  
tu celebrare Crucem et sanctam defendere Legem,  
tu premere imperio Turcas, Liladame, memento!  
Hae tibi erunt laudes nullamque admittere pacem,  
solvere Christiadas, Geticos includere reges,  
parcere captivis et debellare tyrannos!*

The seven lines of Anchises' admonition in Verg. A. 6.847-853 are here enlarged to ten lines; but in their basic structure with regard to single words and phrases as well as the verb forms and tenses (*excudent – tentabunt, tu regere – tu premere, artes – laudes, subiectis – captivis, superbos – tyrannos*), they are easily recognizable as an adaptation of that most famous passage in the *Aeneid*. As Anchises "proclaims Rome's duty to the world",<sup>22</sup> so God proclaims the sacred duties of the Order of the Knights of Saint John. But whereas Anchises emphasizes "the conjunction of the two complimentary cultures, each with its special gifts for mankind, its own civilizing power",<sup>23</sup> the God of Mayre draws a sharp line between the tasks of the Order and the power politics and military aims of other states. In a similar carefully wrought construction with a parenthesis in each part, He castigates in the first five lines the unlimited striving of "kings" for power and territorial claims, the instigation to insurrection and the arming of rebels, and other attempts of murder, civil uproar and

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<sup>22</sup> R.G. Austin (1977), 260.

<sup>23</sup> R.G. Austin (1977), 260.

setting fire to religious buildings – all this obviously aimed at the Ottoman Sultans and their policy in the territories conquered by them and the adjacent ones which they tried to weaken and eventually to conquer. In the second five lines, God instructs the Order and, in particular, Grand Master Liladamus, to honour the Holy Cross and defend the Christian faith, to fight and suppress the Turks with his power wherever possible – thus he will earn praise and glory – , never to conclude peace with them, to free the Christians (sc. those in the countries already under Ottoman rule) and to restrict the Ottoman rulers, to spare the prisoners-of-war and to subdue tyrants.

The second part of this catalogue of exhortations to the duties of the Order is addressed to Liladamus in person, not to each present and future Knight or Grand Master in general, as was Anchises’ appeal “*Romane*” addressed to each future Roman. This second part strikes at least the modern reader by the unconcealed aggressiveness against the Turks and the refusal of any peaceful relations with them: already some 15 lines earlier, the Turks were called an “arrogant people”, “filthy dogs” and a “foul sect”, and the Knights were urged to eradicate them (p. 16):

... *gentemque superbam*  
*impurosque canes et spurcam excindere sectam,*  
*excindentque invicti Equites Equitumque Magistri!*

After all, one should not forget that God Himself is speaking here! *Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* But one should perhaps take into account that Mayre, a member of the *Societas Jesu* and much devoted to the Christian religion, has for many decades been witness to the ongoing Ottoman expansion in the Balkans and in Hungary and Austria in the middle and second half of the 17th century, when he was writing his epic between 1667 and 1685, and saw the danger it represented for the Christians, an experience which would explain his open hatred of the Ottomans and their empire, and which he shared with his Christian contemporaries in western and southern Europe.

This long vision of the island of Malta, its geography and future history under the regime of the Knights of Saint John, and the explanation God Himself gave to Pastor, paints, as we have seen, a vast baroque canvas which groups and combines various characters and scenes from

Vergil's *Aeneid*: the narrator confers on Pastor the role and function of Aeneas looking at the shield whose *non enarrabile textum* is described and explained to the reader of the *Aeneid* by the narrator, whereas Pastor's vision is first told by the narrator, focalizing Pastor himself in the sections on geography<sup>24</sup> and on the past and future series of the Grand Masters. Then, the heroic tale is carried further by an omniscient narrator enumerating the events of the Great Siege of Malta by the Turks in 1565, whereas Pastor, who is viewing what are for him future events, cannot understand what he sees. He does not even learn the name of the island whose identity is revealed only towards the end of the poem. Hereupon, God Himself speaks to Pastor in his dream, giving not so much an explanation of his previous vision, but rather a prophecy of the future importance and historic task of the Order and the protection He will bestow on it. The narrative procedure of the description of Aeneas' shield is, as it were, split up by this procedure into three sets of information for Pastor, for the reader and, finally, for both Pastor and the reader.<sup>25</sup>

The remaining passages in the *Liladamus*, in which Malta occupies a more prominent place, are scattered over the last few books of the poem:

In Book XX (pp. 493-500), Mayre narrates the ceremonial act that took place in Madrid on 24 March, 1530, and by which King Charles V gave Malta, Gozo and Tripolis to the Order in perpetual lease for the annual tribute of a white Maltese Falcon (p. 500):

*Addico, Liladame, tibi cunctisque Magistris,  
addico vobis, Equites invictaque bello  
pectora, famosam Melitem Gozonque propinquam  
et Tripolim: hic state, hic tantis erroribus acti  
vivite et immanes tandem componite fluctus.*

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<sup>24</sup> But see my remark in n. 16 above.

<sup>25</sup> For the ecphrastic technique and variation in the description of the shield of Aeneas in comparison with that of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* 18.478-608) and later refashionings of Aeneas's shield in Neo-Latin epic poetry, see H. Hofmann (2007).

By this ceremony, Liladamus and the Knights of the Order learn for the first time in the poem that Malta will be their new home.<sup>26</sup>

At the beginning of Book XXI, the Knights are preparing their departure from Spain in order to set sail for Malta. On their way from Madrid to Barcelona, they visit the famous church and monastery on Montserrat and then proceed to Manresa where, in a nearby cave, in 1522, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) had carried out his spiritual exercises and drafted his book of *Exercitia spiritualia*.<sup>27</sup> They also visit the church of the Holy Virgin and pray in a long evening office to the Virgin whom they ask for her further protection in the future wars they have to wage against the Turks (p. 527 f.):

*Vincere da tumidos Christoque tibi que rebelles  
Odrysius,<sup>28</sup> veteres dona sarcire ruinas,  
instaurare Rhodon sponsamque attingere metam.  
[...]*

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<sup>26</sup> In the “Underworld section” of Book XIII, the Grand Master Pierre d’Aubisson (1476-1503) shows Liladamus the future Grand Masters of the Order and prophesies the foundation of a city by the Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette; further, a great victory over the Turks (the “Great Siege” of 1565) by that Grand Master and the victory in the battle of Lepanto (or Naupactus) in 1572, and encourages him (p. 313): *Tu ne bellorum finem metamve laborum / finge animo, Liladame, tibi: bella, altera bella / atque aliam expecta sedem. Rhodus altera surget / et melior, summis tamen expugnanda periclis. / Hoc opus, hic labor est, Rhodiis haec cura, triumphus*. But here, too, as in the first prophecy to the eremite Pastor and in the following ones, the identity of the new home, the *Rhodus altera*, is not revealed until it is mentioned by King Charles V in Book XX and confirmed by the Virgin in Book XXI.

<sup>27</sup> Printed for the first time in Rome in 1548. Francisco Borgia or Borja (1510-1572), 4th Duke of Gandia, since 1551 member of the Society of Jesus, and since 1565 its Superior General, who narrates the ascetic life and spiritual exercises of Ignatius to the Knights, proudly mentions the publication of the *Exercitia spiritualia* (p. 526): *Ipsi etiam charum hunc nuper curavimus edi / laudarique librum, Roma hunc Patresque Latini / laudant celebrantque, et laudat et approbat usus*. On the anachronisms and other inconsistencies in Mayre’s narrative, see L. Braun (2007), 609 ff., esp. 650 ff.

<sup>28</sup> Mayre uses various names for the Turks which in classical literature designated different peoples in Eastern Europe, i.e. *Odrysii, Scythae, Geloni, Getae*.

*Ipsa etiam pugnasti olim Rhodiosque tegebas  
scutum hastamque vibrans: Scythicae fugere catervae.  
Favisti Rhodiis, Melitensibus adde favorem.*

Suddenly, the Virgin appears to Liladamus and the Knights and confirms that Malta is in fact the island they are in quest of,<sup>29</sup> and that, as she has favoured them on Rhodes, so she will favour them further, and even more, on Malta. However, they will first have to drive the Turks from the island<sup>30</sup> and to endure other *horrida bella* until she will grant them final victory, i.e., in the Great Siege of 1565 (p. 529):

*Tu quoque jam socios, errantes collige puppes,  
victores ultro illi aderunt spoliisque superbi:  
his demum expugna Melitem mediosque per enses  
ingredere, hic habita, sacros hic pone penates,  
quanquam nec pugnae deerunt, bella altera, bella  
horrida, sed praestat pietas et Martia virtus.*

She further promises them the eternal ruin of the Turks and endless victories in the future (p. 529):

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<sup>29</sup> L. Braun (2007), 659 n. 128 seems to find it inconsequent that the Virgin announces Malta to the Grand Master as their new home only *after* Charles V had already bequeathed the island to the Knights. If one reads the words of the Virgin carefully, however, one sees that she does not *reveal* Malta as the aim of their wanderings, but *admonishes* them to *reconquer* Malta from the Turks and prophesies their victory in the Great Siege of 1565 and her permanent protection.

<sup>30</sup> The Arabic occupation of Malta (870-1090) was broken by the conquest of the island by Normans under their King, Roger I, who ruled Malta until 1194 when it fell to the House of Hohenstaufen in whose possession it remained until 1266. Until 1282, it was then ruled by the Capetian House of Anjou which, however, was driven out of the islands in the "Sicilian Vespers" in 1282. From then on, Malta, together with Gozo, Sicily and Southern Italy, was ruled by members of the House of Aragon, and when Aragon and Castille were united in 1516, it became part of the new Kingdom of Spain under whose rule it remained until 1530 when it passed to the Order of the Knights. This historical truth is replaced by Mayre by a poetic-fictional truth according to which the Turkish magician Argante persuaded Sultan Suleiman to conquer Malta in order to prevent its occupation by the Knights (book XXI, p.532f.). By this poetic invention, Mayre succeeds in contriving the possession of Malta by the Knights into a parallel to the possession of Latium by the Aeneades and to the combat between the Trojans and the *Latini* and to the final duel between Aeneas and Turnus.

*Ipse ego communem pugnam totumque triumphum  
exequet: aeternis stabit victoria lustris.  
Tu leges renova interea ritusque vetustos  
intona et aeternam Turcis promitte ruinam.  
Non Turcis ullae induciae, non foedera sunt.  
Dux ego et aeternos vobis promitto triumphos.*

In Book XXII, a group of the Knights, whose ships had been separated from the others during the storm in Book I, had been cast up on the shore of Egypt and roams through the country, among them a German, called Francoper, who is in search of the sources of the Nile. He is swallowed by a crocodile, but with the help of Saint Hugh, a former Knight of the Order, the crocodile is brought to the Terrestrial Paradise and forced by Saint Hugh to spew out the German knight. Subsequently he encounters a prophet, revealed some time later as the prophet Elias of the Old Testament, who foretells some future events in the history of the Order. In the first part of his speech, Elias briefly defines the tasks of the Order with words borrowed from Anchises' famous admonition to Aeneas on the tasks of the Romans (Verg. A. 6.847 ff.), which Mayre used and adapted several times in his poem (p. 558):<sup>31</sup>

*Describant alii radio et fallentia discant  
sydera, vos, socii, pugnate et vincite saevos:  
hoc opus, hoc decus est agitare et vincere Turcas.*

Then he tries to comfort Francoper by prophesying him a better future and the new home of the Order (p. 559):

*“Respira, fili”, hic vates, “compone stuporem  
et melius disce hinc, meliores accipe casus:  
erratis pridem Rhodii, sed jacta salutis  
ancora, parta quies certusque a Caesare portus:  
haec Melite, haec statio, et Melitenses proxima dicent  
saecula.”...*

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<sup>31</sup> See above p. [8].

And he, too, assures the Knights of his future assistance and protection (p. 559):

*“Atque ego rursum adero, Melitenses ordine ducam,  
expediam, statuas, spurcas difflabimus aras.  
Ibimus et reliquae spargemus cornua Lunae.”<sup>32</sup>*

In the final Book XXV, at last, Liladamus tells the Knights after they had returned from their various wanderings and joined the forces of the Order in Messina, preparing the conquest of Malta, that God once had promised him Malta as the future home of the Order:<sup>33</sup> there he should destroy the Turkish sanctuaries and reintroduce the Christian religion, build new churches and erect statues of the saints. (p. 644):

*Tu quoque, tu charam concedes primus ad oram:  
errantes statuas Divos temploque repones,  
pendebuntque omni donaria Turcica coelo.  
Sacra instaurabis primumque ab origine cultum.  
Hinc priscos rursum mores ritusque, labores,  
proelia, tu veteres cernes rursum ire triumphos.  
Tantae molis erit Melitensem absolvere gentem.*

The last line variates, of course, the famous last line of the proem of the *Aeneid* “*Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*” (Verg. A. 1.33), but the prophecy here refers to the future after the expulsion of the Turks from Malta and the reintroduction of the Christian cult: this, however, is seen as an act of *absolvere*, i.e., the liberation of the Maltese people, their release from the Moslem religion and that they will be won back for the Christian religion.<sup>34</sup>

The *Liladamus* includes again prophecies that have already been told in the earlier books, for instance, the Great Siege of 1565 and the Battle

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<sup>32</sup> With the *cornua lunae* he refers to the Ottoman flag featuring a crescent with a star.

<sup>33</sup> In the whole epic there is no such prophecy by God to Liladamus in person but he may think of the vision of Pastor which the latter has communicated to him in Book I (p. 19). The doubts of L. Braun (2007), 659 n. 128, are, therefore, unnecessary.

<sup>34</sup> For the difference between historical truth and Mayre's poetic-fictional truth, see n.30 above.

of Lepanto of 1571 under the command of Don Juan d'Austria, natural son of Charles V and Barbara Blomberger, daughter of a citizen of Ratisbon (Regensburg). Then the fleet sails to Malta, where the Knights make a landfall and prepare for battle on the following day. They easily defeat the Turks who, panic-stricken, turn and flee. But in the general slaughter Liladamus behaves differently to his classical role model Aeneas: he spares the Ottoman leader Mustapha, but not out of human compassion or generosity for the defeated enemy, as Aeneas first was intending to spare Turnus (Verg. A. 12.940 f.), but only in order to allow him to report the Turkish defeat to Sultan Suleiman (p. 656):

*"Vive", ait hic Heros, "Solymano haec debita demum  
gratia: visa refer tantum: Rhodus altera surgit  
et melior paribusque iterum concurrimus ausis.  
Capta Rhodus, Melite nunquam capienda superstat!"*

Finally, Liladamus dedicates the booty and the whole population of Malta to Christ, and the Knights deposit the relics of the saints on the island as did the Trojans with the *penates* in Italy, and reinstate the cult of their patron, Saint John. Therewith, the original aim of the relocation of the Order to Malta, to be held as a stronghold against the Turks and a bastion for Christian nations, has been achieved and the narrator triumphantly concludes his epic with the words (p. 656):

*Haec Melite, hoc Romae vallum fraenumque Gelonis,<sup>35</sup>  
praesidium Italiae et Romano constitit orbi.*

Of course, the conquests of Malta by Napoleon and by the English some 100 years later were then not yet known to Mayre when he wrote these lines.

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<sup>35</sup> On the name *Geloni* for the Turks, see n.28 above.

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