

Brian J. Dendle

**RICHARD ENGLAND, POET OF MALTA
AND THE MIDDLE SEA**

*To Richard England and
Peter Serracino Inglott,
in homage and friendship*

Richard England, the son of the Maltese architect Edwin England Sant Fournier, was born in Sliema, Malta, 3 October 1937. He was educated at St. Edward's College (Cottonera, Malta), studied architecture at the (then) Royal University of Malta (1954-61) and at the Milan Polytechnic, and worked as a student-architect in the studio of Gio Ponti in Milan (1960-62). Richard England's Maltese works include designs of numerous hotels (Ramla Bay Hotel, Paradise Bay Hotel, 1964; Dolmen Hotel, 1966; Cavalieri Hotel, 1968; Salina Bay Hotel, 1970), tourist villages, apartment complexes, bank buildings (Central Bank of Malta, Valletta, 1993), and the University of Malta campus extension (1990-1995). Richard England has also designed residential and office complexes in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sardinia, and Argentina. His work has won numerous international prizes and merited his inclusion among the 585 leading international architects treated in *Contemporary Architects* (London, 1994) and in the anthology of the 581 outstanding world architects published in Japan in 1995.

Richard England's architecture is characterized by simplicity and a respect for the "vernacular" tradition of Malta. His hotels, "low-lying, terraced structures built of concrete and local stone" (Abel, *Manikata Church* 39), disturb the landscape as little as possible. Michael Spens stresses "England's regionalism," with its roots in Maltese culture and pre-history

(Spens 286). Chris Abel points out the sculptural aspect of England's buildings, "more Greek than Roman in spirit," "an architecture of shadow to create an architecture of light" (*Transformations* 10). For Abel, a turning-point in England's career came with "A Garden for Myriam," with its archetypal forms from a classical past, its "Memory Wall" and "Memory Screen."

Consistently, as in "A Garden for Myriam" and in the "Aquasun Lido," the images conjured up are those of antiquity, not the ancient temples this time, which are unique to Malta, but those classical forms which are universal to the whole Mediterranean region, and to Western culture in general (*Transformations* 146).

Charles Knevitt places England's architecture in the Humanist tradition and stresses the social and emotional impact of his work: "As a poet and dreamer he uses the medium of architecture to elicit and mould an emotional response in others" (*Connections* 29).

Richard England has also made a notable contribution to the sacred architecture of Malta. His first commission was the Church of St. Joseph, Manikata (1962-74), remarkable for its anticipation of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in its reuniting priest and congregation and for its simplicity of form, which contrasts strongly with the neo-Baroque splendor of much contemporary Maltese church design. Architecturally rooted in Maltese pre-history — England was influenced not only by Le Corbusier's Chapel at Ronchamp but also by the "womb-like forms of the half-sunken temples" of Hagar Qim, Mnajdra, Hal Saflieni, Tarxien and Ggantija (Abel 27) —, Manikata Church offered "a place of communal assembly and worship, yet also a place for personal dialogue and solitary meditation" (Abel 45). Other churches designed by Richard England are two chapels at the Addolorata Cemetery (1974), the Church of St. Andrew, Pembroke (1989), and the cathedral-sized Church of St. Francis, Qawra (under construction). The Dar il-Hanin Samaritan home for the elderly at Santa Venera (1996) combines a breath-taking simplicity and respect for the local tradition. His private and meditation chapels — the M.U.S.E.U.M. chapels at Naxxar (1982) and Blata L-Bajda (1991); Cave Chapel, Mgarr (1993); his own residence's meditation space (1994); the chapel of the Franciscan Minor Conventuals, Burmarrad (1995) — impose, as the present writer can attest, an overwhelming sensation of religious awe.

Richard England wrote in the catalogue for the exhibition "In Search of Sacred Spaces" (Mdina, Malta, 1994):

In his creation of sacred architecture
an architect must seek to achieve

places of silence
in spaces of solitude
enclosed by walls of mysticism.

The silence attained
should be one of communion
and not loneliness.

While the mysticism endorsed
must extend beyond man's mortal senses
to reach his inner eternal spirit.

Then, and only then
will the manifest religious architecture become the threshold
between the realm of the materialistic and the spiritual
the doorway to establish a dialogue of prayer
between the ordinariness of man
and the infinity of God.¹

Richard England's interests extend far beyond architecture. He is also a sculptor, photographer, and film producer ("Malta-mour"); he is deeply interested in opera and tenor voice recordings and has designed theatrical sets and costumes for the operas *The Maltese Cross* and *Compostella* (both with music by Charles Camilleri and libretto by Peter Serracino Inglott). Richard England seeks an essential harmony behind different art forms, the interpretation of one art in terms of another. Important to the development of his aesthetic vision were travels to the island of Mykonos (1962) and to Japan (1979). England sought the philosophy behind Japanese art: the "silence," "purity, simplicity, clarity and void" exemplified in Japanese floral composition (Richard England's wife Myriam is an expert in Sogetsu Ikebana); the stillness and simplicity of the minimalist Kara-Senzui dry gardens.

¹ This text and others in the article have no page numbers.

The Non-Poetic Works of Richard England

Walls of Malta (1971) ("photo-prose poem") is a collection of uncaptioned black and white photographs of Malta illustrating themes of silhouette, townscape, streetscape, façade, and texture. The introductory text is strongly literary. *Walls of Malta* is introduced by a poem ("The walls of worship: grey millennial stones...") by David Cremona and a foreword by A. C. Sewter, evoking his first experience of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra. Richard England quotes P. D. Ouspensky, Ken Smith, Kahlil Gibran, and Ladislaus Boros to stress the relationship of feeling, art, and seeing. For Richard England, *Walls of Malta* is a "book about *seeing*," "a quest for an outward pleasure which can lead the sensitive observer towards the experience of an inner joy; a search for a moment of visual poetic enchantment." Words are used to guide the reader to "seeing," to "feeling" (tactile as well as emotional). The text includes fragments of verse (including quotes from Paul Valéry, Jaludin Rumi, John Cage, Jean Cocteau, and Bob Kaufman), and references to contemporary concrete poetry, music, and the art of Rauschenberg, Warhol, and Lichtenstein. The overly-florid poetic prose, with its recondite vocabulary, alliteration, and dense adjectival clusters, exemplifies an occasional baroque element in England's writing: "the saffron yellow-brown barrenness of stark summer light"; "virile spring fertility of jade viridescence"; "the sober oyster weeping clouds of winter"; "the albescent white canescence of a Mahler symphony." England appeals to the words of Jean Cocteau to demonstrate the power of art to lead us to a "complete new world that is more profound, real and fertile than actual reality itself":

this is the role of poetry. It unveils in all the strength of its meaning, it shows naked, under a light that shakes away sleeplessness, the extraordinary things that surround us, and that were registered as matter of fact by our senses.

Carrier-Citadel Metamorphosis. H.M.S. Illustrious-Citadel Gozo. A Study in Formal Affinity (1973) was inspired by and dedicated to the Scottish concrete poet Ian Hamilton Finlay, who had invited Richard England to design "an aircraft-carrier bird-bath." *Carrier-Citadel Metamorphosis* imaginatively establishes by photographs and drawings symbolic, historical,

and formal analogies between the aircraft-carrier *Illustrious* and the citadel of Gozo. Ultimately, by visual metamorphosis and through the passage of time, the war-machines are transformed into elements of peace.

Uncaged Reflections (selected writings 1965-80) are reprints of essays on cultural topics, for the most part first published in *The Sunday Times of Malta*. The essays on architecture protest the architectural degradation of the Maltese environment which followed Independence (1964), the consequence of an ill-conceived "progress." England praises the primitive vernacular tradition of Malta, exemplified in the farmhouse, with its simple cubic elements; England emphasizes that buildings be related to landscape and fit the Maltese heritage and "spirit of place." Other essays offer sensitive criticism of the Maltese artists Mary de Piro and Emvin Cremona, the sculptor Gabriel Caruana, the Welsh-Maltese artist Manuel Chetcuti, and the graphic artist Norbert Attard. Two essays interpret the Japanese arts of floral arrangement (Ikebana) and Kara-Senzui gardens. The essays are thoughtful, written for the most part in a lucid, measured prose. There are occasional examples, as in the reprint of selections from *Walls of Malta*, of an over-emphatic style (the use of upper-case letters), alliterative, arcane in its vocabulary. In his *Foreword*, Peter Serracino Inglott explains this verbal excess: "If the surface of Richard England's prose is occasionally broken by the sudden outcrop of a rugged Maltese rhetorical rhythm or baroque *trompe l'oeil* or somewhat noisy pyrotechnic device, these 'faults' can be taken as indices to the deep, emotional roots out of which the rational discourse grows" (p. viii).

In Search of Silent Spaces (1983) ("Quiescent dreams in borrowed time") combines black and white photographs of places — desert sands, sacrificial altars, "lambent moonlit tides", etc. — which represent silence and of "A Garden for Myriam," created by Richard England for his wife at their home in St. Julians, interspersed with texts exploring man's yearning for a lost Paradise. Richard England, eschewing the International Style and freed by New-Wave philosophy to seek an architecture of emotion, is "lured and obsessed by the contrasting limpid simplicity and expressive austerity" found in "Silent Spaces." His Garden for Myriam, attained by "the gradual elimination

of the non-essential," is based on concepts of "silence" and "memory," as well as "desire" and "transcendence."¹

Silence
 in silent spaces
 to quieten the mind
 to calm the body
 to compose the spirit
 dialogues of silence
 bridges of communication
 conversations of contact
 silence
 silence
 silence
 not seen with the eye
 felt only by the heart
 yet heard by the soul
 in hushed reflection
 in centred thought
 man meets self
 in silent spaces
 silence

Octaves of Reflection (1987) ("Stone, Space and Silence") was written jointly by the Maltese composer Charles Camilleri and Richard England. Camilleri offers aphorisms and sample passages from his music. Richard England's text ("Castles of Contemplation") combines epigrams of an often Zen-like simplicity ("From the sound of stone comes the silence of space"; "What lies beyond beyond?"; "To understand a place one must know its memories"; "The sound of all beginnings is silence"; "Two people can meet in space but not in time, / for one belongs to one time and the other to another"), black and white sketches of building silhouettes, and photographs of geometrically-patterned building projects.

Sacri Luoghi (1994) contains 93 black and white pen sketches of "sacred spaces," 32 worldwide (Stonehenge, Teotihuacan, the Acropolis, etc.), 18 of Malta, and 43 of buildings

¹ In his lecture for the III Bienal for Architecture and Urbanism, held in Costa Rica, England described "A Garden for Myriam" as "an attempt to create dream-like metaphysical arrangements of fragments of memory."

and meditation spaces designed by Richard England. Mario Pisani, in his introduction, stresses the importance of England's minimalist architectural treatment of small sacred spaces, "an architecture of absence or void," to be ranked among "the finest examples of religious architecture in history." "To know a place one must know its memories" (Richard England).

Mdina Citadel of Memory (1995), text by Conrad Thake, consists of Richard England's black and white sketches of the buildings of Mdina, the Renaissance-Baroque city so greatly admired by England and in which his sister-in-law possessed a palace. *Fraxions* (1995) (Italian text by the architectural critic and historian Mario Pisani) offers dazzling color photographs of geometrical shapes, details, and silhouettes of buildings designed by Richard England, identifiable, in the words of Charles Kneivitt, as "icons of Malta" or reminiscent of "Barragan's playful inventiveness," "de Chirico's haunting Surrealist enigmas," or "Calvino's invisible cities."¹

Contemporary Maltese Poetry in English

The preferred language of Maltese poets of the generation immediately preceding and following Independence was Maltese; an excellent anthology of their works, with biographical notes, was published by Peter Serracino Inglott in 1989 (*Ilhna mkisra: antologija ta Poezija*). The leading Maltese poet writing in the English language is the former Chief Justice, John Cremona (1918-). Cremona's pre-war poems were written in Italian and were also published in French and Greek translations. His first book of verse in English, *Songbook of the South*, was published in 1940. His later poems have appeared in numerous anthologies and poetry magazines throughout the English-speaking world. The poems in his recent anthology, *Malta, Malta* (1992), treat the neolithic past of Malta, the Mediterranean of classical mythology, his Gozo boyhood, the sea, his foreign travels, Malta under siege in the Second World War. In style —its Maltese combination of simplicity and the baroque (alliteration, the sometimes lavish use of adjectives)

¹ Richard England has declared that the writings of Italo Calvino and the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico in part inspired "A Garden for Myriam"; see "The Mediterranean House."

— and theme (the references to neolithic ancestors), Cremona anticipates the poetry of Richard England.

Works by Maltese poets have appeared in English translation. The poetry of Anton Buttigieg (1912-83), President of Malta (1976-83), was translated by the Maltese novelist-dramatist Francis Ebejer (1925-93): the gently ironic Wordsworthian poems of *The Lamplighter* (1977) reveal Buttigieg's feeling for nature, religious compassion, concern for social justice, and affection for simple people. A bilingual collection of Buttigieg's haiku and tanka, *Il-muza bil-kimono* (*The Muse in Kimono*), with English translation by Gilbert Yates, appeared in 1968. Far different are the poems of Mario Azzopardi (1944-), the "enfant terrible of contemporary Maltese poetry" (Grazio Falzon), translated into English by Grazio Falzon in *Only the Birds Protest* (1980) and *Naked as Water* (1996). Azzopardi's poems, of loneliness, despair, and anger, reveal a morbid Baudelairian sensitivity expressed, at times self-dramatizingly, with the imagery and juxtapositions of the American Beat poets and the surrealists. (For a study of Azzopardi's verse, see Falzon's "Afterword" to *Naked as Water*.)

The Poetry of Richard England

White is White (1972) is Richard England's first book of poetry. With several blank pages and few lines to the page, printed in pale ochre (which will not reproduce in a photocopier), the 58 pages of *White is White* have the sparse compression of the haiku.¹ Peter Serracino Inglott has referred to its "Buddhist-inspired" imagery ("Foreword," *Uncaged Reflections*, p. xv). I shall quote a few lines of *White is White*, although the poem should be read in its entirety for a true appreciation of his hauntingly evocative quality, suggestive at times of Mallarmé:

whisper white secrets
 absence is white
 paint the wind white
 white casts no shadows. (p. 14)

¹ *White is White* coincided with England's creation of a series of white marble sculptures, "White Cities." See the essay by Frank Jenkins, *Contemporary Art in Malta*, p. 77.

white is a sound coming from the unknown (p. 16)

what is white if not the silent music
each one of us hears in his heart

white is the sound of a lost poem
echoing through the corridors of time
the white wind of a musical tear
echoes the grey lament of a silent fountain (p. 21)

long shadows of silence
cast by a frozen sun
mark time in white eternity

man is lonely for the white silence
he lost when he emerged
from the containment of his mother's womb (p. 22)

the colour of love is white
offered a choice from the colours of the rainbow
i chose the lot
white
white is the colour of fairy tales (p. 27)

take a white painting
paint over it in white
alternatively erase it

white is the frozen moment
of one's glimpse
into the memory of the future (p. 36)

if after tomorrow you will no longer be mine
the world will no longer contain white for me (p. 44)

white is the light in a lover's eyes
in the darkness of night

in the cold evening of your departure
my frozen tears turned into the fragrance of whiteness (p. 45)

cemeteries of death infected corpses
send out pulsations of white mortality (p. 46)

The first edition of *Island. A Poem for Seeing* (1980) is accompanied by numerous black and white photographs of Filfla, an islet south of and easily visible from the neolithic

temples of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra. (In a personal communication to the author, Richard England suggests that Filfla may have served as a focal alignment or “sacred hill” or “horned mountain altar” for the builders of Mnajdra and Hagar Qim.) For many years used for — and partly destroyed by — the target practice of the Royal Navy, the island is now a nature preserve. The photographs are presented in sections: “Echo of Solitudes—Delineations”; “Citadel of Death-Penumbras of Darkness”; “Moods of an Island—Tempered Emotions”; “Paragon of Vanity—Island Dreams”; “Altar of Sacrifice—Target”; “Ark of Tranquillity—Sanctuary”; “Icon of Fertility—Temple Elements;” “Siren of Atlantis—Myth-maker”; “Iceberg of Stone—The Island Revealed.” The last page of the photographic section reads:

Xenophile of fecundity
daughter of the heavens
vagabond of the middle sea
rest in peace

The final page of this edition of *Island* refers us to the local legend of the origin of Filfla, a legend which provides the underlying imagery for England’s poem:

There is a legend in Malta which tells of the creation of this isle. The inhabitants of a local village were so sinful that God caused an earthquake to destroy it, however the village was too evil even for the devil, who, in refusing it, hurled it skywards leaving the void circular depression known as “Il-Maqluba” on the outskirts of the village of Qrendi. Landing in the sea it formed the islet of Filfla.

Island begins with a dedication (I eliminate the upper-case type of the first edition):

This book is dedicated
To a mystical island
born of the wedlock of moon and stars
caressed by the sea
eternally earthbound
an ochre withered rock of emptiness
under a muted sky of sorrow
contemplating the passage of time

The text (“Island of Promise —Poetry of Transcendence”) combines a dense association of imagery: an ancestral search,

the physical nature of the island, its role in myth (galactic, Mediterranean, ancient), fertility, local legend, Atlantis, space ship, ancient worship, target and bird refuge, eternity, solitude, dream, time, the sea, death, lunar myth, the stars, bodily decay. Mentions of spirals ("spiral patterns in the wind," "island carved in spiral dreams") direct us to the makers of neolithic temples. Allusions to perversion ("Sealed forever in depraved echoes of lost perverted memories") and the striking connection of the past (Atlantis) and the starkly contemporary (galactic space ship) refer us to the legend of the origins of Filfla.

Richard England's hauntingly evocative association of geological and cosmic time, Mediterranean myth, the sea, the earth, fertility, and religious adoration, the assimilation of the island to the human body, the extended metaphor of the lover reaching across the ages, the attempt — through imagination and memory — to escape the barriers of historical time, the descent into Hades followed by an ascent into the heavens (possibility of Christian redemption?), plunge us into a universe of dream, of archetype. Despite its brevity, *Island*, with its sense of mystery, eternity, and unrequited longing, should be considered a major poem of the Mediterranean.

Limitations of space prevent my quoting more than a few lines of the poem:

In the middle sea
under an eternity of stars
two continents meet
oscillating
between remembrance and desire

island cast in my prayers
island shaped in my fantasy
island fashioned in my thoughts

glacial waters fill your mind
earth's blood flows in your veins
limestone marrow sets your bones

....

stranger on earth
moonbound in a soundless sea
menstrual tides from sleeping goddesses

stain sterile waiting waters
in a trance of death
a dormant island dreams
its cracks and fissures
cradle fertile seeds of ancient gods
undetoned ecstasies of illicit love

....

yesterday
we walked hand in hand
where once a temple stood
of lines curving into secret circles
and man knelt in prayer
your hands and mine
reached across the waters
to caress an outcast rock
icon of solitude
altar of sacrifice
crucified against the sky
in a sea devoid of logic
an island burned but not consumed

....

come descend with me
down saline stairs of oscillating moon-lit tides
through corridors embalmed with sadnesses unborn
deep into the petrified bowels of a subterranean sea
where avenues of vultures await our death
and poisoned webs of ancestral spectral doom
coagulate the cryptic crystals of our merging blood
here the ardent pillars of fire burn no more
in the no-time long unending slumber
of a citadel of the dead

come rise with me
on sibilant waters of quiescent memories
through perfumed cascades of burnt galactic legends
to wash the sea with molten love
to nail our bodies to the clouds
to reach the heaven of our skies
and cast an endless ectoplasmic spell
illuminating the lost dark side of the moon
with an unquenchable white light of radiant hope
in an eternal incantation of our unconsummated love

Selections from *Island*, arranged in a slightly different order, were reprinted in *Uncaged Reflections*. A truncated version, with minor textual variants and in lower-case type, was published in *Eye to I* (1994). Some stanzas of *Island*, together with poems from the later collection *Eye to I*, were set to music by Charles Camilleri and issued on compact disc, "Standing Stones" (1992) (also previously available, in a different version, on an L.P. as "Stone Island within..."). The French writer René Bégouen is preparing a French translation of *Island*.

Eye to I (for which the working title was *Borrowed Dreams in Borrowed Time*) (1994) is a selection of thirty of Richard England's poems, followed by translations into Italian by Gaetano Gangi. John Cremona, in his foreword, indicates the centrality of Malta in England's verse, the dominant and connected themes of "time (and timeliness) and woman," and England's attraction towards "mystery and legend."

Nine of the poems are taken from *Island*. Others repeat — in haunting, musical rhythm — themes of *Island*: dream, solitude, the grief of aging, the longing for love outside of time. As in *Island*, Richard England's Malta is that of ancient, prehistoric dreams and worship:

ON THE ISLAND OF SOLITARY GIANTS

On this island of solitary giants
from the darkness of the Earth
subterranean cults of wisdom
mould curves compressed in masonry
singing stones dancing in the solstices
litanies forged in numerical harmony.

The people of this clairvoyant isle
in allegiance to their land
cast amalgams human and divine
metaphysical symbols of unity
umbilical dyads of fertility and sterility
where death meets birth in an eternal cycle of return.

ENCHANTED ISLE

Enchanted isle
a travelling pilgrim's shrine
at the crossroads of the Middle Sea

temple for the Goddess of the Earth
 oracle of the mantic moon
 where sarsen stones of silence
 mark thresholds of land and sky
 necropolis of hope
 lifegiver to the dead.

In the fertile currents of this rock
 as woman's mysteries flow in blood
 altars of double spirals
 carve symbols of time returned
 channels of ritual healing
 in clairvoyant slumber
 a priestess sleeps in trance
 in this land of the Cosmic Mother
 wisdom comes in dreams.

England's vision — fundamentally Christian — is one of rebirth
 and love:

IN DREAM I FEARED THE END

Yet while in dream I feared the end
 now open-eyed I know it's but a dawn
 and I launch myself convinced
 that death is not man's final act
 but a natal threshold and a birth
 to an unfading richer life beyond
 in a transcendent never-ending world
 far richer than our own. [Extract]

STONES STANDING IN SILENCE

I ask you goddess of this land
 where has all this latent knowledge gone
 denuded in the choreographic dance of time
 buried in the squandered sands of lost oblivion.

I pray you Mother of this isle
 from your cosmic tomb of never ending curves
 washed in the primeval blood of sacrificial earth
 exalted by the mystic knowledge in your veins.

Awake these stones once more today
 from their tranquil sleep of death

restore the secret of their cults
and embrace again their vast galactic plan.

Ask them that they return anew to man
his harmonious presence in this World
that he may find once more his peace
and learn to love again. [Extract]

Richard England's most recent work, *Gozo Island of Oblivion* (1997) ("A graphic-literary itinerary"), contains England's lush prose evocations of Gozo, numerous black and white drawings by England of island scenes, accompanied by quotations which illustrate the working of the artist's mind, the "Gozo Eclogues" of John Cremona, and nine poems by Richard England. The poems, of an elegiac quality befitting England's poetic maturity, represent a Housmanesque sense of vanished youth and also a deeply-felt Christian belief in Redemption:

A lost traveller on life's mapless road
Offspring of lamented yesterdays
Chants the pains of distance
In orphaned companionship of loneliness
Silent incantations set to twilight texts
Atonal music scored in absent tones.

A tear rolls down and cleans away the dust
Decodes these ancient marks in stone
Revealing relics of remembrance

And as the hour glass of life
Further sheds its grains of sand
This wandering pilgrim
Once more is made aware
That the winter of this life
Descends too soon ahead of time.

(p. 80) [Extract]

Through empty silent streets
In the shadowed light of dawn
The sound of hurried steps
Disturb the village sleep
A black clad priest
Stole round collared neck
From church to house
Transports the Eucharistic Host.

Through open door
 Up winding steps
 To dim-lit attic walls
 A near-death prayful corpse
 On tarnished sheets of white
 Receives the Blessed Bread
 Then exhausted but fulfilled
 Departs this life in peace.

Convinced that as he tracks his path beyond this gate
 The Lord is there to take his hand. (p. 90)

One poem, religious in inspiration, offers a litany of Gozo village names:

Through Mgarr
 Ghajnsielem
 Qala
 And Nadur

To Xaghra
 Rabat
 Kercem
 And Munxar

Past Gharb
 Ghasri
 Xewkija
 And Sannat

From all of these bulbous church dome breasts arise
 Nourishment of a peoples' creed
 Testimony to an Island's faith. (p. 36)

Summary

Richard England, world-renowned as a brilliantly-original architect and theoretician of architecture, is also one of Malta's leading poets. His haunting verses — alliterative, musical, flowing, dignified — refer us to a sacred world of Mediterranean and cosmic space. England's poetry poses a universe in which the individual is caught between a series of polarities: between the archetypal memory of a lost past (the Garden of Eden, neolithic Malta, Greek myth) and the hope of

future Paradise; between the local (his deep love of the Maltese islands) and the universal (his wide readings, exploration of other cultures, his questing, intellectual curiosity); between silence (sacred space, *White is White*) and an occasional over-exuberance (the lush prose of *Walls of Malta*); between the keenness of his intellect and the lyric intensity of his feeling. Impressive also is the range of England's verse, from the dignified spanning of eons of cosmic time (*Island*) to the simple, elegiac note of his lament for lost youth in the poems of Gozo.

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