

Book Review

Paul Heywood (2023). *Staying on in Malta*. Midsea Publications. ISBN: 978-99932-7-974-7.

To his colossal credit, Paul Heywood makes no bones about his leanings as a citizen of the country in which he was brought up. He is a devout Christian, more specifically Roman Catholic, votes Nationalist and is a proud European. At no stage does he purport to be 'neutral', and his overall vision reflects, for the most part, these standpoints. As this anthology of writings about his personal and public life shows, he is however fair. His work in the public sector was marked by an honest-to-goodness approach which won him the admiration, especially in policy making and administration, of political friends and adversaries alike. It is fair to say that his efforts in educational administration were guided by a strong sense of the common good and making things work for students under a professed sense of social justice. This is why ministers on both sides of the dominant political spectrum trusted him as an 'old hand' in education. His life and professional trajectory is a far cry from those of persons who try to appear sanctimoniously 'neutral' when they are obviously not. Paul Heywood sought, at times creatively, to make things work for students and their families and for the country.

This work in hand can easily have been spread out over three separate books. One is an autobiographical account or memoir of his and his family's itinerant life spanning India, Alexandria, Cairo, Libya and Malta, written in a compelling style suggesting that Paul Heywood has the makings of a novelist. Nothing is stilted. On the contrary, there is a flow throughout this section. It reminds me, in a way, of the autobiography in English of the man with whom Heywood politically did not concur and neither did Paul Xuereb, the latter having written the book's Preface: Dom Mintoff. Like Mintoff, Heywood set his personal narrative, with its thick, vivid evocations, against larger global scenarios, more specifically the two World Wars, the first in which his father, like my English grandfather on my dad's side, was directly involved in the British army, the Liverpool, Somerset and two other regiments. It is significant that Paul's father never spoke of the terrible experiences of trench warfare and the scars they would have left in the terrible carnage of a war, naively believed by some in Italy (Papini) to be something one should embrace ("Amiamo la guerra!"), and elsewhere as the "war to end all wars". The second

World War created the conditions for the young Paul to give further free rein to his imagination. This comes across when describing how he and friends explored every nook and cranny of the underground war shelters. There were however enduring scars.

This was Malta, the country the Heywoods made their home. Fun episodes can easily transmute into tragedy during wartime. They involved children's favourite pastime of playing with marbles. It took me back to my childhood and a school not far away from one of Paul Heywood's family residences in Buskett Road, Rabat, without my having experienced the tragedy he had to cope with and to which he would react dramatically. This would have been a *coup de theatre* had the scene been enacted on stage. Alas, this was no theatrical performance on stage but the stark reality of war which snatches lives suddenly and clinically. Weeks after calling, in vain, at his friend's home to enjoy their daily game of marbles, he was informed that his friend was killed by shrapnel. Shocked and numbed with grief, Paul decided to throw his marbles, the next day after receiving the sad news, through the iron grating into the cellar of his friend's house. This episode is remembered by Paul Heywood in both his prose and verse; two items dedicated to this loss. Another tragic story is of a boy who missed school on the day an RAF bomber lost control during a training exercise and crashed onto his house and surroundings. – a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Verse in English and Maltese constitute the book's closing section. The author's religious beliefs and commitment shine through this section and other parts of this book. So do his love for his life companion and wife, Miriam, and nature as a tangible manifestation of divinity, in an almost pantheistic manner. Quite revealing are his translations into superb Maltese of tracts and meditations from the apocalyptic San Juan de la Cruz. Space does not permit an acute analysis of Paul's prowess in composing verse but his penchant for using alliteration and reverberating sounds is there for all to see. His dedication to the love of his life shine through the verse, her fragrance captured by a rich choice of vocabulary. All is tempered, however, by the realisation that happiness cannot last beyond 'this bank and shoal of time' or so one might assume. I feel however that Paul Heywood embraces a metaphysical sense of love almost reminiscent of John Donne and Richard Crashaw, albeit more thematically than in Paul's chosen style of verse.

Death is a recurring theme and there is pathos in the remarkable 'Enduring Troth' where sleeping like a log, oblivious to his conjugal partner's whispering, gives rise to the realisation that one day this can turn into a deeper, lifeless slumber following the "final take off...to eternity", as he puts it, in another piece of verse.

The third feature of this volume concerns Paul Heywood's professional career. A fully qualified lawyer with an additional Arts degree, he chose to be an educator instead, just like a few others, including a certain Paulo Freire, whose writings he came to admire and whom he saw in person at a UNESCO Conference. Having shared an office with him in the then Education department, I can vouch that Paul Heywood was no bland bureaucrat, nor faceless executive. He was as inventive, in his administration, as he was in his writing of prose and verse. His comments in files were amusing to read, instructive in the creative use of English and Maltese. They would be worth tracing for this purpose. He was also creative in the way he investigated and solved a case of a poor stigmatised and isolated child at a school Paul Heywood headed, a case of a "leper", kept at arms length by other children who let their weird fantasy run riot, abetted by a strong dose of parentocracy. His use of bluff, in this specific case, and imagination must have been worthy of an Edward De Bono prize for Lateral Thinking.

Paul Heywood was placed in very important positions of educational leadership in the country which he represented abroad in many projects and significant conferences, run by the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the EU, the Commonwealth, the International Baccalaureate Organization and other entities. He helped shape, with others, part of the educational policy trajectory of his country. He held key positions such as Head of Upper Secondary/ New Lyceum for Arts, Head of the Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School, Pro-Chancellor of the University of Malta and Chairperson of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Selection Board for Malta. He was heavily involved in establishing 'Systems of Knowledge' at the New Lyceum (subsequently Junior College), the Malta Equivalence Information Centre (MEIC) and many other developments in Maltese education, and also sports - MFA Disciplinary Commissioner (apart from having legal training, he had been a very active sportsman representing the University and local teams at football and also his favourite cricket, besides athletics).

His speeches and reminiscences on many of these developments, likely to prove controversial as he never shied away from expressing his strong convictions, are a boon for anyone seriously engaged in educational and general policy research. He made a significant contribution to the development of the Pupil-Worker scheme at sixth form level, despite his reservations regarding some of its features. He helped set up the Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School. His serious and painstaking approach earned him the respect of political figures in the party he obviously did not support, especially ministers including Agatha Barbara, Guzé Cassar, Philip Muscat and Daniel Micallef.

Needless to say, the bulk of his administrative and policy involvement came after 1987, and he worked closely with the then Minister of Education, Dr Ugo

Mifsud Bonnici and Rev. Peter Serracino Inglott. 'Systems of Knowledge' was one of the areas in which the three made a telling contribution. Paul Heywood is adamant that its syllabus needs to be revised every two years, in keeping with an ever changing society with its different challenges also in terms of cultural relevance, gender, race and class representations. Gender, I would add, also includes sexuality.

A much travelled educator, which allows him, in his verse and essays, to focus on some of the world's architectural (Strasbourg's Gothic Cathedral) and geological (Meteora) wonders, and a polyglot, with knowledge of German and having even spoken Tamil and Gujarati during his early upbringing in India, Paul Heywood comes across as an internationalist. He was inspired in his education work by the International Baccalaureate. He has been serving on the Editorial Advisory Board of its flagship academic journal, *Journal of Research in International Education*, reviewing manuscripts for publication in this outlet. As this book shows, he firmly believes in international education, committed, as he is, to a holistic education that can help stem the potent tide of Neoliberalism. This volume also affirms his belief in the diffusion of knowledge of the legal basis of education among educators and all those involved in education; he praises Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, a seasoned lawyer, on publishing a book in this area. He also feels that some knowledge of the basic elements of law should be studied by youngsters now that the voting eligibility age is being lowered.

This book affirms Paul Heywood's belief in an education for social justice and it might come as a surprise to some to learn that he holds such socialist thinkers on and in education, as Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire, in high esteem. The former was referred to by Don Lorenzo Milani as " un santo laico" (a lay saint). It would be as surprising as discovering, in the opening chapters, that Paul Heywood's maternal grandfather's sister was married to none other than socialist activist and thinker, Manuel Dimech. Paul would however never claim to be a Socialist.

As someone who wrote his Master's thesis, between 1986 and 1988, on Gramsci and Freire and subsequently raised this research project to PhD level and to that of a book published internationally in eight languages, I find this most gratifying.

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