REPRESENTING VALLETTA: GLORY, DECLINE AND REHABILITATION

Like many other cities in the world, the capital city of Malta, Valletta, has been subject to countless studies and imagery, and showered by much praise on its historical, archaeological, and architectural merits. Less popular however, is the research carried out in the fields of literature and popular culture. "Representing Valletta: Glory, Decline and Rehabilitation" tackles the representation and interpretation of Valletta within the literary, artistic, and more pop-cultural fields.

The dissertation here mentioned was carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literary Tradition and Popular Culture. Being an interdepartmental programme, it presents students with a holistic approach crucial to all lovers of literature, film and the arts. Moreover, past elements are often contrasted and compared to the present to allow students to tackle aspects from both the literary canon to contemporary and pop-cultural elements.

Thus, the main idea my study was to show how such a contemporary an aspect such as the existence and the continual development of a city, can be linked to literary aspects and popular culture manifestations. To identify the elements and emblematic characteristics that make up the representation of Valletta, one has to ask which aspects ignite interest in both the artist depicting the city and the visitor visiting it.

Therefore, the dissertation presents the reader with representations of Valletta by making reference to cultural, traditional, artistic, and creative aspects of the city. Each of the mentioned aspects portrays a different point of view which contributes to the identity of Valletta. Thus the city is seen as having different facades which together bring out its traditional and cultural manifestations. This was an interesting notion to tackle since it makes people more aware of the city's heritage.

Consequently, the study takes into consideration the importance of the Mediterranean Sea as a place of exchange of different cultures, beliefs and ways of life, which are present in various Mediterranean countries such as Malta. Being a creative city, Valletta is then seen as a source of inspiration to artists to further create their own artistic manifestations, thus contributing to a new creative image of the city. Therefore, Valletta is more than its physical
buildings and streets; it also represents its energy, stories and ideas. The infinite opportunities offered to individuals give the idea of a continuous process that helps in the regeneration of the city.

Importance is also given to the people of Valletta, by refereeing to the different individuals making up the city. Reference is made to the inhabitants of the city, since their presence is evident on a daily basis. They are significant to the continuation of traditions and values in the city, by passing customs from one generation to another. Hence, by doing so they are assuring the survival of past traditions, while with each passing down, new concepts are formed and are integrated in the already existing custom.

Moreover, the dissertation highlights the importance of nostalgia and memory in contemporary time by showing how memory serves as a link between the past, present and the future. Italo Calvino’s novel, *Invisible Cities*, provides a lens with which to view Valletta by itself and in relation to other cities in contemporary time. Valletta, although old in its foundations, it is still considered as being a young city in the aspects of creativity and culture.

One can come to understand how such a topic provides vast information, making the research a never-ending one. Tackling such concepts made me more aware and knowledgeable about the physical and moving elements making up our Capital City. For this reason, I would thus like to thank the University of Malta and the Master it! Scholarship Scheme for giving me the opportunity to enhance my knowledge and continue my studies in my desired field. My Master degree was part-financed by the European Union – European Social Fund (ESF) under the Operational Programme II – Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, ‘Empowering People for the More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life.”