An account dedicated to holy Pauline places

Simon Mercieca

Victor Mallia-Milanes's latest publication is a book about churches and chapels in Malta and Gozo dedicated to St Paul. At a local level, the book represents an overview of the principal shrines dedicated to St Paul. More importantly, it is the first publication to have put the local cult of St Paul on an international platform. The author has now sealed the perennial question whether St Paul was shipwrecked off the coast of Malta or somewhere else in the Mediterranean. On top of that, Mallia-Milanes says, there is no doubt (and rightly so) that historically this shipwreck did take place off the shores of our islands.

In his book, Mallia-Milanes discusses the shrines linked in popular memory with the saint's stay in Malta. The first two were at Rabat and Mdina respectively, with the most important being the cathedral dedicated to this saint and regularly built on the house of the Proto-Publius. The other shrine is the gozo, which was the cathedral as the place of Pauline importance. But while the proto-Publius became the centre of devotion, the proto was and remained a place of historical curiosity even after the Order's arrival. The author then refers to the mediaval chapel dedicated to St Paul at the Cala Di San Paolo. Already as far back as medieval times, this area was linked to the arrival of St Paul.

Paul, Mallia-Milanes also quotes Aichelio Ferris who mentions the existence of a chapel dedicated to the saint on Silvras Hill.

While there are historical records about the presence of a chapel in this area prior to the Great Siege, it seems that it had a different dedication. Therefore, if a chapel dedicated to St Paul existed within the harbour area, it was situated somewhere else. Recently, Stanley Finini seems to have given the answer as he mentions the existence of a mediaeval chapel dedicated to Paul in the parameters of Vittoriosa. Most probably, this chapel was situated in the area where the chapel of St Paul in Cospicua stands today. This would suggest that St Paul's landing place was at Cospicua rather than in Gozo.

The other chapels that are discussed are those of Bormacquar, Cospicua, Marsalforn, San Pawl tat-Taqna and Birkirkara. The three wayside chapels are San Pawl tal-Qajja in the limits of Matthew and St Paul's Church and the Order of Paul's arrival, the Basilica of Our Lady of Attard and the third lies at Xejdu l-Qginn. Thanks to this work, both the locals and tourists are being offered a book which, while being of a high academic content, can serve them as a guide to the footsteps of the Pauline cult in Malta and Gozo.

The local reader is offered a translation into Maltese of the English text while the specialised reader has an extensive bibliography of the main references published on this topic as well as a good index.

One man's freedom is another man's prison

Stanley Borg

If Jonathan Franzen were to write a shopping list, I would put on it. And that's because, if he had to choose between the shadowy (even though, what's wrong with that?) question of whether he wants to be famous, he would have to be famous.

The only problem is that Mr Franzen's writing entails a lot of it. In the first two pages of his latest novel, Freedom, one of the main themes is the struggle between the privacy of the writer and the intrusions of the outside world. The writer, Jesse, is faced with a choice. Should he continue to live in his small apartment in San Francisco and write his novel in peace, or should he move to New York and become a successful author? Jesse decides to move to New York, but soon finds himself under siege by the media.

Despite his commercial success, Freedom is not a bestseller. It takes more than a name to become an American success. Mr Franzen continues to write for a small audience.

The Corrections weighs in at 192 pages, yet it is such a small audience. Mr Franzen's writing entails a lot of it. It's a book about the limits of the author's influence on American history.

Yet, the Curiosity that Mr Franzen has for the woman who, after the departure of her husband,4

The narrative structure may sound confusing, but it isn't. The author then refers to the Curiosity. The author then refers to the Curiosity. The author then refers to the Curiosity. She makes us human.