



Lunar landscape in St Venera

I live in Triq il-Palazz l-Ahmar in St Venera. If any of your readers decide to visit this street they would not find any red palace. Instead, as soon as you enter the street from Cannon Road you are welcomed by the sight of two skips where non-residents regularly tip all their rubbish.

On the right hand side of the street are St Michael School and an old people's home, *Dar il-Hanin Samaritan*. These two institutions are run by the hard working members of the Society of Christian Doctrine (MUSEUM).

Facing these buildings are a number of terraced houses, all with beautiful front gardens.

Unfortunately, this set up is ruined by the poor state of the road which is so full of potholes that it looks like a lunar landscape.

I have been living in this street for almost 30 years but unfortunately it has never been upgraded.

Last year, I was assured by two St Venera councillors that our street would be resurfaced in 2009, but nothing was done. Living on the periphery of St Venera

makes me feel so ignored and insignificant.

Now, as a last resort, I am praying hard that during Pope Benedict's visit to Malta, the MUSEUM will invite His Holiness to visit their institutions in Triq il-Palazz l-Ahmar, hoping that this will persuade the government to finally take action to resurface our street.

If this happens I suggest we rename our street Triq San Ġorġ Preca.

Lawrence Zammit
St Venera

Respect towards us citizens

I was disgusted at the reaction of a policeman on duty near the monument in Floriana.

I was a passenger on a mini van and a gentleman seated in the front seat was not wearing a seat belt. The officer pulled the van to the side and gave the man (not the driver) a ticket. The gentleman accepted this quietly but when he spoke to the policeman he

received a very rude reaction. Such 'officers' should not be in the force.

This is the second time I have come across such a rude officer. I wonder whether the Commissioner is aware of the kind of officers we have on our streets. Why can't an officer be polite to a citizen like other policemen abroad? Here, they talk to us as though we are criminals.

Rude policemen are ruining the force's reputation. It seems that once they wear the uniform, they think they rule the world. How are we expected to turn to the police for help if they are rude and do not give citizens a chance to speak their mind?

Shirley Ann Brineat
Birkirkara

Another form of animal cruelty

Should we distinguish between forms of animal cruelty? If someone buys a live rabbit or guinea pig to feed it while still alive to a pet snake or owl, is that not cruelty?

Dogs and cats have feelings... other animals, such as a neglected rabbit given as a Christmas or Easter present to a child, have feelings too!

I recently took care of a rabbit whose owners neglected it to such a

state that all its paws were severely burned with its own excretions, which resulted in the bones coming out through the skin. It has a broken hind leg, is under nourished - weighing in at well under a kilo - and it will be lucky to live through the ordeal and trauma and stress.

Why are people still buying animals as gifts? Why do parents buy their children pets, only to allow this neglect to take place? This attitude

is irresponsible and should not be allowed.

How many otherwise healthy animals will have to suffer because of ignorant individuals like these?

Something needs to be done. Animal lovers should take action; if you know someone who is neglecting an animal, speak out. Let us stop this cruelty.

Nadiene Gatt Muscat
Attard

Traffic hazards in Victoria

I cannot understand why most zebra crossings in Victoria are not preceded by the zig-zag lines that help motorists identify them in time. As far as I am aware, the only one which conforms to this rule is in Enrico Mizzi Street.

Also, part of the pavement in two dense traffic areas, at 40 cm wide, is too narrow. They do not even allow

the carriage of the smallest pram or a wheelchair. Both pavements are in busy streets - Main Gate Street corner with St Francis Square, and Republic Street corner with Independence Square.

If a pedestrian tries to walk on the latter, he or she can easily be hit by a passing vehicle as this is in the narrowest part of a hectic

thoroughfare, and so has no protective railing.

Victoria is already renowned for possibly the narrowest street in Malta. I hope these public hazards have not been planted just to give Gozo's capital a second record.

Paul Cassar
Victoria

Correct role models for Maltese sacred music

I read with great interest Lino Bugeja's feature on sacred music (*The Sunday Times*, January 10).

I have strong reservations about the aesthetic value of Giuseppe Caruana's hymns, and strongly disagree that his music can satisfy the Pope's concerns, who is known to be a keen and accomplished musician.

From a preliminary study undertaken by the music division at the Mediterranean Institute, it resulted that at least one of Caruana's compositions is far from unique or aesthetic.

Some time ago, as director of the Mediterranean Institute, I backed John Galea to encourage students following historical musicology to undertake studies on 19th century Maltese composers. The music of Paolino Vassallo (among others) was identified for this study.

Incidentally, the name of this composer was omitted in Mr Bugeja's article, despite the fact that he is the most important late 19th and early 20th century Maltese composer.

Nevertheless, thanks to the support received from Fr Albert Borg, who opened up the rich music archives at the Augustinian Priory in Valletta to the students, research was

undertaken on a popular hymns written by Mr Vassallo. Karin Grech edited some of Vassallo's work in her BA (Hons) dissertation entitled *Two Composers in the Musical Archives of Cospicua Parish Church and Augustinian Convent in Valletta: Fr Andrea Schembri, SJ (1805-1872) and Paolino Vassallo (1856-1923)*.

Both her thesis and the way this work was supervised by Dr Galea received special praise by the appointed foreign examiner, Richard Divall.

To our surprise, it turned out that the music of one of Caruana's most popular hymns, that is, *L-Innu ta' Filghodu - Reġa' Sebah Ja Mulejja* (words by Dun Karm) bears a striking resemblance to an earlier composition of Mr Vassallo written in the form of an antiphon for the feast of St Lawrence in Birgu!

Before proposals and names are put forward to be used as role models for sacred music in Malta, a proper study should be undertaken by experts to ascertain the real aesthetic value of the composers' works.

Simon Mercieca
Director,
Mediterranean Institute
University of Malta, Msida

De Valette's sword and dagger

Since this year will mark the 200th anniversary of the end of the French occupation of Malta, I feel it would be appropriate for the government to ask France to return Grand Master Jean Parisot de Valette's sword and dagger, which Napoleon's troops had taken from the island in 1798.

The sword and dagger, which are exhibited at the Louvre in Paris, were a gift of King Philip II of Spain to De Valette, the hero of the Maltese victory over the Turkish invaders in the

Great Siege of 1565. They should be displayed in a museum in Malta.

This official request should be made to French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

France's return of these objects, which have great historical and intrinsic value for Malta, would be a much appreciated gesture.

After all, they are of no great historical importance to France.

Carmel Saliba
Victoria

I was pleased to see that France's greatest honour, the *Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur*, was bestowed to former President Eddie Fenech Adami, who I greatly admire as a statesman and who truly deserves the honour.

Yet I regret to note that the French government's gesture reminds us that the Louvre museum still has the bejewelled sword and dagger given to Grand Master Jean de

Valette by Philip II of Spain, which were stolen by Napoleon's troops when they occupied Malta in 1798.

Much as I admire Dr Fenech Adami, I would have preferred it had France honoured Malta by returning these exhibits, which are of great historical significance, to Malta since they were a recognition of De Valette's heroic role in the Great Siege of 1565.

George Vella
Victoria

Non English labelling

It is extremely frustrating for me, whenever I shop at supermarkets in Malta, to try to figure out whether or not a particular product is, for example, face cream, hair cream or any other cream other than the one I want. This is simply because I cannot read Italian.

It may be OK for local residents who have got used to getting the right product through experience. But can you imagine the frustration and anger the tourist, the visitor or a first timer goes through?

This is nothing short of bad business.

Should a product, sold in a country whose second official language is English, not be labelled in both Italian and English? Often the product shows other languages on the label, but not English. In Canada, where both English and French are official languages, labels must be in both languages.

Should the government not insist on the English language labelling of products sold in Malta?

John Grima
Toronto, Canada