

Mixja Letterarja

L-EDITORJAL

CLARE AZZOPARDI

FIR-RABA' EDIZZJONI TAL-GAZZETTA LETTERARJA NINTRODUĊULKOM DIN IL-MIXJA LETTERARJA FIR-RABAT; MIXJA LI TISTGĦU TAGHMLUHA MAL-FAMILJA KOLLHA META TIXTIEQU U KIF TIXTIEQU. NISSUĠĠERULKOM LI TIMXU MA' DIN IR-ROTTA, TIDHLU FIS-SIT WWW.HELAMALTA.COM/PROJECTS/LITWALK, TAQRAW IS-SILTJET LETTERARJI MARBUTIN MA' KULL SIT STORIKU U TGAWDU L-MADWAR. IL-MIXJA T-TAJBA!

Dan l-editorjal mhux editorjal tas-soltu. Fis-sens li fih ma nihux spunti minn xoghlijiet f'din il-gazzetta u nitkellem dwarhom. Lanqas ma nagħti l-opinjoni tiegħi dwar xi haġa partikolari bħalma għamilt fit-tliet gazzetti letterarji li harġu s'issa. Mhux għax m'għandix opinijoni li nixtieq naqsamhom magħkom, imma għax nixtieq niehu din l-opportunità u nikteb fuq xi haġa ġdida li hdimna fuqha dan l-aħħar bħala Fondazzjoni HELA bl-għajnuna tal-fondi tal-Premju tal-President. Sabiex niċcelebraw *Raħal il-Letteratura* se nkunu qed inniedu mixja letterarja li tibda mill-Foss tal-Imdina u tibqa' għaddejja sa Ġnien Howard. Ma nafx għandekx għal qalbek il-mixi, il-kotba, jew l-istorja. Jekk iva, mela din il-mixja letterarja se toghġbok żgur. Permezz tagħha se tkun tista' żżur siti storiċi fil-waqt li tisma' siltiet jew poeziji differenti marbuta mal-istess siti.

Il-mixjet letterarji huma komuni hafna fil-bliet Ewropej. Meta nzur belt ġdida niehu gost insir nafha billi nsegwi mixja magħmula apposta bl-għan li waqt li nkun qed insir naf il-post, insir naf ukoll il-kittieba ta' dak l-istess post. Dawn il-mixjet jistgħu jkunu kemm għall-kbar kif ukoll għat-tfal; jistgħu jiehdu xejra umoristika jew tal-biża' jiddependi mill-gosti ta' dak li jkun u jekk iridx jisma' stejjer tal-wahx jew inkella stejjer tad-dahq. Niftakarni nagħmel waħda Edinburgħ li kienet pjuttost tal-biża' u kienet iktar mixja taħt l-art milli fit-toroq! Imma kont hadt gost u kienet differenti mis-soltu mixjet turistiċi tal-belt. F'din il-belt fl-Iskozja, mhux biss hemm numru ta' mixjet letterarji, imma hija wkoll belt bi programm sħiħ ta' attivitajiet marbuta mal-kteb fosthom

festival li jsir kull sena u li huwa wiehed mill-ikbar festivals tal-kteb fid-dinja. Fl-2004 Edinburgħ ingħatat ukoll it-titlu ta' Belt tal-Letteratura mill-UNESCO. Biex belt tingħata dan it-titlu trid tilhaq ċerti kriterji mfassla mill-UNESCO. Bhalissa hemm 42 belt rikonoxxuti mill-istess entità bħala bliet tal-letteratura. Ma nafx jekk pajjiżna għadx ikollu belt li tingħata dan it-titlu. S'issa nistgħu ngħidu li kellna l-ewwel Raħal tal-Letteratura u din se tkun l-ewwel mixja letterarja miktuba bl-Ingliż minn Francesca Monseigneur u kkurata mill-kittieba Leanne Ellul.

L-għan tal-mixja letterarja huwa li nagħtu dewqa tal-letteratura Maltija lill-partecipanti u li nitfgħu ftit dawl fuq monumenti u postijiet storiċi tar-Rabat. Il-partecipanti jimxu minn post għal iehor fir-Rabat, isiru jafu xi haġa dwar il-post u mbagħad jisimgħu wkoll silta jew poezija marbuta ma' dak il-post. Fost il-postijiet li inkludejna f'din il-mixja hemm: il-Knisja ta' San Pawl, il-Knisja ta' San Duminku, Misraħ Forok, il-Villa Lusingsland u l-Arkivji Nazzjonali. Il-mixja tibda mis-swar tal-Imdina u tispicċa hdejn il-mafkar ta' Pawlu Xuereb. Fost il-kittieba magħzula

hemm Kilin, Lina Brockdorff, Glen Calleja, Lorraine Vella u John Bonello biex inkun semmejt ftit. Il-ġeneri varjati sew u f'din il-mixja letterarja, int min int, tista' ssib xi haġa li ddaħħek jew tispirak, li ttik tkompli timxi jew li forsi tieqaf taħseb xi ftit ukoll ...

Nittama li dan għadu biss il-bidu u li bħala Fondazzjoni għad ikollna fondi biex inhejju iktar mixjet letterarji fi bliet differenti. Sadattant, nittama li tiehdu gost b'din u jekk ikollkom xi kummenti, xejn ma niddejuq nisimgħuhom halli ntejbu xogħolna. Sadanittant ... x'nagħmlu? Tlaqna? ■



Mir-Rabat sar-Rabat

JEAN PAUL BORG

IR-RABAT, FEJN BEDA KOLLOX. FEJN GHAMLET L-EWWEL PASS VERU TAGHHA, QABDET IT-TRIQ U KKVONVINCIET RUHHA LI MHIX SE TMUR LURA. IR-RAHAL LI FAKKARHA FIL-PROVERBJU ĊINIŻ LI VJAĠĠ TA' ELF MIL JIBDA MINN PASS WIEHED U GHAMLET KURAĠĠ. IR-RAHAL LI MINN FUQ L-GHOLI TIEGHU QABŻET U NTELQET, HALLIET IL-GRAVITÀ MHALLTA MAL-ADRENALINA TEHODHA FEJN RIEDET HI.

Biex waslet ir-Rabat u tat l-ewwel pass taghha kien hemm mitt pass preliminari u wiehed. Kien hemm minnhom qalghuha minn mal-art bi ffit, minnhom b'aktar, ohrajn li dawruha dawra durella, haduha lej' ix-xellug jew lej' il-lemin, haduha 'l quddiem u wara reġġghuha lura għax il-biza' għamel tiegħu, bejn f'logħba u bejn fi gwerra magħha nnifisha sakemm kixfulha triq u qatgħetha li dik kienet se tiehu, dik għas-Saqqajja, b'wiehed u għoxrin kilometru quddiemha. L-ewwel qtar tax-xita fil-lejl ta' qabel u l-parir ta' ommha, "Mar, għada tmur xejn ta hi, ma tmurx tiehu rih", sfaxxaw fi żrara fit-triq unika li kellha quddiemha. Il-messaġġ tal-għarus, "Ix-xita, għada mmorru niehdu kafè minflok" u l-hafna messaġġi ta' wara li baqgħu bla tweġiba nbidlu f'hofor fit-triq li evitat mingħajr ma tat wisq kas. Ma baqgħux aktar dmirha. Is-skiet risposta, bħalma kien risposta meta waqt li qaltli li applikat għan-nofs maratona weġibha, "U dan mhux ġenn, tmur tiġri wiehed u għoxrin kilometru meta għandna żewġ karozzi bejnietna?!"

U mbagħad, il-Hadd filgħodu, l-aħħar Hadd ta' Frar, ffit sigħat qabel dak li kellu jkun l-ewwel pass. Qamet kmieni, xwiet ffit hobż, dellkitu bil-ġamm, kilitu bil-mod, libset ix-xorz u l-flokk, wahhlet innumru bil-labar tas-sarwan, libset it-tracksuit fuq kollox, lebbtet mid-dar bla kliem u bla sliem, dahlet fil-karozza u saqet lejn ir-Rabat. Ipparkjat fit-triq li tagħti għall-Gianpula u mxiet bil-mod fejn kellu jibda kollox. Hemm fuq, is-Saqqajja, 155 metru 'l fuq mil-livell tal-baħar, hasset l-ewwel rih ta' Frar li habat ma' wiċċha, mingħajr karezzi, dahhliha sal-għadam, hasset preljut ta' x'gej għaliha, dehxa, bħal żveljarin li jumejn qabel fakkarra li kellha tiffaċċja ġurnata ohra u li għaddielha l-hin tal-irdoss taht il-kutri. Rat hafna hafna aktar milli hasbet, u aktar minn kwantità kien hemm il-kwalità li dejjem qalulha u dejjem emmnet li m'għandhiex - iġsma perfetti, kunfidenza, kapacità ta' stretching ta' partijiet tal-ġisem daqsliekku tal-lasktu flok tad-demem u l-laham, u saqajn u kuxxejn mikxufa mingħajr qatra xaham. Ir-rih u dawn kollha, ġegħluha tiddeċiedi tiġri bit-tracksuit. Bejn l-iġsma perfetti u l-imperfezzjoni solitarja tagħha, lemhet hafna fi gruppi, f'timijiet, ċorom ta' atleti lebsin l-istess kuluri, jippożaw għar-ritratti flimkien, ifaqqgħu jdejhomm ma' xulxin. U min kien wahdu donnu kien ma' xi mahbub, jagħti bewsa tal-aħħar u jlissen, "narak Tas-Sliema" jew "good luck," jew "you can do it," li minkejja li ngħadu b'lehen baxx xorta sabu mod kif jidhlu f'widnejha. Dawk bħalha,

imbeżżgħa mit-triq u l-wiehed u għoxrin kilometru, sabu refuġju fil-headphones jew f'xi hood f'rashom li kwazi għattitilhom għajnejhom. Ftakret fil-biżgħat tal-passi preliminari, id-dwawar durelli li kellha tiehu, fakkret lilha nnifisha li kienet hemm biex tghaddi mit-triq li għazlet *hi* għaliha nnifisha. U nnutat li kien hemm hafna f'solidarjetà mal-imperfezzjoni tagħha, b'aktar żmien u laħam minnha, li sfidaw ir-rih ta' Frar u d-dehxiet tiegħu bix-xorz, diġà lestew ġirja bil-mod waqt li ppruvaw jgħollu t-temperatura ta' ġisimhom fit-toroq tas-Saqqajja f'anticipazzjoni għal li kien gej. Kwarta wara kienet bit-tracksuit fil-borża li gābet magħha qed tghaddiha lil min kien qed jiġborhom halli ssibhom Tas-Sliema, bil-mowbajl magħhom, "x'seta' jġri?"

Ġriet ffit bil-mod bħal shabha godda u ddeffset fuq wara tar-rassa ta' fejn ingabar kulhadd lest għat-tluq. Ffit muzika għolja nessietha l-hsibijiet. U mbagħad, sparatura li qatgħetha minn ġewwa. X'suppost kellha tagħmel? Dlonk, imbuttatura minn warajha fakkriha li riedet tiġri 'l quddiem, u tat l-ewwel pass. U mbagħad it-tieni, it-tielet. Ffit wara, għaqdet l-ewwel ffit mijiet li żammewha fir-Rabat. Il-gravità u l-adrenalina bdew jahdmu, qabżet it-tliet elef u bdiet in-niżla tal-Imtarfa. Hassitha dejjem ffit ahjar. Anki tippermetti lilha nnifisha titbissem, irnexxielha! Hassitha ffit aktar libera u ftakret, "ahna kulm'ahna iġsma" u verament dan ġisimha qatt ma hassetu ehfef. Ġriet aktar u aktar, kwazi qatgħet nifisha imma ma mxietx, rat minn taht għajnejha lill-għarus wiċċu mqarras ma' ommha l-Blata l-Bajda u ġie jġri hdejha, staqsieha jekk riditx tieqaf, il-karozza kienet qrib, u reġgħet ma weġbitux, u waqfet biss meta waslet Tas-Sliema, tawha l-midalja, flixkun ilma u frotta. Tbissmet, gabret hwejjigħa għadha bit-tbissima, tat ħarsa lejn il-mowbajl, tqarrset xhin rat li kien hemm hafna messaġġi imma halliethom warajha bħall-hafna hofof li sabet fit-triq, harset ffit lejn il-baħar u reġgħet tbissmet, u hekk, kif kienet, qabdet tal-linja.

Waslet ir-Rabat, mingħajr aptit li tidhol fil-karozza. Passiet ffit, hadet stessu fuq is-Saqqajja, il-post fejn beda kollox, imm'issa kien sieket u kompliet tpassi ffit iehor madwar ir-Rabat, kultant izzappap, kultant tkaxkar, u dak il-hin ġieha hsieb. Hemm ikollha arja kemm trid. Hemm tagħzel it-toroq li trid. Hemm tista' tisfida r-rih ta' Frar u ta' bħalu bix-xorz.

L-għada filgħodu, wara l-kolazzjon, ċemplet innumru ta' flett għall-kiri li rat mil-lukanda fejn kienet raqdet fir-Rabat. ■

Before the dawn

MARIA GRECH GANADO

There is a sunrise one cannot contain,
a burst of gold that breaks the hold –
its burning sears the grasping of your hand
but go it must, and your mind too
must scatter with it. It fills the hungry hollows
of the land, the crevices, the cracks. It searches
for the holes which termites make.

In times of earthquake, the surface of a planet
throws itself up, awakes. If you survive, if,
like a wonder, dawn comes round again,
there is a burst of gold that breaks your hold,
a sunrise which no essence can contain. ■

Relative time

MARIA GRECH GANADO

Towards the end, my mother would regularly
bid me wind the clocks she couldn't reach –
how little time I felt I had, how slow to respond,
bipolar only like a pendulum that's stopped.

Younger, I'd rushed to do it, directing from the stool
their ticking and their tocking with a wave of each hand,
gleefully flirting with each ding and dong
as I had paced them, clock succeeding clock.

When time ran out between the chores
of my own motherhood and my lost name,
all it became was a tighter twisting of keys
in yet more faces without doors, each effort
a rehearsed piece played for my mother
who thought me younger than she.

She's gone. As has my own young family.
And I've inherited the clocks and the time
to wind them in. I keep their faces
within reach of mine. Sometimes their chimes
bring memories of lighter days. Sometimes
all they can say is Gone Gone Gone. ■



Il-Katakombi tal-Hanzira

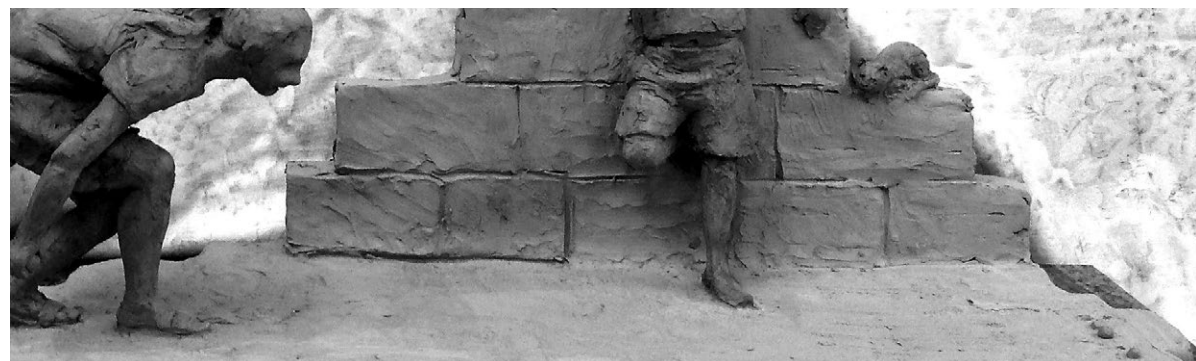
NOEL TANTI

Ilum naf li jsejhulha L-Abbatija Tad-Dejr imma meta konna tfal konna nafuha bhala l-Katakombi tal-Hanzira. Ma kienx hemm rixtellu, jew jekk kien hemm, kien zdingat u mkisser ghax wara l-Muzew dejjem hemm kont issibna, bil-flixxun tal-Coca, it-Twistees, il-karti tal-loghob tal-karozzi u s-sigaretti, li konna nixtruhom xi 5c il-wiehed. Imma dakinhar kont wahdi.

Ma niftakarx ezattament x'fettilli mmur naghmel hemm billejl, f'dak ir-rih ma jahmilx sigra wieqfa u xita ssawwatlek wiçcek. Ma mortx biex nistkenn, ghax tlaqt mid-dar u ma kelli niltaqa' ma' hadd, sa fejn naf jien, li hi haga tajba ghax ma kinux se jmeruni dwar dak li rajt fid-dlam tal-katakombi.

Qabel ma rajtha, smajtha. Smajtha tiehu n-nifs, tharhar qisha xih irid jaqla' bila, imbaghad bdiet tisghol u wara nfaqqhet tidhaq. Xtaqtha kienet dahqa mxajtna ghax kont indabbar rasi 'l hemm dak il-hin stess, imma ma kinitx, kienet l-istess dahqa li biha kienet tilqagħni nannti kull meta kont immur naraha fil-home, "Ara naqra x'qala' l-bahar!" u tiftah dirghajha biex tghannaqni.

Imxejt bil-mod, attent biex ma nghaffiġx xi far jew xi qattus mistur fid-dlam. Ilmaht skalda dawl qawwi, jiddi imma jkanġi fil-kannella, qisu ritratt antik sepja.



Rajt figura mghawġa ganç, b'hotbitha lejja, mghottija b'kapott goff donnu xkora mimli grif u toqob. Minn taht il-kapott feġġet harta titriegħed, bħallikieku kellha l-artrite, u bejn is-swaba' kien hemm sigarett ġdid. "Ghandek nar?" staqsietni. U nahlef li hekk kif xirfet wiçcha, ilmaht manhar ta' hanzir, imkemmex, iqattar, jitbissem.

Dawwart denbi u tlaqt nigri lura minn fejn kont ġejt. Irfist xi haga hajja li ghamlet għaliġa u tatni s-salt imma ma kellix mohħ hlief għall-wahx li hassejt ibaqbaq fija. Hriġt sparat fir-rih u fix-xita u ġrejt qisni l-indannat sakemm wasalt quddiem il-bieb tad-dar. Bdejt nilheg qisni bhima, nagħfas il-ponnijiet ta' jdejja ma' nġhasi biex forsi dik ix-xbieha mishuta titlaqni.

Biex forsi dik ix-xbieha mishuta titlaqni. ■

When you come back, you'll know what to do

TEODOR RELJIĆ

THE ROCK IS COOL AGAINST AGATHA'S BUTTOCKS AND SHE ALLOWS HERSELF A SMILE OF PLEASURE. SHE HAS ALMOST UNWRAPPED HER TORSO FREE OF THE LAYERS OF CLOTH BUT SHE TAKES HER TIME. AWAY FROM THE CHURN OF HISTORY IN WHICH SHE BELONGED, SHE REALISES THAT SHE CAN LEVERAGE HER NEW LONELINESS INTO AN EQUALLY NOVEL VARIETY OF PEACE.

Once done, she runs her hands down the flat layer of skin and bone. She mourns her breasts – she feels she's allowed to, now. She shuts her eyes and for that moment, she lets the total darkness take her. Swallow her like it has swallowed her in all the centuries that had marked her death.

She opens them to the flickering catacombs – made into soft gold by the halo of candles she'd carefully arranged, and which appear to be drawing oxygen from the mysterious breezes that snake their way through the underground enclosure -- like eager visitors, observers keen to witness this rare presence, this rare thing: a resurrected saint apparently immune to suffering.

She puts the candles out and lies on her back -- the Rabat rock is soft enough to serve as a bed.

Living here, and living well, would be the last miracle she chooses to perform.

Agatha woke up in the catacombs that bear her name two or three months ago, with no explanation from the God she had taken such great pains to commune and represent. But she was awake, so she headed out.

Nobody noticed her leaving through what had become both a new grave and

a new bed. She moved like a ghost, though she felt very much like a solid being, a solid person. The courtyard facing the catacombs was bathed in scalding light, and she felt it sting her eyes and she felt the robes hang heavy: she gritted her teeth and resisted the urge to strip down and find the closest basin of water to jump into.

She ran out from the courtyard and into the street, and paused only when she saw a large crucifix on a large plinth: a stone structure both defiant and proud.

This would be some kind of home, she decided.

Her robe packed a sachel of gold – likely a tribute placed on her corpse by eager followers. She blessed them silently (whoever they were) and exchanged it for the town's money at the jeweller's, who stared wide-eyed at what he found splayed in front of him, newly choked out of language just as Agatha had been unable to communicate in the archaic tongue that was now left to her.

The jeweller said that he couldn't possibly pay her what it's all worth yet, he would need time, he could do it in installments, bits and pieces. She didn't understand the words as words but she pieces them out from his face and the halting pauses that characterised his

speech, that made him a child again in all his giddy enthusiasm.

She would visit him as many times as needed. She had time.

The violence of the past deserved its place. She had decided it would be packed away in the catacombs – a neighbouring tomb to the one she slept

in, a pocket of dark space where she would put all the evil that still haunted her. Each night before sleeping, she substituted prayer for meditation into the hole. She thought of the men who violated her body, and the God who made it all part of his ineffable tapestry.

But the miracle of rebirth was inside her alone. She did not remember stealing it from the ineffable presence. But she was not giving it back. ■



