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Memoria as mirror

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Propositions belonging to the Ph.D. thesis of Dane Munro:

Memoria as Mirror, the Shifting Self-Image of the Hospitallers Order of Malta over the Ages

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- 1) Although not elevated to sainthood, through a proper process of canonisation, the image of the 'Blessed Gerard' within the Order of St. John brought him close to what in the middle ages was called 'living saints', as described by Aviad M. Kleinberg in his book *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*.
- 2) It seems a weird way of shifting the goal posts: not so long ago in Eindhoven, the Netherlands the 'city of light', a proposal was accepted to change a street named after Witte de With (1599-1658), the Dutch Lieutenant-Admiral, to Barbaros (Hayrettin Paşan Barbarossa 1478-1546), the Ottoman pirate and slave trader, as a result of a deep democratic decision in a street re-naming process. Historical awareness here is sacrificed to idle and unjustified symbol politics.
- 3) Should we interpret the job description of 'Black Pete' (*Zwarte Piet*), stemming from the old English word *cnicht*, not as a 'knecht' (a servant or bondsman) but as a 'knight', s/he shall become a noble, selfless and chivalric service provider to, for instance, a saintly man like St Nicolas. After all, there was plenty of African and Moorish nobility in the past, in Ethiopia, Somalia, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Congo, in the Scriptures and in Europe... it is time to actively pick up that dignity of the past again and show the world what nobility of the mind means. Imagine the possibilities not only for societal change, positive contributions to diversity, but also for fashion. And even the children's feast of St Nicolas could finally be enjoyed in peace by everybody.
- 4) The fear of the 'Terrible Turk' seems to have become an internal Turkish affair in Early Modern times.
- 5) Had the Sunnite and Shi'ite denominations within the Muslim world not been so bitterly divided, the First Crusade, set out with the perceived notion to save the Christian heritage in Jerusalem, would have been a failure; as a consequence, neither the Order of Saint John, the Hospitaller Catholic Republic of Malta, nor this study would not have existed.

- 6) Self-image and identity of historical figures are complex issues and their preservation in memory depends heavily on how deep they are rooted within the fibre of society and how strong the contrary current of contemporary public opinion is.
- 7) The Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* of 1st February 2019: *Amper animo voor nieuw Holocaustmonument: 'Zonde van het geld.'* In translation: Hardly any enthusiasm for the new Holocaust monument: 'A waste of money.' The same newspaper, of 15th September 2019: 'War tourism is a hit: millions of visitors per year. War tourism is a growth market, thousands of jobs have been created.' The province of Gelderland budgeted this year six million Euro for promotional aspects of the memory of the Second World War. A deputy was quoted, saying that 'the most important aim is that we do not forget the horrors of the war.' The US ambassador added that 'we have been living for 75 years in freedom, thanks to the sacrifices made by others. It is very important to pass on that memory to the next generations.' Denying the Holocaust is a criminal offence but trying to push it into oblivion by being cheap is apparently not.
- 8) Due to the strong symbolic message of the *corpus* at St. John's Co-Cathedral at Malta, both captured in the textual and in the visual aspects of the funerary slabs and monuments, it is the picture-perfect embodiment of *memoria*, keeping the commemorated alive and bridging the past, the present and the hereafter.
- 9) Recent historical debates regarding the role of the Hospitallers and the relationship to the Crusaders seems to be stuck in a modernist rut of guilt from the side of the West (e.g. BBC television series *The Crusades*, Terry Jones and Alan Ereira) and in serious shortcomings of histo-reality from the side of the East (e.g. Al-Jazeera series of the *Crusades: An Arab Perspective*).
- 10) Whoever looks into the *Mirror of Memory* should check if Oblivion is close to overtaking.
- 11) In view of the differentiation of memory and history by Pierre Nora, memory is very elective, selective and subjective, while history, at least when written by the victor is...exactly the same.
- 12) The Hospitaller *Ordensstaat* in Malta was an undemocratic, despotic warfare state at sea which made possible a first of a kind medieval welfare state on land for the Maltese indigenous population: food, safety, healthcare, work, pensions and daily bread, quintupling the population in 268 years of their presence.