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Through my eyes

Some of those who had purchased my first publication *Il-Ktejjeb tal-Hrejjef* (The Booklet of Legends) are getting back to me with their comments. This is the reason why I decided to reply to all at one go through this article.

It seems as if there was actually some space for political satire in the Maltese market. The same applies to all the caricatures that accompany the tale, credit going to young artist Mark Scicluna, exclusively inspired by the most recent political history of our Republic.

Why go some 400 years back?

Temporal detachment leads to emotional detachment. Today's people speak impartially of yesterday's generations, no matter how heinous, immorally unacceptable or detrimental their actions were. This brings about rational judgement usually supported by proof that is put together "only too late" and substantiated with knowledge only afforded by "hindsight". We, as subjective observers of our times, are naturally hindered from such objectivity and shrouded in a thick sense of denial of truth itself.

Therefore the *détachement* in time in *Il-Ktejjeb tal-Hrejjef* is done on purpose. The more painful it is the better. The more unfit the adaptations of today's events to yesteryear's scenario the better. The more the presumptuous reader denies it, the more the author confirms the above-mentioned sense of denial.

In *Il-Ktejjeb tal-Hrejjef* my/our story is made "his story" also known as "history". The overwhelming sense of denial of nations en masse still occurs today. For those who may have wondered how nations live through times of misery, they ought to know that usually one is likely to find a people divided in two: The critics, rebels or adversaries (most of the time ignored for a long time until proven right) and the unconditional political/religious devotees.

Soon, we'll realise that we are like our forefathers. Like them, sometimes we've acted foolishly. They must have believed in witches and broomsticks; we believe in virtuosity and virgin politicians. However, we could say that their means were limited. At least, their means of communications were definitely much more limited. However, that comes as no consolation. Rather, it may show we are the more pitiful as, with more means of communications and ways of verifying truth, we fall into the same trap of deceit. In fact, the book attempts to build up somewhat of a "the emperor's new clothes" scenario where the more intelligent

you are, the more you can understand it. The prouder you are, the more hindered you are from reading into it. That, at least, should put stupidity and pride on the same level.

Some commented on me being biased. Of course I am. At least I don't try to look that I'm not! I never purported to be what I'm not. I'm just amazed at their amazement at discovering the bias. Don't they know everybody is?

And as to leeway for interpretation, well, interpretation yes and how. That's what it was all meant to be about. I hope the debate and discussions the book triggers take much longer than the time one takes to read the book itself. The fact that some of the people who approached me on the subject either spoke about it at length or went on to speak about current politics is satisfactory enough and shows that the primary goal has already been reached.

Is it real or fictitious?

Some people also asked whether all characters were meant to represent real characters or if some were fictitious. Well, the female characters are the only totally fictitious ones. Unfortunately, we have no influential matriarchs involved in politics and were it not for the two fictitious females introduced at the last minute before publication, the book would have been too sexually biased.

All the male characters, on the other hand, are inspired by a real, current key player in the Maltese political scenario. The characteristics of the character, the relationship with the other characters and the narration should readily reveal to the knowledgeable reader and current affairs enthusiast the identity of the politician "the way I see him", that is, "through my eyes".

Criticism is one of the aims.

One cheeky person who commented on the book asked if I'd mind too much criticism. I don't really know why he sincerely thought this would put me down. But, out of mere respect, my answer was that "criticism is one of the aims". If I didn't expect any criticism, I wouldn't have invested in the book at all.

However, first and foremost, the first aim is political education through satire. On the book I mention an author's name. And that is Francois Rabelais.

Those who've read some of his lines would know what education through ridicule of the political élite means. The unconditional acceptance of the allegedly corrupt political behaviour of our times will be tested at the next general election. That will be a national thermometer that will gauge a hotchpotch of excessive tolerance, a sense of denial and unconditional partisanship on the one side and unshackled political thinking on the other.

People grumble for reform but, to quote Francois Rabelais himself, applying it to political change "I have known many who could not when they would, for they had not done it when they could".