

Female Philanthropy during the 17th Century

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Figure 1:

The façade of the church of St. Catherine's Monastery in Republic Street, Valletta.

A nineteenth century lithograph by L.Brocktorff in The Malta Penny Magazine.

Stephen Degiorgio Collection.

Authenticity Form

Institute of Tourism Studies



DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY FOR HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA STUDENTS

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Student's Name & Surname ELISA BUTTIGIE

Course HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOUR GUIDING.


Title of Long Essay

FEMALE PHILANTHROPY DURING
THE 17th CENTURY.

I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Long Essay and that it is my original work.

No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another qualification of this or any other higher education institution.

I hold the Institute of Tourism Studies (Malta) harmless against any third party claims with regard to copyright violation, breach of confidentiality, defamation and any other third party right infringement.


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04.02.2019.
Date (DD/MM/YY)

for my daughter Alessia

Abstract:

Female Philanthropy in 17th century Valletta:

Even though women are not habitually mentioned in local history books, thanks to some historians we are learning that they did have a very important and influential input in Malta's rich history. Women offered crucial support during the Great Siege and they even physically helped to build Valletta in the 16th century. (Hoe, S. (2015). *Malta Women, History, Books and Places*. Oxford: Holo Books, 79-86)

This is what this study is about. The protagonists are female personalities who shared the same name but came from very different backgrounds and had very different incentives for their philanthropic deeds. The aim is to learn about their motivations and appreciate their contribution to society in the seventeenth century Valletta. The protagonists of this study all strove to offer the less fortunate a better life. Katerina Vasco Olivieri channelled the grief of losing her only son into a project aimed at providing a home for troubled girls. Caterina Vitale's life was eventful, but she also made a great impact on the lives of many by offering financial stability to an institution with a very worthy cause; that of freeing Christian slaves and reuniting them with their families. Caterina Valenti was a courtesan (Muscat, C. (2018) *Public Women - Prostitute Entrepreneurs in Valetta 1630 – 1798*. Malta. BDL, 186) who established a *jus patronatus* in the parish of St. Paul the Apostle in Valletta. Caterina Scappi, on the other hand, founded the very first female hospital. All the protagonists in this research were seventeenth century residents of the city of Valletta and their philanthropic deeds were motivated by goodwill, sympathy and religious zeal. The narratives that feature in this study, aim at offering a consolidated picture of female philanthropy in seventeenth century Valletta.

Acknowledgments:

At the beginning of my research, I felt completely lost. All was new and frightening for me. I was however lucky enough to have an experienced tutor – Dr. Christine Muscat, who was keen to share her expertise and lead me into the right direction. I thank her warmly.

Thanks to Ms. Glorianne Mizzi who introduced me to her.

I would like to thank Mr. Vincent Zammit who was always available away, for any type of query. His guidance during the course of my studies was indispensable.

Special thanks go to the Prior Provincial of the Augustine Province, Father Leslie Gatt, Sister Mikelina Mifsud, Abbess of the monastery and Vincent Galea, helper at the monastery who is not only full of information about its history, but was also eager to share this with me.

It is thanks to these people that copies of the original documents were obtained.

My study companion Chantelle Shaw made the journey sweeter and definitely more enjoyable. Thanks for sharing this new experience with me.

I would like to thank my non-biological sister, Sharon Chetcuti, for always being there and believing in me. Thanks for urging me on and for reading my chapters. Your constant support was and will be always be vital!

Thanks also to Amanda Mifsud for cheering me on. Thanks for the enthusiasm with which you always eagerly waited for more pages!

Finally yet importantly, heartfelt thanks go to my daughter Alessia, my inspiration, the reason I aim to be the best I can, the best thing that ever happened to me. Grazie d'esistere!

It is to her that I dedicate my dissertation and my life.

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Introduction:

“Up to the late seventeenth century, not many travelers commented about the women of Malta”, says Thomas Freller in his book *Malta and the Grand Tour*. When they did, the focus centered largely on their beauty, their attire and their affinity to the knights. (Freller, T. (2009). *Malta and the Grand Tour*. Malta. Midsea Books, 521). Few focused on the women’s contribution to the city or their valuable work. This study aims to show that in reality, we have buildings in Valletta that were built through the philanthropic deeds of some outstanding women. Certain wealthy Catholic women living in the city in the seventeenth century invested a substantial part of their wealth in charitable projects. These women were inspirational figures who in a male dominated world in Hospitaller Malta, played an active role in society. They faced many challenges but they appear to have persisted with their vision with strength and courage. History seems to have forgotten these female philanthropists! Grandmasters strove to turn Valletta into a City of God, a religious city. (Muscat, C. (2018) *Public Women. Prostitution in Valetta 1630 – 1798*. Malta. BDL, 63). Valletta was also the economic hub of the island. Economic activities are traditionally believed to have been male-run and women in the seventeenth century were “qualified by their marital status” (Cassar, C. (2000) *Society, Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta*. Malta. Mireva Publications, 247). Some of the protagonists of this study did inherit their wealth from their husbands, others however appear to have amassed their wealth on their own resources. Women did work and earn money. In her book *Magdalene Nuns and the Penitent Prostitutes*, Christine Muscat says:

“Women living in the harbour generally worked within the domestic environment. Their work typically involved cooking, cleaning, sewing, weaving and spinning. Some women worked as farm labourers, pedlars, maids and washerwomen”.

(Muscat, C. (2013) *Magdalene Nuns and Penitent Prostitutes*. Malta. BDL)

This essay follows some exciting seventeenth century female philanthropic trails.

Literature Review:

In her book: *Women and Poor Relief in Seventeenth Century France*, Susan E. Dinan writes about the impact of Religious Catholic women and their input in society. She suggests that their philanthropic deeds were clearly instigated by religious zeal.

June Hannam, Ann Hughes and Pauline Stafford focused on the history of women in the United Kingdom from the middle ages onwards. They propose that tradition along with religious zeal played an important part in female philanthropy. (*British Women's History. A Bibliographical Guide* (1996) Manchester University Press.)

In Malta, both Christine Muscat and Giovanni Bonello explored the subject of female philanthropy as both a self-sacrificing and self-fulfilling act motivated by the desire to invoke divine grace. Alfie Guillamier in his book: *Bliet u Rhula Maltin* and Tony Terribile in his book: *Tezori fil-knejjes Maltin: Valletta 1*, also mention some female philanthropists. This is however, always done as a sideline and these females are never given the limelight they really deserve.

This study seeks to provide an overview of the different ways how certain philanthropists in Valletta voluntarily strove to help persons in need. The focus is primarily on their charitable acts. This research shows that female philanthropy was largely motivated by intrinsic goodness but personal tragedy and fear of the afterlife were prime instigators of female generosity. Some women like Caterina Vasco Olivieri, used philanthropy as a counteracting agent for her son's illness and consequent death. Caterina Valenti's and Caterina Scappi's philanthropy was fueled by their desire to be redeemed of their past sins. Caterina Scappi's motives are to date rather vague; however, it is clear that her intentions were to provide medical care to women who were denied this service by the local authorities.

Methodology:

My first source of research was to read several books about female philanthropy in Europe, mainly in England, France and Italy. This instigated my desire to learn about the female philanthropy in early modern Malta. I read books, which relate to this subject. The list of books is included in the bibliography section.

I also conducted primary research at the Monastery of St. Catherine in Republic Street, Valletta. Here several meetings were held, the main two being on the 20th of June 2018 with the mother abbess Sister Mikelina Mifsud who showed me around the monastery and provided significant information on the nuns' present day situation. Another important meeting was held on the 30th of July with Provincial Father Leslie Gatt OSA and Mr. Vincent Galea. Mr. Galea has been the curator of the monastery for many years, and still occupies this position until the present day. Mr. Galea provided me with first-hand information. He is a very knowledgeable individual, who has throughout the years, accumulated a lot of knowledge from the cloistered nuns themselves. He provided me with a written version of events, especially prepared for this meeting. On this day, the monastery's archives were accessible and useful information was sourced.

Chapter 1: Katerina Vasco Olivieri.

In 1530, the arrival of the Knights of St. John in Malta brought with them a number of families from Rhodes who decided to follow the Order, rather than stay under the leadership of the Ottomans back in their country. That is how the Olivieri family ended up coming to Malta. Their daughter, Katerina, was born here and eventually married Marquise Giovanni Vasco, a Portuguese nobleman. The couple set up home in Valletta. An only child, a son, was born to Katerina and Giovanni Vasco.

Katerina's son got seriously sick. This is believed to have been the prime motivator behind Katerina's foundation of the monastery of St. Catherine. Katerina Vasco Olivieri vowed to give her Valletta residence, Casa Vanilla to the '*Orfanelle delle Misericordia*' in return for his recovery. Another theory suggests that it was Katerina's brother, known as Father Mikiel, who convinced her to leave the property to the church.

In 1575, a congregation of young women, known as '*Orfanelle delle Misericordia*', took on the responsibility of looking after young girls with the aim of sheltering them and helping them lead a respectable life. Some of these girls were daughters of prostitutes. (Muscat, C. (2009) *Magdalene Nuns and Penitent Prostitutes*. Malta. BDL, 63). They initially lived in a house on Zachary Street but when the landlord passed away, they were evicted. It was at this point that Marquise Katerina Vasco Olivieri opened the doors of her home, Casa Vanilla, to a group of young women who were caring for the endangered girls. She provided them with a permanent place to live thus giving them the possibility to continue with their work. Her noble gesture provided the homeless '*Orfanelle delle Misericordia*' with a home and the stability, they so lacked. The Marquise built the Orfanelle a chapel within the building. This is not the chapel attached to the monastery today. The present day monastery and church were built in the second half of the eighteenth century. The former chapel was possibly erected within the entrance hall of Casa Vanilla itself and even though there is nothing in writing confirming the exact location of the chapel, in the entrance hall one can see a richly decorated aperture in the wall, that may indicate the area where the altar once stood. Casa Vanilla eventually started to be known as St. Catherine's monastery and the community of nuns was referred to as the nuns of St. Catherine. St. Catherine is also known as St. Catherine of Alexandria or as St. Catherine of the wheel. She is traditionally believed to have been martyred because of her strong faith. Catherine experienced a vision of Mary and Baby Jesus that instigated her conversion to Christianity. St. Catherine of Alexandria was

also the protectorate saint of the Italian knights. She was the saint after whom the foundress Katerina Oliviero was named. Bishop Labini consecrated the new church designed by Romano Carapecchia, on 15 July 1783. It was dedicated to the presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple. The Maltese artist Enrico Arnaux executed the titular painting. During the French rule in Malta (1798 – 1800), the nuns of St. Catherine ceased to care for orphan girls. Napoleon Bonaparte suppressed the Magdalene nuns and forced them to live with the nuns of St. Catherine.

In 1851, a nun in the monastery of St. Catherine claimed she had a vision of the Holy Mary handing her a girdle. The girdle, in religious interpretation is a sign of consolation. Seeing that the nuns did not profess to any rule, this was interpreted as a sign to join the Augustinian Order. Our Lady of the Girdle is the patron saint of the Augustinians. The Augustinians adopted this devotion to Our Lady of the Girdle based on a tradition that Our Lady had appeared to St. Monica. St. Monica is St. Augustine's mother and she needed consolation due to the struggles she faced when dealing with her son's conversion. Our Lady gave St. Monica a sash in sign of consolation. This tradition started to diffuse and in 1436, a confraternity of Our Lady of the Girdle, also sometimes known as the confraternity of consolation was founded in an Augustine church in Bologna. In 1722, a confraternity of Our Lady of the Girdle was founded in the Augustinian Church in Rabat and during the 18th century, the devotion continued to diffuse around the Maltese Islands. The nuns are still affiliated to the Augustine Order today

On January 27, 1611, the Marquise and her husband drew their last will and testament. In it, they stipulated that the nuns of St. Catherine were to be the universal heirs of Casa Vanilla. The contract located in the monastery's archives is in Latin. Father Gulju Bonnici translated it to Maltese in 2005. Mr. Vince Galea remembers getting some information about this contract from an elderly nun, who is now confined to bed. He also recalls how there was once even talk about writing a book about the monastery's entire history. To date, this regrettably, has not materialized.

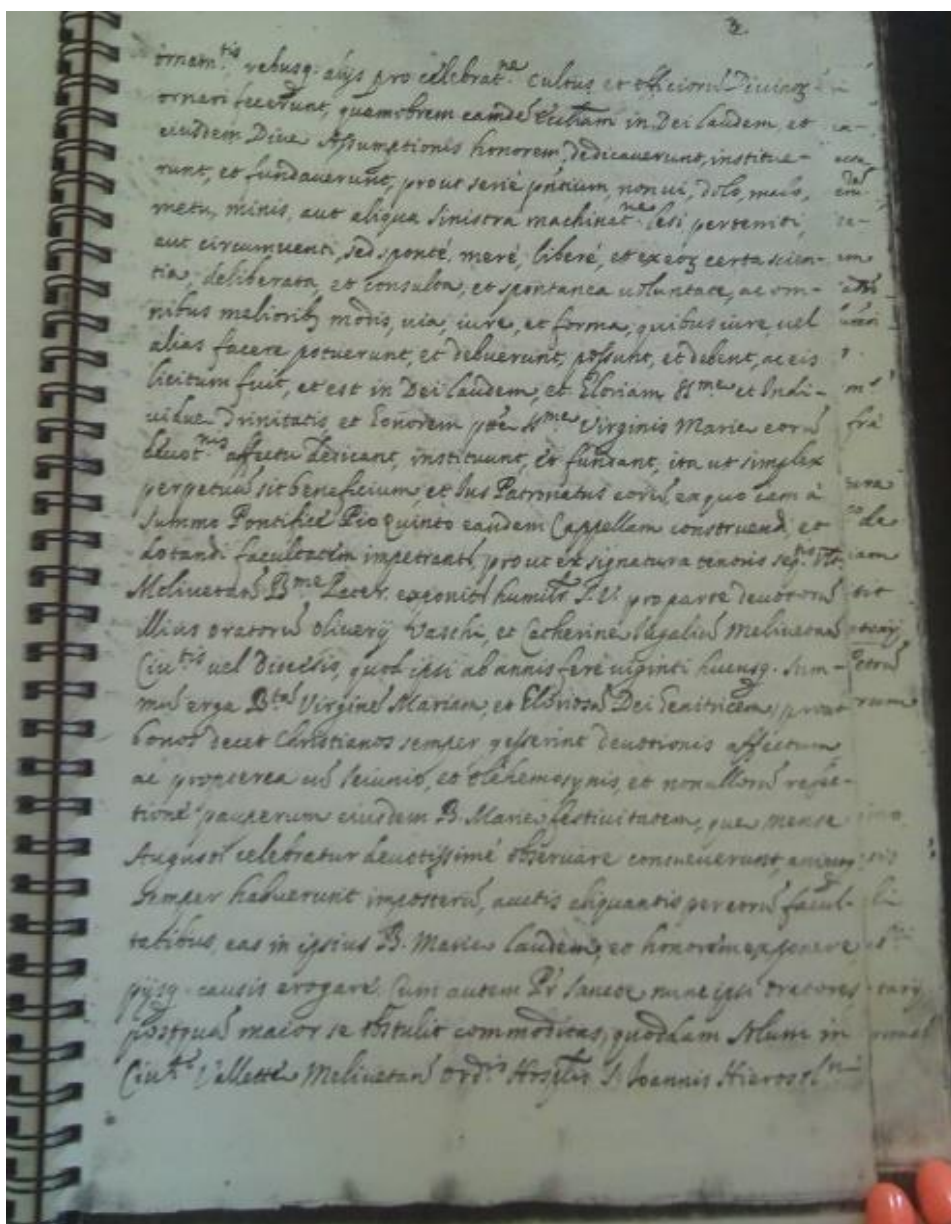


Figure 2:

A copy of the original document found in the National Archives – Volume 1 out of 5 – Notary
Johannes Tholossentius.

In the Vasco-Olivieri last will and testament, dated 24 March 1612, the testators appointed Andrea Marcoval and Pietru Cachia as their power of attorney. There is no mention on whether these men were related to the Marquises or otherwise. The testament includes details on the aims of the Olivieri's bequest. These included funeral arrangements and a solemn choral mass celebration for their souls after their death. Normal masses were to be celebrated every Monday, Wednesday and Friday of every week. Various other contracts and communications were attached to the last will and testament, amongst which a communication from Pope Gregory XII accepting the offer made, for the chapel to be built. This was dated 5 June 1579. In another document, it was stipulated that the chapel is to be taken care of by the Orfanelle delle Misericordia and the young girls under their care, and that once the Vasco Olivieri were both deceased, the part of the house they lived in was to be transformed into a monastery. Included are also confirmations from the Bishop of Malta, Thomas Gargallo (1578 – 1633). The date that appears on this deed is March 23, 1612. One has to appreciate the long process it took for everything to fall into place and for the relative authorities to issue the necessary permits. This is a section from a letter issued by the Bishop's office approving the Olivieri bequest. It shows the principles on which the monastery was founded:

Through our Vicar General, we were informed about the poor state of the monastery that was established in the city of Valletta and placed under the patronage of the Sisters of Mercy of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin. This was erected to offer shelter to poor girls exposed to sin. They are given regular financial help and honest education aimed at saving them. The church/chapel inside the monastery placed under the patronage of The Blessed Virgin Mary in Valletta and the recruitment of the said girls was made possible through the foundation of a jus patronatus founded by Mr. Vasco Oliviero and his legitimate wife Katerina. This bequest with the donation of all their goods past and present was approved by the Holy See. The deed with all its acts and conditions were drawn by Public Notary Nicolai Antonju Vincella de Santoro in the day. And the named curators Andrea Marcoval and Peter Cachia legitimately elected by the Curia Castellania represent the said Oliverju who is presently at an advanced age and not wholly sane. [This is stated in a deed 14 March 1611 drawn by public notary Andrea Alban] It includes all the wishes as expressed by the founders and

curators in the acts and conditions of the said deed. We hereby give our consent and approval for the project to proceed in conformity to the limitations established by the Holy See. Granted at our Palace Valletta, today 23 March 1612.

Mir-relazzjoni tal-Vigarju Ġenerali taghna ahna konvinti mill-verità tat-talba li turi l-istat fqir tal-Monasterju li gie mwaqqaf dan l-ahhar fil-belt Valletta tas-Sorijiet tal-Mizerikordja taht it-titlu tal-Preżentazzjoni tal-Beata Vergni li fih jingabru dawk it-tfajliet fqar li huma esposti ghad-dnub u ghalhekk ta' kuljum jghinuhom b'xi flus u jehilsuhom minn halq l-infern, u jaghtuhom edukazzjoni onesta. Wara li rajna n-nomina ta' dawn l-istess tfajliet u l-Monasterju ghas-servizz tal-Knisja jew Kappella taht it-titlu tal-Beata Vergni Marija fil-belt Valletta moghtija mill-fundazzjoni tal-ġuspatronat imholli mis-Sur Oliverju Vasco u minn martu legittima Katerina u li taghha hemm l-awtorità tas-Sede Appostolika bid-donazzjoni tal-beni kollha taghhom preżenti u futuri skont l-atti u l-kundizzjonijiet ta' dan il-kuntratt maghmul min-Nutar pubbliku Nicolai Antonju Vincella de Santoro fil-ġurnata... u l-kuraturi msemija Andrea Marcoval u Pietru Cachia eletti legittimament mill-Kurja Kastellana meta l-imsemmi Oliverju xjeh u żmaga kif hemm miktub fil-kuntratt tan-Nutar pubbliku Andrea Alban tal-14 ta' Marzu 1611 maghmul bl-ahjar mod u li fih hemm ix-xewqa tal-fundaturi u l-kuraturi skont l-atti u l-kundizzjonijiet tal-istess kuntratt, ahna naghtu l-kunsens taghna taht ir-riservi tas-Sede Appostolika u dan naghmluh bl-approvazzjoni taghna u mhux b'mod ieħor.

Moghti fil-Palazz taghna tal-belt Valletta, illum 23 ta' Marzu 1612.

Figure 3:

Translated version from original document in Latin,
done by Father Gulju Bonnici, OSA, in 2005.

It is past the hustle and bustle, towards the southern part of Republic Street, just opposite the home of the Noble De Piro family, Casa Rocca Piccola, that one finds the monastery of St. Catherine. Looking at the building from outside one cannot help but be impressed by its grandeur. Stepping inside is a unique spiritual experience. The place breathes harmony, tranquility and peace. Sister Mikelina Mifsud, the mother abbess, who was expecting us, greeted me with exceptional warmth and kindness. Nostalgically she mentioned the years gone by and how in the past no one was allowed to step inside the monastery, and how much stricter the rules were. She explained how till the present day people still knock on their doors, unburden their problems and get advice and ask for prayers from the last five nuns left in the entire building. I could not help but think how three centuries later Marquise Katerina's vision still lives on. The monastery, aptly, bears her name, St. Catherine's Monastery, a fitting tribute to the Marquise. In one of the first rooms of the monastery, in the hall, one finds a portrait of St. Catherine. It is believed that this may be the actual image of the Marquise Katerina Olivieri. The reason behind this was that only portraits of saints were allowed within the monasteries. This painting is attributed to Francesco Zahra, a Maltese artist (1710 - 1773). Before the nuns joined the Augustine Order, it was originally located in the old chapel, which was dedicated to St. Catherine of Alexandria. The Marquise's very own personal belongings still present at the monastery today, indicate the family's wealth and status. A prime example is the stunning and impressive silver and gold cross, adorned with semi-precious stones, and bearing the family emblem. It is likely that it belonged to the family for generations and had accompanied them on their journey all the way from Rhodes.

One can find the family's coat of arms both in the first hall and in the small church. Anton Cachia built this church in the eighteenth century. The renowned Florentine architect Romano Carapecchia originally designed the monastery in 1714; however, there was not enough land and space for the project to materialize. This resulted in the monastery being built without a church. A temporary space used for religious worship incorporated in the hallway. (De Lucca, D. (1999) *Carapecchia: Master of Baroque Architecture in Early Eighteenth Century Malta*. Midsea Books, 128-133). A small black coffin, found in the crypt, is believed to hold the remains of Katerina's only son. Although there is no commemorative tablet confirming this, the nuns of the monastery, for centuries, have believed that the coffin does indeed belong to Katerina's son. Katerina's son is not mentioned by name in any of the documents, so his first name, remains unknown.



Figure 4:
Coffin said to hold remains of Katerina's deceased son found in the monastery's crypt.



Figure 5:
St. Catherine's Monastery, at present,
Republic Street, Valletta.



Figure 6:
Vasco Olivieri coat of arm
found at the monastery.



Figure 7:
Holy Water Holder
found at the monastery.



Figure 8:
The silver cross belonging to Vasco Olivieri family at St Catherine's Monastery Valletta.



Figure 9:



Figure 10:

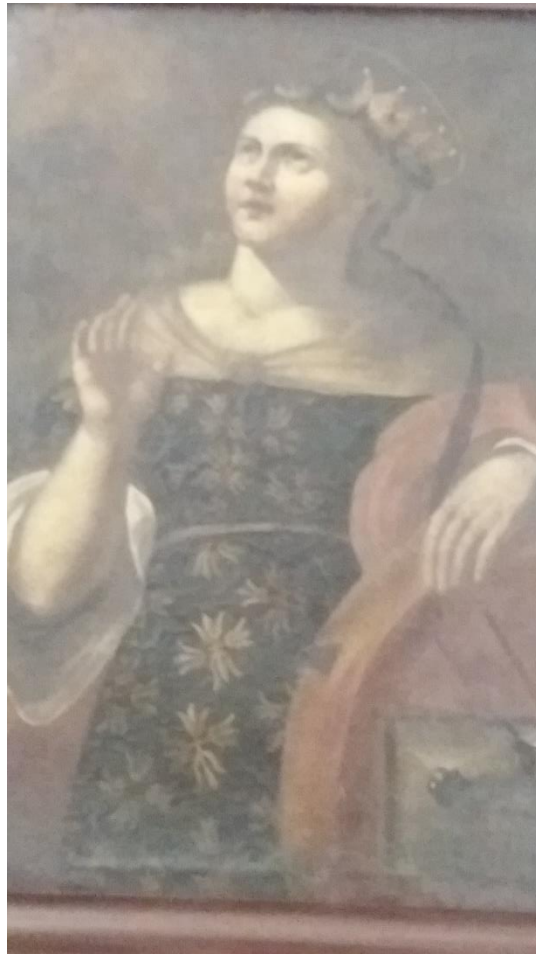


Figure11:

Portrait of St. Catherine of Alexandria traditionally believed to be the image of the foundress Katerina Vasco Olivieri.

Chapter 2: Caterina Vitale & Caterina Valenti.

Besides sharing the same name, Caterina Vitale and Caterina Valenti shared the same profession. They were both prostitutes. Both used philanthropy to counterbalance their wrong doings. Their charitable acts sought to make amendments for sins they committed during their life with the aim of securing a place in heaven.

Caterina Vitale: Also known as, La Speziala, meaning the female pharmacist is believed to be the first female pharmacist and chemist in Malta. She was also the first female pharmacist working for the Order of St. John (Hoe, S. (2015). *Malta Women, History, Books and Places*. Oxford: Holo Books, 110-118). She was born in Greece in 1566 but was brought up in Valletta. Vitale was a philanthropist who may not have led an exemplary life. She married Ettore Vitale from Naples, who was accused of bigamy in the Inquisition's Court. Due to his good relationship with the Order he got away with a telling off and a fine (Bonello, G. (2004) *Histories of Malta. Reflections and Rejections*. Malta. FPM, 108-123). Ettore was allegedly, killed by a bomb, which is believed to have exploded outside the couples' home in Archbishop Street Valletta, numbers 135 and 138. Caterina took over Ettore's business when he passed away. (Hoe, S. (2015). *Malta Women, History, Books and Places*. Oxford: Holo Books, 100 -102). In his book, 'Daughters of Eve' Carmel Cassar reveals some of Vitale's experiences. Vitale's name appears in trials that took place in 1608 in the Inquisitor's tribunals. She was accused of mistreating her slaves, and on another occasion, she was also accused of witchcraft. Eight years after Ettore's death, Vitale adopted a girl named Isabellica. Isabellica joined the Magdalene Nuns' nunnery at only twelve years of age, under the name of Sister Cherubina, (Bonello, G. (2004) *Histories of Malta. Reflections and Rejections*. Malta. FPM, 108-123). Child nuns as young as seven and eight years old were present in the Magdalene monastery in Valletta in the seventeenth and eighteenth century! (Muscat, C. (2009) *Magdalene Nuns and Penitent Prostitutes*. Malta. BDL, 89). During her frequent visits to her daughter, Vitale tried to persuade her to leave the nunnery. Isabellica refused, claiming that she was unhappy at her adoptive mother's house (Hoe, S. (2015). *Malta Women, History, Books and Places*. Oxford: Holo Books, 102). The nuns were upset by Caterina's behavior, and this often resulted in quarrels between the two parties. Vitale was called up by the Inquisitor, and prohibited from visiting her daughter. This decision was to be revoked at a later stage, (Hoe, S. (2015). *Malta Women, History, Books and Places*. Oxford: Holo Books, 110). In all probability, Caterina's persistence, her strong influence and her connections

were instrumental in making the Inquisitor repeal his decision. Caterina Vitale went on to have several other feuds with the nuns. This stemmed from her belief that the nuns only wanted to keep Sister Cherubina with them in the monastery because they wanted to partake of her own wealth. Her persistence eventually paid off. Caterina managed to acquire a letter from the Pope asking the Magdalene nuns not to hold Isabellica against her will. Isabellica was eventually allowed to leave the nunnery. Some say that her adoptive mother dragged her out of the monastery. Isabellica was married off to a man of her mother's choice. (Muscat, C. (2009) *Magdalene Nuns and Penitent Prostitutes*. Malta. BDL, 79).

In his writings about Vitale, Giovanni Bonello suggests that at a later stage in her life Caterina wanted to make amendments for her past sins through various generous and philanthropic deeds. (Bonello, G. (2004) *Histories of Malta. Reflections and Rejections*. Malta. FPM, 108-123). Bonello relates how she set up a foundation for prayers for her soul inside the monastery of St. John the Evangelist and later on another one in the Carmelite Church in Valletta for her mother's soul. She also, very generously, gave the Carmelites a property in Senglea and other valuables for this very same cause. This explains how she eventually ended up being buried in the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Valletta. Caterina's name is closely tied to the noble institution of Monte Della Redenzione degli Schiavi. Alof De Wignacourt established this institution in 1607, to free Christians subjected to slavery by ransoming their freedom. (Hoe, S (2005) *Women, History and Places*. Oxford. Holo Books, 103). The institution was facing financial problems, that is, until Vitale died and left most of her estate in her will for this institution. The estates included the areas nowadays known as Selmun and Mistra, in the north of the island. Selmun Palace was built in the eighteenth century. The place was originally used for defense purposes but later the knights rented it out for hunting purposes. The income from the rent money provided further funds towards the running of the institution. In 1787, the institution merged with the Monte Di Pieta. The name was consequently changed to Monte Di Pieta e Redenzione. The building that once housed the Monte di Pieta survived Nazi bombing in WWII, and still stands in Merchant Street, Valletta.

Caterina Valenti: In the sacristy of the Collegiate Parish Church of St Paul's Shipwreck's, in St. Lucia Street, one finds a portrait of a woman in a nun's habit. This woman is Caterina Valenti. Caterina was a prostitute who in the later stages of her life renounced her profession and dedicated herself to philanthropy. She is portrayed wearing a white monastic habit. Caterina's life was a colourful one

indeed. She once attacked and defamed another woman. She also had disputes with the Magdalenes for not paying her dues in full and final settlement of her death dues. (Muscat, C. (2018) *Public Women. Prostitution in Valletta 1630 – 1798*. Malta. BDL, 187-189). The reason why her portrait hangs in the sacristy of the said church is due to her significant legacy to the Parish of St Paul. She established a jus patronatus in the parish worth 9,000 scudi. This same jus patronatus also exempted her from paying the full amount of money that she owed to the Magdalene nuns. It seems that Valenti, similar to other women living in Valletta in the seventeenth century used philanthropy to compensate for her past sins before facing her day of judgement.

Caterina had a son. She invested in her only son's education to ensure a good life for him and provide him with a good education and hence a good life. She sent him to Palermo where she funded his studies to become a lawyer. Caterina passed away in 1683. She was buried in the very same church she had helped with her legacy: the Collegiate Parish Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck in Valletta. Here one can still find her tombstone, prominently placed just in front of the main altar. (Muscat, C. (2009) *Magdalene Nuns and Penitent Prostitutes*. Malta. BDL, 138 -139, 189)



Figure 12:

Caterina Vitale's tombstone.

Found at the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.



Figure 13:
Coat of Arms of Redenzione degli Schiavi
Merchant Street, Valletta.



Figure 14:
Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel,
Valletta.

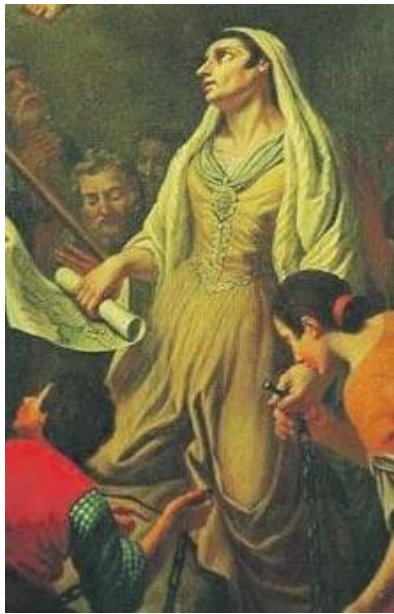


Figure 15:
Portrait of Caterina Vitale, found in Selmun Palace.



Figure 16:
Caterina Valenti's portrait found in
Sacristy of the Colligate Parish Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta.



Figure 17:

Caterina Valenti's tombstone.

Found in the sacristy of the Colligate Parish Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta.



Figure 18:

St. Paul's street featuring the Colligate Parish Church of Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta.

Chapter 3: Caterina Scappi

Little did I know when as a young girl I decided to learn to play the guitar, that the Johann Strauss School of Music in Old Bakery Street Valletta, was once the home of Caterina Scappi. This historical house is a landmark in Valletta and a milestone of female philanthropy. Judge Giovanni Bonello wrote about Caterina Scappi and her hospital for women in Valletta. Scappi appears to have been a generous woman highly involved in all sorts of philanthropic deeds. She adopted a little girl who had been abandoned at birth. In an article that featured in the Sunday Times, August 23, 2015, Judge Giovanni Bonello reveals that Scappi was not Maltese. She came from Siena in Italy; however, she did live in Malta for a very long time. She was not born into nobility, but was nonetheless respected and held in high esteem. This is known by the fact that she was addressed as *magnifica* or *signora*. This title was normally reserved for nobles. We do not know much about her origins, her family, or the reason why she came to Malta in the first place. One can however say that she was financially stable. Scappi, also known as La Senese, came up with the idea of a female hospital. This was because the hospital of the Order had stopped allowing any women patients' admittance and refused to offer them medical services at their hospital. (Bonello, G. (2015) Times of Malta. *Caterina Scappi and her revolutionary hospital for women who were incurable*. <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150823/life-features/caterina-scappi-and-her-revolutionary-hospital-for-women-who-were.581731>). Caterina's hospital was known as La Casetta, meaning a small house. When the need for bigger premises arose, the hospital moved to Merchant Street. The hospital opened in 1625 and remained in use until 1655. Some of the patients in the hospital were prostitutes suffering from venereal diseases. In 1641, the Order financially supported the hospital, due to lack of funds. When Caterina Scappi died in 1643, the Order took over the running of the hospital thus promulgating Scappi's legacy after her death. Grand Master Manoel De Vilhena (28 May 1663 – 10 December 1736) enlarged the hospital. A later decision to close the hospital down altogether was soon regretted, as females suffering from the venereal diseases were not given the necessary medication. Grand Master De Redin reopened the hospital in April 1659. Modifications to the building were carried out in the late eighteenth century, when the building was enlarged in order to accommodate more beds. The hospital's conditions progressively worsened. The Casetta was unfortunately destroyed during the WWII. The orphanage next door was also demolished to make way for the government school. (Savona, C. *Civil Hospitals in Malta*. Retrieved June 2018, from

<https://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/civil-hospitals-in-malta/>). An important building gone forever and with it the reminder and echo of Scappi's good deeds. Scappi's last will and testament is a reflection of her life. She was as generous in her death as she was during her lifetime. She left a bequest for her hospital and some money to knights born in Siena – her hometown. (Bonello, G. (2015) Times of Malta. *Caterina Scappi and her revolutionary hospital for women who were incurable.*)

A curious fact about Caterina Scappi is her donation to the Magdalene nuns, that was to be used to facilitate her entry to the monastery, if she so willed. (Muscat, C. (2013) *Magdalene Nuns and Penitent Prostitutes*. Malta. BDL, 103). Caterina Scappi was an inspiring woman, who most certainly filled a tremendous need and provided the women in her time with the medical treatment they so lacked. A commemorative slab dedicated to this pious woman, can be found at Our Lady of Mount Carmel church in Valletta. This is because Scappi was also a financial contributor to the Carmelite Order. (Bonello, G. (2015) Times of Malta. *Caterina Scappi and her revolutionary hospital for women who were incurable.*) Another proof of how her generosity knew no boundaries. The slab is located on the left hand side of the church.



Figure 19:

Portrait of Caterina Scappi found in the former of Magia Curia, Castellania.

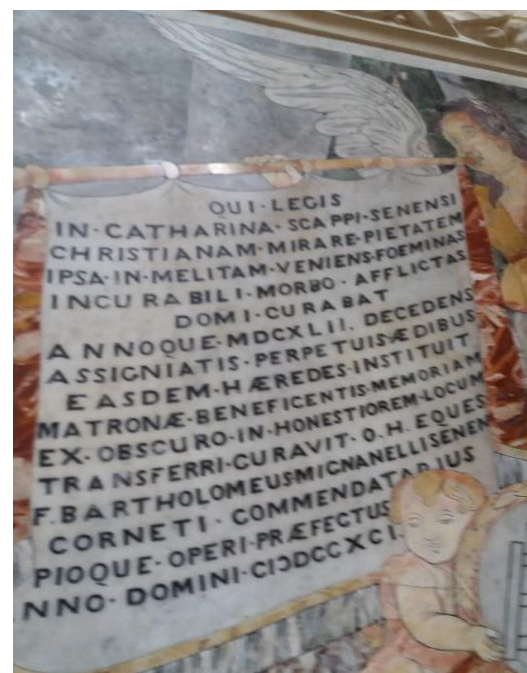


Figure 20:

Tombstone of Scappi found at Our Lady Carmelite Church, Valletta.



Figure 21:

Casa Scappi. 74 Old Bakery Street, Valletta.

Conclusion

The four early modern female protagonists in this study shared the same name, resided in the city of Valletta and were all philanthropists. Their philanthropy was however differently motivated. This dissertation has shown that some females in seventeenth-century Valletta were active social personalities who dedicated a reasonable amount of time, energy and personal wealth to better the lives of other less fortunate beings. Katerina Olivieri turned a personal tragedy into a project that provided a home for a group of religious females and a shelter for disadvantaged young girls. Caterina Vitale and Caterina Valenti, on the other hand, used the fortunes they amassed in their younger days to help various charities whilst paving their way to heaven. Caterina Scappi was likewise an outstanding female philanthropist who provided poor women with a hospital and medical care. The post-Tridentine period is believed to be an era that offered women limited opportunities. The achievements of the women in this study however show that female philanthropy was one channel through which females could pursue various initiatives. All showed a strong determination to help vulnerable women. The will to succeed helped them reach their goals. These strong-willed women are largely unsung heroines who deserve a rightful place in our national history. Their lives and deeds are integral to Valletta's past. Their stories need to be told. Katerina Olivieri's orphanage that today houses St Catherine's monastery of the cloistered Augustinian nuns still stands in Republic Street. Half way down Merchants' Street is house number 46, the Monte di Pietà e Redenzione. In the early 1600s, Caterina Vitale's generous contribution to this organisation was paramount to the accomplishment of the Redenzione degli Schiavi's mission. Caterina Valenti portrait still stands next to the portraits of other benefactors and benefactresses of the Parish of St Paul in the sacristy of the church. Caterina Scappi's house in Old Bakery Street still stands and the site where her hospital known as the Casetta once stood can be indicated in front of the Church of St Mary Magdalene of the penitents. This study endeavoured to honour these four early modern female philanthropists, and sought to promote their legacies in Valletta by focusing on their lives and deeds. Integrating visuals linked to these women's charity in a Valletta tour itinerary will surely offer added value to a tourist guide's commentary.



Figure 22:
A modern aerial view of Valletta.

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Figure 1:

Photo of The façade of the church of St. Catherine's Monastery in Republic Street, Valletta.

Source: A nineteenth century lithograph by L.Brocktorff in The Malta Penny Magazine.
Stephen Degiorgio Collection.

Figure 2:

A copy of the original document found in the National Archives – Volume 1 out of 5 – Notary Johannes Tholossentius.

Source: Author.

Figure 3:

Translated version from original document in Latin, done by Father Gulju Bonnici, OSA, in 2005.

Source: Author.

Figure 4:

Coffin said to hold remains of Katerina's deceased son found in the monastery's crypt.

Source: Author.

Figure 5:

St. Catherine's Monastery, at present. Republic Street, Valletta.

Source: Author.

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Vasco Olivieri coat of arm found at the monastery.

Source: Author.

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Holy Water Holder found at the monastery.

Source: Author.

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Source: Author.

Figure 11:

Portrait of St. Catherine of Alexandria traditionally believed to be the image of the foundress Katerina Vasco Olivieri.

Source: Author.

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Caterina Vitale's tombstone. Found at the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Source: Author.

Figure 13:

Coat of Arms of Redenzione degli Schiavi. Merchant Street, Valletta.

Source: Accessed on: 25.03.2019

https://www.google.com/search?q=monte+della+redenzione+degli+schiaivi&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjcp5Ge5qfhAhWQ_aQKHdKxAcUQ_AUIDigB&biw=1366&bih=655#imgsrc=yYd5CAJX2a9qdM

Figure 14:

Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Valletta.

Source: Author.

Figure 15:

Portrait of Caterina Vitale, found in Selmun Palace.

Source: Accessed on 25.03.2019

https://www.google.com/search?biw=1366&bih=655&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=wPygXOTwBLCofAPwdawSA0&q=caterina+vitale+in+selmun&oq=caterina+vitale+in+selmun&gs_l=img.3...4564.9128..9499...0.0.0.128.1213.0j10.....1....1..gws-wiz-img.....0i30.n25w8PAQx7I#imgsrc=mm4Epdl-ZQQjsM:

Figure 16:

Caterina Valenti's portrait found in Sacristy of the Colligate Parish Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta.

Source: Author.

Figure 17:

Caterina Valenti's tombstone.

Found in the sacristy of the Colligate Parish Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta.

Source: Author.

Figure 18:

St. Paul's street featuring the Colligate Parish Church of Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta.

Source: Accessed on 25.03.2019.

https://www.google.com/search?biw=1366&bih=655&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=HP2gXKZJz4TV8A-AloFg&q=st+paul+s+street+valletta&oq=st+paul+s+street+valletta&gs_l=img.3...2732.5646..6127...0.0.0.114.956.0j9.....1....1..gws-wiz-img.TL5MkNH3Egk#imgsrc=uRINN8d9w-CxuM:

Figure 19:

Portrait of Caterina Scappi found in the former of Magia Curia, Castellania.

Source: Author.

Figure 20:

Tombstone of Scappi found at Our Lady Carmelite Church, Valletta.

Source: Author.

Figure 21:

Casa Scappi. 74 Old Bakery Street, Valletta.

Source: Accessed on 25.03.2019.

(https://www.google.com/search?biw=1366&bih=655&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=av2gXLzRN4S61fAP6bWHkA4&q=school+of+music+old+bakery+street+valletta&oq=school+of+music+old+bakery+street+valletta&gs_l=img.3...4507.12865..13067...4.0..0.134.3306.1j29.....1....1..gws-wiz-img.....0j0i24.UUJvrSzJ93E#imgsrc=iuONAsdDcQgwqM):

Figure 22:

A modern aerial view of Valletta.

Source: Accessed on 25.03.2019.

https://www.google.com/search?biw=1366&bih=655&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=av2gXLzRN4S61fAP6bWHkA4&q=valletta+ariel+view&oq=valletta+ariel+view&gs_l=img.3...3121.10712..10854...3.0..3.190.3411.1j29.....1....1..gws-wiz-img.....0..35i39j0i0i67j0i10i30j0i8i30j0i24j0i5i30.q1t3KKh1LTI#imgsrc=zc5zm2GexNsaEM:

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Appendix:

Female Philanthropists in 17th Century Valletta Tour:

Stops as follows:

1. Collegiate Parish Church of St Paul's Shipwreck's Sacristy, Caterina Valenti – her portrait and her burial place.
2. Redenzioni degli Schiavi – Katerina Vitale in Merchant Street.
3. St. Catherine's monastery in Republic Street.
4. Archbishop Street: Our Lady of Damascus Church, where Vitale worshipped and House number 135 on the right of Bistro Angelica in Archbishop Street which was owed by Vitale. House number 138, was also owed by Vitale and left in will to Redenzione degli Schiavi in 1618. Our Lady of Damascus Church, where Vitale worshipped and even to which she donated money.
5. School of Music – Old Bakery Street – Scappi
6. Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel – Vitale and Scappi's memorials.

Tour Description:

Katerinas in the City – Half-Day tour:

This guided tour will take you to the lovely streets of Valletta exploring the philanthropic treasures left behind by some notable females in the 17th century. All of these women share the same name Caterina! Thus the name of our tour! We shall meet in front of St. Paul's where we start from the sacristy of St. Paul's Church to have a talk about our first Katerina – Katerina Valenti. We shall then proceed to the church to see her tombstone. Come and find out about her colorful life and her philanthropic deeds. We also visit Merchant Street and hear about how after a life full of drama, Katerina Vitale, turned her life around and made an important contribution towards ransoming captured Christian slaves! Just a stone throw away, arriving at St. Dominic's church, we shall be able to see where the first female hospital once stood, thanks to the hard work and funds of the dedicated Katerina Scappi. We shall also hear some amusing stories about her neighbours.... the penitent prostitutes! The fourth Katerina will leave us gasping at the beauty of the monastery in Republic Street, once her home. On our way to our last stop we shall be passing in front of Vitale's houses in Archbishop Street and closing off at the Carmelite Church, where both Vitale and Scappi were laid to rest.