

# The MALTA CLASSICS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

APRIL '24 | ISSUE 22

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

*Salvete omnes!*

Welcome to the April 2024 edition of the Malta Classics Association Newsletter. This issue starts off with an address from our executive president, Samuel Azzopardi, as well as an annual report from Claire Bugeja, our general secretary, for the year 2023.

Following this is a review by Samuel Azzopardi for Pat Barker's novel, *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) – a retelling of Homer's *Iliad* from Briseis' perspective.

Lastly, mark your calendars with our list of upcoming Roman festivals, as well as a number of exciting events including lectures, tours and more!

If you have your own ideas to share with the Classics community and are interested in contributing to this newsletter, please email us on [info@classicsmalta.org](mailto:info@classicsmalta.org) or send us a message on our Facebook page.

*Skye Vassallo*

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Malta  
Classics  
Association

# ADDRESS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT

**SAMUEL AZZOPARDI**

Dear colleagues, thank you for joining us this evening for this year's Annual General Meeting. Today's AGM brings to a close our first ever official two-year term and while our General Secretary and Treasurer will be giving detailed reports on what has gone on this year, I believe it is appropriate to reflect on this Executive Committee's term as a whole.

Over these past 24 months, the MCA has issued four new publications: our annual academic journal for 2022 and 2023, *Melita Classica* Volumes 8 and 9, containing 16 contributions all together; *A Guide to Latin Terms in Law*, which brought together a host of Latin terms used to this day in the courts together with their translation and examples of their use, and which was published in collaboration with the University of Malta's 'Għaqda Studenti tal-Liġi'; and *Fabulae Melitae Mirabiles*, a collection of Maltese legends and folk-tales translated into Latin by our Honorary President for 2024, Dr Carmel Serracino. All four different works were important in their own way, and I am honoured that they were brought to light under our care in the last two years.



via Facebook

Between 2022 and 2023, the MCA organised or co-organised another eight public lectures on various topics of general and particular interest. We also hosted three academic conferences, one in the 2022 and the other two in 2023. Two of these, in March 2022 and November 2023 were the second and third iterations of our annual *Conference of Contemporary Research in Classics*, with the fourth already planned for April 2024. The third other conference was the *Annual Meeting of Postgraduates of Ancient History*, a conference which travels from country to country and which we

were honoured to welcome to Valletta in March 2023 with the kind assistance of the University of Malta's Department of Classics and Archaeology. In all, these conferences provided an opportunity for 63 classicists and scholars at various points in their career to share with our local and international audience the fruits of their study and research.

In the meantime, the Malta Classics Association continued to assist the study of Classics and the ancient world by organising courses in Classical history, culture and myth, Latin and Greek, and by preparing students to sit for the *Classical Studies* intermediate exam every summer.

In collaboration with the *Notarial Archives Foundation*, the MCA has launched a series of courses in Latin through which 50 students are now learning Latin, many of whom are preparing to sit for the ELEX Vestibulum Exam by Euroclassica. Introducing ELEX and EGEX examination in Malta has been a dream shared by many previous Executive Presidents and Committees down the years, and we are pleased to have finally found a way to do this in a way which augurs replication in the future.



via Facebook

In a less academic slant, the MCA has also introduced our *Roman' Around* expeditions to sites of historical and classical interest. In 2022 we visited the *Tas-Silġ* complex and in 2023 we visited the archives of the Greek Catholic Church in Valletta. We have not yet decided where we will be heading to in 2024 but works are in the pipeline to host an art exhibition of works inspired by the Classics in September 2024.

NGO's like the MCA are not aimed towards generating revenue, but money is nonetheless important to finance the projects and aspirations of our Executive Committees as they work towards serving their aims. In January 2022 we inherited a sturdy treasury with €9,192.28. We are pleased to hand over a sturdier treasury of €16,398.59, which I believe is also the highest ever end-of-term financial handover in the history of the MCA.

These numbers and statistics are great tools for tracking ones progress and work but they do not give much opportunity to reflect all the work that takes place backstage, so to speak. All these triumphs were the result of a group effort of the many people involved within and outside the Executive Committee. We look forward to more!

Executive President Samuel Azzopardi  
MCA AGM  
16 Jan 2024



via Facebook (Rtk103)

# GENERAL SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT

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## CLAIRE BUGEJA

### Introduction

Thank you all for joining us for this evening's Annual General Meeting. The following is a brief overview and report of the work done by the outgoing Executive Committee which was elected for a term of two years in the AGM of January 2022.

### Executive Committee

Throughout 2023, the Executive Committee met for a total of ten meetings, one of which was the AGM for that same year. In addition to these, however, there was much communication behind the scenes and to a degree that cannot be as easily quantified. All the work carried out this year would not have been possible without the diligent work of many people who donated their time and energy so willingly, whether in an executive or a non-executive capacity. Particular mention is made of our Honorary President, Prof Anthony Frendo, our Executive President, Samuel Azzopardi, our Vice-President, Steve de Marco, myself Claire Bugeja as General Secretary, Nico Muscat as Treasurer, James Farrugia, Kayleigh Frostick, Nikolai Zammit, Karl Hallett, Raina el-Masri, Victor Bonnici, Maria Giuliana Fenech, Joanna Zammit Falzon, Dr

Dr Ing John Betts and so many others who contributed their time and energy to the MCA and its aims.

In 2023, the MCA also maintained its membership with Euroclassica and participated actively in the discussion of the amendments to its statute during the August 2023 conference.

### Lectures, Conferences and Events

Over the past twelve months, the MCA organised three public lectures, two conferences and one visit to a site of historical interest.

In January, Professor Karen Carr spoke to us about *Decentring Europe Two Ways: Swimming and the Slave Trade in Classical Antiquity*. In April, Dr Matthew Mordue spoke to us about *Book 10 of Pliny's Epistles: An Edited Account of Ideal Governance*. Lastly in May, Dr David Cardona spoke to us about the *Melite Civitas* archaeological project around the Domus Romana in Rabat/Mdina.

The MCA was honoured to host the *Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History* in Valletta in March 2023. Our keynote

for this conference was Prof. Anthony Frendo who spoke to us about *Gateways to the Past: Archaeological History? Historical Archaeology? Or both?* His contribution was followed by an additional 24 presentations on various topics of historical and classical interest. We thank the University of Malta's Department of Classics and Archaeology for assisting us in bringing this Conference to Malta, and the Malta Society of Arts for hosting us, with particular thanks to Dr Ing. John Betts, Dr Carmel Serracino, Mr Adrian Mamo, and Mr Gabriel Zammit.

Later in the year, in November 2023, the MCA organised the third edition of our very own *Conference of Contemporary Research in Classics*, in the course of which 12 speakers shared their research with us. In addition to this, our keynote speaker for this conference, Eduardo Garcia-Molina, spoke to us about *The State of Hellenistic States: New Approaches and Directions*.

In February 2023, the MCA and its members visited the archives of the Greek Catholic Church in Valletta, where we were introduced to the Greek rite and the history of the Greek Catholic Church in Malta by Prof Martin Zammit. We were then shown the archival collection of the same parish by Mr Michael Buhagiar.

### **Courses**

The MCA continued with its mission to promote and facilitate the study of Classics in Malta. During the summer, the MCA organised three courses: a Greek Mythology Course taught by Steve De Marco, a beginner's Latin course taught by Claire Bugeja, and a Classical Studies Overview

Course taught by Samuel Azzopardi, James Farrugia, Raina el-Masri, Joanna Zammit Falzon and Maria Giuliana Fenech.

This past Autumn, the MCA entered into formal collaboration with the Notarial Archives Foundation and has organised a series of three ongoing courses leading up to the ELEX Vestibulum Exam. These courses are currently being taught by Samuel Azzopardi and we are all very excited to finally have students sitting for these international exams in Malta in September 2024.

### **Publications**

This year, the Executive Committee decided not to embark on any additional publication efforts and to focus on promoting the sale of the many publications already published by the MCA, including the two non-*Melita Classica* books published by the same executive committee in 2022.

The MCA nonetheless published our annual journal, the *Melita Classica*, which was circulated with our members. This year's *Melita Classica* included 6 papers and 1 academic note. We thank the Editorial Board and the many authors of the included works for their work towards bringing *Melita Classica Volume 9* to publication.

### **Looking Forward to 2024**

Although this Annual General Meeting marks the end of the term of the current Executive Committee, it would be irresponsible of us to hand-over the MCA without any plans or foundations for the future.

The coming year 2024 will see the continuation of the *Lingua Latina ab Initio* courses in collaboration with the Notarial Archives Foundation and the bringing together of a *Livy Reading Group*. We hope that additional courses will also be organised.

In order to keep Malta at the forefront of research exchange, the MCA will be organising the 4<sup>th</sup> annual *Conference of Contemporary Research in Classics*, as well as a monthly online lecture series. These will not replace in person lectures, of which we hope several will also be organised in the coming year.

*Melita Classica Volume 10*, which will include the proceedings of the 2023 AMPAH Conference is currently in the works, with the deadline for submissions for *Volume 11* set for the last Friday of June 2024. We trust the new Executive Committee will also once again consider the need and suitability of further publications.

## Concluding Remarks

The work of the Executive Committee and those who contribute to the MCA would be pointless without the appreciation, support and encouragement of our many members. Thank you for being present and giving meaning to our work. We hope that you will continue to support us in the coming months and years.

General Secretary Claire Bugeja  
MCA AGM  
16 Jan 2024

image via Pixabay

definition via Liddell, Scott: An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon on Perseus Digital Library  
quote via a translation by A.T. Murray, PH.D, 1919, on Perseus Digital Library

## WORD OF THE DAY

κλέος  
[kleos]

- I. a rumour, report, news;
- II. good report, fame, glory.

“I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, who am known among men for all manner of wiles, I and my **fame** reaches unto heaven.”

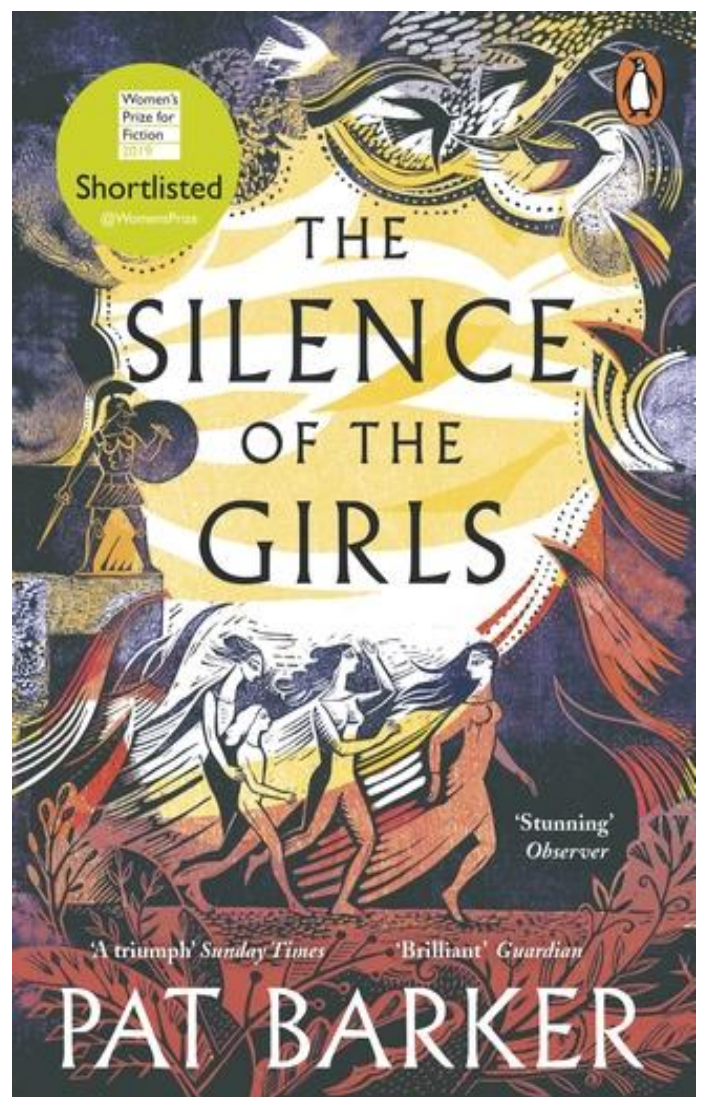
Hom. Od. 9.1.19-20

# BOOK REVIEW: *THE SILENCE OF THE GIRLS*

**SAMUEL AZZOPARDI**

Pat Barker's *Silence of the Girls* (2018) reminds us in no compromising terms that Achilles, Agamemnon and all the other so-called Greek 'heroes' were marauding pillaging brutes who looted and destroyed cities, killed men and boys, and subjected women and young girls to the most extreme forms of violence and abuse. This is not revolutionary in any way *per se* – we all, ultimately know that this was the reality of the Trojan War (if there was any such thing) and similar conflicts – but whereas the *Iliad* itself and indeed other works inspired by this war such as Mark Merlis' *An Arrow's Flight* (1998) and Madeleine Miller's *Song of Achilles* (2011) focus on the experience of the soldiers and mention the suffering of the Trojans and their allies indirectly and in passing, Barker's work places the plight of the most vulnerable of the Achaeans' victims at the centre of the narrative.

Indeed, the book is a narrative by Briseis taken up from when Achilles seizes her city, kills her brothers and young husband, and takes her prisoner. In the course of the rest of the book we get to know Achilles better as a tortured young warrior traumatised by his detachment from his divine mother and



via Penguin Books

his fatal destiny who tends towards the cruel and the slightly sadistic. We also meet Patroclus, who retains that element of kindness which is noted in the *Iliad* and



his fatal destiny who tends towards the cruel and the slightly sadistic. We also meet Patroclus, who retains that element of kindness which is noted in the *Iliad* and which has inspired his characterisation in many later works, but who remains, ultimately, one of the marauding warriors with his own victimised slave-girls and bed mates. We are also introduced to many of the other Homeric heroes, each with their own particular character and flaws.

More importantly, however, we meet many of the multitude of women who become victims of the Achaeans and their looting. Some of these, such as Hecuba, Polyxena and Andromache, are generally well known, and their story has been explored in many works, both Classical and later. Others, like Iphis and Tecmessa are less known to the general public and have not received as much individual attention. Their experience - and those of other women who were subjected to slavery long before the walls of Troy were breached and had been made to share their masters' tents and beds for years - are what *Silence of the Girls* is mostly concerned with beyond the personal story and inner thoughts of Briseis herself.

The book explores what it means to be someone and then to become nothing more than a something, to be used and traded like a tool or a farm animal. Briseis is torn between wanting to hold onto her past and

what remains of herself and leaving it behind so that her present reality becomes more bearable if no less anguishing. The book also explores the apparent contradiction in the case of women like Iphis and Tecmessa who end up falling in love with their captors but invites us to approach them sensitively and with understanding as women who are doing the best they can in their circumstances. In a move that rather subverts our expectations, Uza, a former sex-worker since captured and given in gift to Odysseus, almost celebrates her enslavement, seeing in her new circumstances a stability and opportunity for advancement she would otherwise never have had.

*Silence of the Girls* is an enjoyable read that challenges us to look beyond the perspectives of the main characters and to consider the experience of the war as lived by the losers. The book is an important read for those who want to explore the story of the *Iliad* and of war more generally in a broader and more encompassing way. The characters are well developed, Briseis' introspective thoughts are provoking and clearly described, and the narrative itself is presented in a flowing and easy manner. The narrative of the book does not diverge from the narrative of the *Iliad* or surrounding Classical literature in any noticeable way.

# ROMAN FESTIVALS

## *martius - march*

				<b>1</b>		
			<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>17</b>
	<b>19</b>				<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>

**1:** Kalends sacred to Mars and relighting of Vesta's fire

**14:** Equirria

**15:** Ides Sacred to Jupiter and Anna Perenna

**17:** Liberalia

**19:** Quinquatrus

**23:** Tubilustrum

**24:** Dies Sanguinis

## *aprilis - april*

<b>1</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>21</b>
	<b>23</b>		<b>25</b>			<b>28</b>
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>		

**1:** Fortuna Virilis

**4-10:** Ludi Megalenses

**12-19:** Ludi Cerealis

**13:** Ides sacred to Jupiter

**15:** Fordicidia

**23:** Vinalia

**25:** Robigalia

**28-3(May):** Floralia/Ludi Floriales

via ZenitX on iStock



<i>maius - may</i>						
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>		
			<b>9</b>		<b>11</b>	
<b>13</b>		<b>15</b>				
	<b>21</b>		<b>23</b>			
		<b>29</b>				

**9/11/13: Lemuria**  
**15: Ides sacred to Jupiter**  
**21: Agonalia**  
**23: Tubilustrum / Flora's Festival of Roses**  
**29: Ambarvalia**

## UPCOMING MCA EVENTS

Date	Venue	Description
9 April	Online	“Reception and Practical Use of Ancient Letter Collections in Durham Cathedral Priory (1090-1540)” by Dr Lucas Matheus Caminiti Amaya. A free public lecture, open to the general public.
26 April	Oratory of the Jesuits’ Church, Valletta	“Joseph Demarco: a Maltese Physician and Intellectual in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century” by Skye Vassallo. A free public lecture, open to the general public.
14 May	Online	“Liberty Revisited: Virgil and the Transformation of Roman <i>Libertas</i> ” by Prof. Fabio Tutrone. A free public lecture, open to the general public.
18 May	San Pawl Milqi	Guided Tour of the <i>San Pawl Milqi</i> archaeological site, starting at 10:00am. By registration only: €5 for members, €10 for non-members.
11 June	Online	“In Defence of Jason Against Medea” by Andreas Prasinos. A free public lecture, open to the general public.
9 July	Online	“ <i>Cum Timore Dei</i> : Fear of Divinity in the Greco-Roman World” by Dr Despina Iosif. A free public lecture, open to the general public.