

Reading Classics at Leiden University

During the past months, I had the opportunity to read for a Master of Arts degree in Classics and Ancient Civilizations at Leiden University in the Netherlands. My specialisation within this degree programme was Classics, which is broadly defined as the study of ancient Greek and Latin, encompassing both the languages themselves as well as their literary works. While strengthening my overall academic skills, this degree programme also introduced me to new methodologies for reading and commenting on ancient texts.

The Master's programme was structured into a number of courses and a research thesis. Among the various courses, I completed a Greek course on ancient aesthetics, a Latin course on the reception of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the 20th and 21st centuries, and also a course on the reception of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in late antiquity. Some of the courses were also interdisciplinary in nature, such as 'Classics Now!' and the 'Ancient World Seminar', in which key issues and texts relating to the ancient Mediterranean world and its relevance today were addressed. Finally, in my thesis I analysed the traces and influences of ancient Presocratic philosophers in a speech given by the physician Eryximachus, one of the characters in Plato's *Symposium*.

Apart from gaining a great knowledge base, this Master's programme also provided the opportunity to enhance and acquire several vital skills. For example, a number of courses encouraged the exploration of digital methods to research and promote the classical cultures in our contemporary society. Moreover, interdisciplinarity held a pivotal role, since the programme combined insights not only from Classics, but also from Assyriology, Egyptology, as well as Hebrew and Aramaic Studies.

Over and above my formal studies, I took an active role in student life more generally by serving as a student member on the Programme Committee (*Opleidingscommissie*) of the (Res)MA in Classics and Ancient Civilizations. This committee is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and issuing advice on the quality of the respective programmes. As a further extracurricular activity, I was also a choir member of the Leiden Student Choir and Orchestra *Collegium Musicum*, performing in a number of rehearsals and concerts throughout my time in the Netherlands.

While reading for this Master of Arts degree, I was fortunate enough to benefit from an award of the Tertiary Education Scholarships Scheme, a scheme financed and administered by the

Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation in Malta. Alongside financial assistance, this scheme also provided the opportunity to practise certain important transferable skills, such as writing a motivational letter and sitting for an interview.

The outcomes of this degree programme are relevant to Malta and its development. The interdisciplinary relation between Classics and various fields such as digitisation, research, and education are beneficial to the development of the Maltese economy. Moreover, the knowledge gained from a degree in Classics also complements the status of Malta as a home to many archaeological sites from the classical world, such as the Domus Romana in Rabat and the Roman baths in Xemxija. In conclusion, I look forward to contributing further to the Maltese cultural and research sectors by applying the knowledge and skills gained during this Master's programme.

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