

Why Does the World Need a New Journal on Late Antiquity?

The idea for launching *Studies in Late Antiquity* crystallized gradually over the past decade as a response to the increasingly expansive horizons of the field. As scholars of Late Antiquity, we have grown accustomed to the methodological diversity of our field, which has long embraced the perspectives of Archaeology, History, Classics, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Art History. But because of this very diversity, we rarely find ourselves assembled in a single place. And, ironically, the more we found ourselves working with colleagues studying other regions, either as we try to address their ideas within our own work or to work collaboratively, the more we saw the need for a venue that would highlight the shared empirical, historiographic, and methodological concerns that hold the field together, however uneasily. Which assumptions and theoretical perspectives do we hold in common and where do various scholarly traditions diverge? Are there problems or themes that bind us together and, if not, what should the future directions or contours of the field be? It is the aim of this journal to inspire dialogue, debate, and discovery: to create a forum that will bring together the various wings of the field in a wide-ranging and evolving conversation that will encompass different area studies and methodologies.

To be sure, there are a number of excellent journals that publish studies on various aspects of the field of Late Antiquity and for which we have great esteem. The articles that will appear in *Studies in Late Antiquity* will overlap to a certain extent with existing publications in the field. At the same time, we are committed to ensuring that *Studies in Late Antiquity* will fulfill its core mission to foster both methodological self-reflection and expansive geo-cultural coverage that has not characterized these other venues.

In sum, many of us—in part, perhaps, as a result of teaching more globally oriented undergraduate courses—strive to put into practice Peter Brown's call in *The World of Late Antiquity*: to connect the Mediterranean world with the broader late ancient world. But this is not an easy task. As Mark Humphries

emphasizes in this issue, “One obvious problem. . . is that such an undertaking would require mastery of the histories of a wide range of cultures, not to mention their multiplicity of languages; as such, a project of the sort recommended here might best be undertaken as a collaborative effort.”¹ Realizing this goal, we now see, requires effort and deliberate outreach, for which we have to rely on our community’s support. Many of our colleagues working in this chronological period in China, India, or Africa, for example, have expressed interest in sharing their insights with those working within the boundaries and borderlands of the Roman Empire. In founding a journal such as *SLA* we hope to offer a format in which we all can in fact bring together such a community of scholars, to assemble different perspectives on common themes, to foster the necessary conversations, and thus to stimulate further multi- and interdisciplinary research.

It is perhaps no accident that *SLA* has grown from California soil, a place particularly predisposed to face—like Janus—both east and west. For nearly two decades, the study of Late Antiquity in the University of California system has increasingly engaged faculty, students, colleagues and communities thanks to the energy of the founding members of UC’s multi-campus research group in Late Antiquity (Emily Albu, Hal Drake, Susanna Elm, and Michele Salzman) under Claudia Rapp’s dynamic leadership from 1995–2010. The call to educate California’s diverse citizenry has encouraged us to think about our field in global terms and motivated us to reach out to the wider public.

These considerations have shaped our plans for the future: We hope to make the journal a venue to discuss not only important research, but also pedagogical issues, museum and gallery exhibitions, and other events relevant to Late Antiquity. In addition, we want to address issues and scholarship in the Digital Humanities. As the first completely online platform for late ancient scholarship, *SLA* will allow us more freedom to do what no other late ancient English language journal does, from publishing high-quality images, to maps, to 3-D projections, to datasets, to video and more. Please use our online platform to help us identify these projects, together with those just above, so that we can in turn bring them to our readers’ attention.

Creating a forum where research on the Mediterranean can be put in dialogue with topics on Han and Tang China or the Baltic borderlands does not immediately result in the connections and collaboration that makes such research possible. Launching this journal is only one aspect of building a community of scholars. We plan to accompany this with workshops and panel discussions at national and international conferences that will, we hope, further stimulate dialogue, debate and discovery. We would like to

extend a warm invitation to all our colleagues and graduate students to contribute to this joint venture in exploring further the implications of the many worlds of Late Antiquity beyond conventional boundaries of space and time. ■

NOTE

1. Mark Humphries, "Late Antiquity and World History: Challenging Conventional Narratives and Analyses," p. 28.