



Jerez Bertolín, L. (2021): 'Editorial'

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## Editorial

It is for me a great pleasure to introduce this 26<sup>th</sup> issue of the Rosetta Journal. Last issue we celebrated an important milestone in the Journal by celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> issue. This issue is also cause for celebration, for this year the Journal celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its foundation in 2006. There are many people that in the last 15 years have participated in this journal, be it as part of its Editorial Committee or as authors, reviewers, copy-editors, etc. The current Editorial Committee wishes to thank all of those that have preceded us in keeping this journal alive for so long. It is truly a testament to the tenacity and passion of both the University of Birmingham's postgraduate community in the Department of Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology as well as the worldwide postgraduate community working in classics, ancient history or archaeology. It is always a pleasure to receive articles, book reviews and notices from far shores, and we hope that the next 15 years are also full of issues and submissions.

Getting this issue ready has not been easy. This whole issue has been planned, worked on and published in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, making the editorial process sometimes difficult. Luckily all participants in the making of this issue have shown the best of themselves. I am deeply grateful to all the contributors to this issue, who have risen to the challenge and have done a splendid work.

I would like to first thank Amy Porter, my predecessor as General Editor. It was a daunting task to succeed her as General Editor and continue the excellent work she had done for the journal, but her help and advice was always available and incommensurably useful. I would also like to thank Theo Reeves, our Articles Editor, whose diligence and resourcefulness has been invaluable in getting this issue published. I would also like to thank Teifion Gambold, our Book Reviews and Responses Editor, who is a master of the delicate art of providing useful and clear feedback. I would also like to thank Dr. Antonios Savva, our Notes and Shorter Pieces Editor, who is a veteran of the journal and an infinite well of knowledge and insight. I would also like to deeply thank our Treasurer and IT officer Laura Clark, who has worked tirelessly making the journal's website more accessible and without whom this issue could not have been published. I would also like to thank Hebe Barlow, our Marketing Officer, for her work on social media publicizing the journal to

a greater audience. I want to also thank the copy-editors that have contributed to making this issue stylistically consistent and pleasurable to the eye. They are Lisa Doughty, Agni Agathi C. Papamichael and Teifion Gambold. Finally, I am deeply grateful to all specialist editors who have taken time off their tight schedules to read and review our articles and provided expert feedback to our authors.

This issue was centred around the subject of “memory”, and it begins with an article on perfume-making, that is, the noble art of making memorable smells. In her article Giulia Freni, a graduate student at the University of Siena, explores the relationship between a perfume recipe in a second century AD papyrus (*P.Oxy. 5242*) with other ancient ointment recipes. Her objective is to highlight how the ways to make and thicken flowery oils was a relevant interest of ancient writers in various contexts, from medicinal uses to making perfumes. She does so by comparing the thickening of iris, rose and lily oil between *P.Oxy. 5242* and Dioscorides’ *De materia medica*, Theophrastus of Eresus’ *De odoribus* and *Historia Plantarum*, and Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis historia*, concluding that interest in the thickening of oils is present in all three and noting that there might be some textual relation between *P. Oxy. 5242* and *De materia medica* given their similarities.

Fond memories breed nostalgia and influence how we understand the present, and this can be seen in Theodore Metochites’ *On Education* where he complains having to abandon his literary ambitions in order to marry, which in turn affects his perception of marriage. The approach to marriage of Metochites is analysed in our second featured article by Konstantinos Karatolios, who is a PhD candidate in Byzantine History at the University of Crete. He compares Metochites’ text with the approach to marriage of a contemporary romance, *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, both written between the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in the Byzantine Empire. The main issue at stake in the article is what social purpose do these works give to marriage. Karatolios concludes that despite the insistence by both works that marriage is to be used to preserve one’s social status, they also indicate that marriage was used as a gateway to social mobility.

This issue also includes a book review of Edward J. Watts’ *Mortal Republic: How Rome Fell Into Tyranny* by Alexander Moore, a DPhil Ancient History researcher at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford. “Those that do not remember history are

bound to repeat it” seems to be the motivation behind Watts’ analysis of the fall of the Roman Republic according to Moore, and the book argues that the Republic was not inherently doomed and was failed by its own politicians as a warning to what might happen in our times should we not remember it. Moore argues that the book features a new and interesting perspective and would be especially useful for those undergraduates and members of the general public looking to learn more about the Late Republic. However, Moore is not convinced by Watt’s main argument, and argues that the book relies too much on taking ancient accounts at face value and tends to oversimplify a very complex political moment in history.

Finally, this issue closes with a thought-provoking short piece by Phoebe-Irene Georgiadi, a PhD candidate in Byzantine History at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Georgiadi inquires on the utility for historians of the Byzantine world to trace a sharp distinction between “classicising histories” and “chronicles”, often distinguished by whether the time period covered was in recent memory and the complexity of their language. This distinction, Georgiadi argues, should be re-examined, as it has generated an undue contempt towards chronicles among historians.

I hope the reader will find in this issue something to catch their eye and their interest. It has been an honour to prepare this issue and I am very happy to see it finally published thanks to the hard work of all participants in the editorial process, from the authors to the editors. Enjoy!

Lluís Jerez i Bertolín

General Editor