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http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk/Issue_03/editorial.htm

Editorial

Welcome to Issue Three of Rosetta, the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity's (IAA) postgraduate internet journal. We have had a change in the editorial committee since the last issue. Some committee members have moved on but others have joined us; we also have a new Editor and new Book Reviews Editor. A healthy mix of continuity and change. This issue has proved to be challenging and has presented a steep learning curve and period of reflection for some of us. I would like to thank all the members of the editorial committee who have been on hand to help produce the current issue and have contributed to the enthusiasm and commitment necessary (especially Helen, Juliette, Debbi, David and Steve).

With Issue Three you may notice that we have added a more comprehensive collection of notes for contributors. In particular, thanks are due to Helen Goodchild who has continued in her capacity as web coordinator, handling the uploads for this issue; most memorably our lead article and its many Greek symbols. This particular article was, in part, the inspiration behind producing a style guide and I believe also for the special emphasis placed upon our preferred scripting of unusual symbols (see the passage commencing 'It is very important' in Notes for Contributors). This is not to say that we are in anyway ungrateful for the article in question, 'Medea. An Example of how destructive rhetoric can become'. The paper – a skilful analysis of the play by Euripides – provides not only our only full size article for the issue, but also something of a theme for volume three as a whole and the development of the journal as a project. The theme in question is that of identity.

In her paper, Doctor Martín Valasco notes that the narrative structure of the play involves a consciously philosophical discourse that forms the basis for a critique of the relative values of 'truth', 'civilisation' and 'proper' behaviour. It is found that the rhetorical argument made by Medea can be seen to be devastatingly 'true' and yet horrifically wrong with the ensuing murder of Jason's new wife and his children by Medea. It is particularly interesting to note in the paper that it was necessary for Euripides to make use of a non-Greek character, Medea herself, in order to objectify the contemporary Greek identity from a non-Greek perspective 'which was easily acceptable to his audience'. In this way Euripides could 'set out the possibility of opening new horizons in the evolution of the Athenian culture itself'. In the play the identity of those reflecting upon their actions and their obligations is of central importance. Identity is also a theme that can be read into the contributions to the Rosetta's

book reviews in this issue and the article ‘Teaching Myth’, both in terms of the characteristics we seek in our data and our own academic identities.

The process of creating the style guide has involved a similar awareness of identity. It has also brought home, once more, just how diverse are the IAA’s academic footings – the number of referencing conventions that we had to contend with in the style guide was proof of this. The disciplines which had to be catered for included archaeology, ancient history, modern history, classics, heritage management and industrial archaeology, all of which require different writing styles and expectations of how a journal should be structured. The need to ask ourselves the kinds of rules and restrictions that would fit the look of the journal, the practical tasks of editing and publishing contributions, and considering who our readership and contributors were likely to be were further developments and refinements of the journal’s identity. In the end the phrases ‘multi-disciplinary publication’ and ‘variety of historical and archaeological disciplines’ provided the guiding light to the style guide that was produced. We decided on inclusiveness, making the acceptable conventions perhaps the widest of any academic publication that has any such rules.

This process also involved reflection on the relationship between the journal and the IAA, and the condition of the journal itself. *Rosetta* is a postgraduate-led journal and as such asks for a share of the commitment that Birmingham students devote to other activities, not the least of which is their own research. However, another necessary activity in our academic lives at the IAA is to communicate effectively with each other and to create our own intellectual experiences as we do so. This necessitates a degree of group- and self-identification, a process that inevitably involves the acknowledgement of boundaries. These boundaries may be academic, in terms of our respective disciplines, or they may be personal boundaries, that relate to commitment and time available to contribute. The kind of identification necessary to sustain a journal such as *Rosetta*, which exists to present academic opportunities and experiences to postgraduates, ought to be a perceived shared ownership of the publication, and this is where the efforts of inclusivity should work in our favour. However, in spite of the great deal of work by the editorial committee, there has been a noticeable dip in contributions to the journal overall and this issue is smaller than all those previous. Additionally, enthusiasm for the updatable ‘Forum’ section of the journal has waned, and there are currently no plans to take the journal in this direction in the near future.

In part this must be because of the nature of the journal itself – it is a postgraduate e-journal, maintained by volunteers, is relatively new and untested, and has nothing of the appeal or prestige of some of the better known academic publications, even those published online. Finding the right place for the publication of our cherished projects is something that occupies the minds of academics at all levels of their careers, and many will have higher ambitions than a student publication in its vulnerable, early days of production. This might put off even those who have heard of us, let alone those who have not, a feeling to which academics within the IAA will not be immune. Other factors for the dip in contributions may include the time at which the current issue's publication was attempted. Perhaps we have fallen foul of a natural lull in the academic calendar corresponding to the early weeks of the academic term. Although this did not effect the previous autumn issue, that issue was our first and we discovered a healthy stock of dissertations and projects that could be prepared for publication. The first two issues came relatively easily, in that regard. So, considering Issue Three to be a part of the 'early days' of the establishment of the publication might provide some explanation (and consolation) for the current situation.

One thing is certain: if *Rosetta* is to survive as a journal and to build upon the successes of the first two issues then we need to address problems of participation and contribution. I believe that two provisos go with this decision. Firstly, the high quality of the papers must be maintained in the interests of professionalism. Secondly, we must continue to commit to publish twice yearly (although the publication dates may be malleable to a degree), in order to use these autumn and spring thresholds to project the journal's identity outwards to Birmingham students and staff and the wider academic community. Postgraduate journals that only publish annually often face problems in successfully handing over the reigns to new coordinators, and issues may skip a year or two as a result. It seems to me that it is the sense of shared ownership of the journal that is essential to the achievement of these two stipulations. Without the enthusiasm of students of the IAA the journal is not only likely to fail, but perhaps should fail, since it loses its *raison d'être*.

To an extent these problems were anticipated and I can happily report that efforts are already underway to build upon the momentum of the first two issues. Many of the editorial committee have been involved since the first issue and some of those who have moved on will remain keen to be of service in the future. Closer ties have also been made with the Institute's

Postgraduate Forum¹ and these informal presentations will no doubt prove to be a useful breeding ground for ideas and contributions in the manner of the Institute's Postgraduate Colloquium. The colloquium is an annual event that showcases the early stages of the postgraduate community's research and aims to establish academic connections across the breadth of the Institute. As such the colloquium forms a high tide mark for interdisciplinary cooperation within the IAA and corresponds to the ethos of the journal.

In the past Colloquium presentations have formed the bulk of the submissions to Rosetta and this is sure to continue. Speakers at the Institute's Interdisciplinary Seminar Series, 'Landscapes of Death'² and those of the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies³ could also provide copy for the journal, and students active in these groups are encouraged to suggest that speakers publish in Rosetta. Contributions from Institute staff would also be warmly received and would add to the journal's developing reputation and appeal. Additionally, financial support for the publicising of the journal has been offered by the IAA, and the advice of an in-house professional has been promised. Effective advertising would also help to expand Rosetta's readership and contributions, as would the announcement of our existence at national and international conferences, something that we would encourage students and staff to do for us. We hope to offer the materials to make this easier (colour posters, leaflets, and so on) in the near future. Contact has also been made with two well-established postgraduate journals – Sheffield's *Assemblage*⁴ and *Archaeological Review* from Cambridge.⁵

There is complete agreement that the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity's great variety and multi-disciplinary connections are good for the intellectual life of both the Institute and the journal. It is worth repeating that the self-identification of students and staff as members of the IAA who are operating individually and within their own groups is both the means and the outcome of this academic process. Rosetta is a necessary part of this blend of activities – and that implicates all within the IAA in its future.

Robin Bryn Weaver

In memory of my father Bryn Weaver (1940-2007) who died during the preparation of this issue.

¹ <http://iaaforum.bham.ac.uk/>

² <http://www.iaa.bham.ac.uk/seminars/sem2death.pdf>

³ <http://www.iaa.bham.ac.uk/seminars/cbomgs07.htm>

⁴ <http://www.assemblage.group.shef.ac.uk/>

⁵ <http://www.societies.cam.ac.uk/arc/>