

7 April 2025



Virtual Centre for Late Antiquity

[www.vcla.org.uk](http://www.vcla.org.uk)

Llandrindod Wells

Wales, UK

## LATE ANTIQUITY BOOK PRIZE 2025

*in memory of Bill Podmore (1933–2016)*

### SCOPE AND AIM

The scope of the subject matter eligible for the Book Prize is as follows:

- (1) the period between approximately 200 CE and approximately 600 CE (in the former West Roman world and its neighbours) or approximately 700 CE (further East);
- (2) social, economic, political, cultural and religious history, including literary and material culture, thus including archaeology;
- (3) the territories and former territories of —
  - (a) the Roman and Persian empires;
  - (b) those regions and peoples of Europe, Africa and Asia with which the citizens or subjects of the Roman or Persian empires, or the occupants of the former territories of those empires, interacted either directly or via an intermediary.

On the basis of this scope, the aim of the Book Prize is to call some attention to particularly good authorship — in terms of both research and writing — in so far as that authorship addresses the history and/or archaeology of the field, broadly understood.

### ELIGIBILITY

The prize will be awarded to the author, or authors, of a book. To be shortlisted, a book needs to be a coherent whole, having a singular mind and ‘voice’ behind it. Shortlisted books will therefore, most likely, be the product of research and writing by a sole author. Limited joint authorship — probably no more than two or three persons — might also be eligible; but the authors must, in that case, take cabinet responsibility for a coherent whole book. As there is currently no drought of books that meet these terms, the VCLA will not be shortlisting edited books that are multi-author collections of discrete chapters or translations of previously published books. Members of the judging panel and VCLA employees are not eligible.

The prize is open to authors at any career stage. The 2025 prize is for books with a copyright year of 2024. If the year of first publication (whether physical or electronic) and the stated copyright year diverge, then the VCLA will decide on eligibility, based on circumstances. There is no limit on nationality, residence or language of publication.

Virtual Centre for Late Antiquity (established 2017) is a private company limited by guarantee, without shareholding, incorporated in the jurisdiction of England and Wales, UK, with company number 10750650.

The VCLA has a Section 60 exemption, and therefore does not have ‘Ltd’ (or equivalent) in its name. This is because the Articles of Association contain educational objects, and an asset lock that requires any surplus to be reinvested in those objects rather than being distributed to members.

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## PROCESS

Titles are gathered by approaching publishers, surveying catalogues, and taking soundings from experts in the broad field. Additionally, the VCLA invites nominations and self-nominations, with a nomination closing date of 31 May 2025. Members of the judging panel can make proposals — save that the VCLA expects to be informed of any connection to authors. The VCLA aims to announce a shortlist of 6 titles in September and to make an award in November.

## CRITERIA

The first priority is research that is distinctive for its originality, rigour, and significance. We look for a solid, learned contribution to the field. Actual discoveries should be subjected to analysis and interpretation, and not simply reported. Otherwise, new analyses, arguments and interpretations are all eligible. Works of synthesis are eligible; but these are also assessed for originality, rigour, and significance. This means that surveys that are intended by design to reflect the existing state of knowledge, without a distinctive personal treatment, will not be shortlisted.

The second priority is literary. We make no assumption that we will find work that merits literary prizes, although we shall be happy if we do. Otherwise, we are looking, simply, for good prose. For us, this means that we are looking, especially, for concision and clarity, well-judged diction and syntax, and hopefully a sense of pace. Well-made sentences that flow effectively are abundantly preferable to sentences that trundle and bump. Technical work is absolutely fine; but we dislike *avoidable* obscurity. If an author shows a sense of style, we incline to welcome this; but judges are free to form their own views about an author's style.

On the basis of these criteria, we have no interest in the boundaries between 'academic', 'crossover' and 'trade' books. We are not judging sales and marketing strategies.

## JUDGING PANEL 2025

Samra Azarnouche (France)  
Susanna Elm (Germany / USA)  
Kyle Harper (USA)  
Olivier Hekster (Netherlands)  
Sabine Hübner (Germany / Switzerland)  
Samuel Lieu (UK)  
David Potter (USA)

*Additional expert readers as required*



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