

Symposium Abstracts
Knowing Bodies, Passionate Souls: Sense Perceptions in Byzantium
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**The Phenomenon of Embellishment and Re-composition in the Music of
Late Byzantium**

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Reconstruction of the soundscape (Schafer 1994, Lingas 2013) of various Byzantine environments in which the performance of music played an integral role remains a rather elusive endeavor for the modern scholar, as virtually no notated manuscripts of instrumental or secular vocal music survive. In contrast to this, we are able to reconstruct the aural profile of Byzantine liturgical offices and some imperial court ceremonies – at least in part – thanks to notated manuscripts of ‘Byzantine chant’, of which approximately one thousand survive from around the ninth until the middle of the fifteenth century. In the middle of the twelfth century, when melodic notation had attained a relatively high degree of precision, the first traces of a new musical style – *καλοφωνία* (lit: ‘beautiful sound’) – are found. In its fully developed state, *kalophonia* is characterized by effusive vocal writing, modal variety, the rearrangement of text, and the intrusion of non-discursive textual elements such as *te-ri-rem*. That this style truly constituted a ‘new art’ is further emphasized by the fact that the sources burgeon with the names of hundreds of composers alongside chants that, in some cases, seem to achieve the status of ‘art works’, in that they are named, attributed, reproduced, and referred to as exemplars. Generally ignored by musicologists of the first half of the twentieth century in favor of less melismatic repertoires (e.g., the *Heirmologion* and *Sticherarion*), *kalophonic* chants have been the subject of extensive musicological inquiry since the 1970s. Recent studies have focused on *kalophonia*’s connection to earlier, florid repertoires, its relationship to concomitant spiritual practices, and its impact on the contour and overall aesthetics of worship in late Byzantium. In this paper, I shall focus on a relatively uninvestigated genre of *kalophonic* chant, the *kalophonic stichera*, and on the phenomenon of subsequent embellishments that occurred within this repertory *after* the *kalophonic* style was fully entrenched. A characteristic example of this phenomenon of embellishment is found on fol. 133r of MS Iviron 975, an autograph of Manuel Chrysaphes, imperial court musician under the final two emperors of Byzantium. Prior to the composition, *Μάγοι Περασῶν βασιλεῖς*, a festal chant sung at the meal of the Emperor on Christmas Day, Chrysaphes writes: “Another *Pentecostarion* for Christmas, a composition by Ioannes Comnenos, embellished afterwards by Xenos Korones, and then later, unified and embellished a bit by Chrysaphes.” This highlights a remarkable process of re-composition that is at least four layers (and several centuries) deep. Such refashioning of earlier models is found throughout this repertory in the form of embellishments, abbreviations, and in some cases, revisions. An analysis of this process of re-composition sheds light not only on the aural substance of these embellishments, but also on the ever-changing aesthetics of musicians, patrons, and congregations – all active participants in the sonic environment of worship in late Byzantium.

Struggling with Romanos's "Dagger of Taste"

Thomas Arentzen (Lund)

The sixth-century hymnographer Romanos the Melodist has a developed language of eating and drinking, of anticipated meals and enjoyable feasts, and yet his palette of tastes is all but colorful. Hunger and thirst, on the other hand, are vibrantly displayed across the canvas. I take this to reflect a historical reality in which the lack of nutritious food may have been more urgent to most people than the lack of tasteful food. In this paper, then, I shall explore not only what the different tastes tell us, but also how a selection of characters approach food and drink with various hues of desire in Romanos's poetry: the corpulent overeater (Hades) of bad-tasting food – who eats until he vomits; Jesus and the Samaritan woman thirsting for each other's water; the junction between the Virgin's breast-milk and congregational appetite; the ravenous craving – despicable or desirable? – of the harlot in love. Romanos's universe appoints a central position to the fervently yearning self, with its hunger and thirst. This paper explores how plain flavors intersect with the rich patterns of gustatory expectations and excitement. Attempting to cut a breach between the untasteful and that which is becoming, the "dagger of taste," as Romanos calls it, comes to serve religious discernment. Hence the faithful, with all their desires and needs, may be "depicted in true colors" by the Samaritan Woman and her unquenchable thirst for sweet water.

Sensing Beauty: Medieval Art, the Five Senses and the Art Museum

Martina Bagnoli (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore)

I am currently working on an exhibition on the five senses in medieval art. The exhibition is not a survey of representations of the five senses, although these will feature. Rather, it is meant as an exploration of the multimodal performance of medieval objects. One of the aims of the exhibition is to recalibrate the emphasis placed on intellectual vision as the ultimate goal of medieval art. As scholars have shifted their focus on issues of materiality and manufacture, they have questioned the strict hierarchy of sensory perception that such paradigm implies and the strictures of theological discourse that it imposes on art. Starting from these premises my exhibition will encourage visitors to experience medieval art thinking with all their senses. But how to put on display an aesthetics of the senses? Art Museums were born at a time when aesthetics was devoid of all emotions. In his celebrated *Philosophy of Art*, Hegel regards vision as "appetiteless" saying that all true looking is without desire, and that there can be no aesthetics of odor, texture, or flavor, which are debased modes of access to the world. Two hundred centuries later, museum displays are still made for "appetiteless" looking. They are designed to foster an engagement with art that is meant to take the body out of the equation. An exhibition on the five senses in medieval art puts to the test the trend towards experiential learning that museums across the world have implemented for over twenty years. Displays in museums increasingly rely on visitors' active participation. The public is asked to touch and smell things or to hear sounds that help contextualize works of art. But is such an overt sensory stimulation the right way of doing an exhibition on the five senses? Or shouldn't we instead ask the eyes to hear the sound of music, or the hand to see God, the way medieval images tricked the viewer into doing? And what does this say about sensing beauty?

The Saint's Two Bodies: Sensibility under (Self-)Torture in Byzantine Hagiography

Stavroula Constantinou (University of Cyprus)

Under (self-) torture, the holy protagonists of Byzantine hagiography acquire a double body: a body that undergoes great pain and suffering, and a body that experiences immense joy and a number of other strong feelings. Hagiographers tend to pay less attention to the feelings of the suffering body while they emphasize the senses of the second body, which reaches a state of ecstasy. By stressing the saint's ecstatic experiences, hagiographers reveal the essence of holiness that is high spirituality achieved through inhuman yet voluntary suffering. This spirituality however is not incorporeal but it is perceived through the senses. Under extreme pain, the holy protagonist sees, hears, smells and tastes God, and he or she feels intense emotions, such as pleasure, satisfaction, awe and terror. The representation of holiness as a bodily experience enables hagiographers to render the achievement and the meaning of sanctity more accessible and more understandable to the texts' audiences.

This paper explores the sensibility of the suffering saint's double body, its anatomy and rhetoric. It also examines the double body's narrative significance and its effects on the texts' audiences. Through the analysis attempted here, it is argued that the holy protagonist's sensibility offers a key to understanding the workings of Byzantine sanctity. For the purposes of the present paper texts are used that belong to most hagiographical genres: Passion, saint's Life, collective biography, and *Apophthegmata Patrum* ranging from the fourth to the twelfth centuries.

Geographies of Silence in Late Antiquity

Kim Haines-Eitzen (Cornell)

What is silence? And how is silence—or stillness, *hesychia*—animated in the service of the ascetic project? As a sensory landscape, to what extent does the *eremos*—the desert or wilderness—provide a place of quiet? These questions lie at the center of this paper, which treats the desert as an acoustic territory for monasticism in late antiquity. The tensions and paradoxes that inhered to “wilderness”—as imagined and experienced—were powerfully productive, and techniques for stilling the body in a noisy world came to be carefully delineated in the literature of desert monasticism. Athanasios's *Life of Anthony* and John Klimakos's *Ladder of Divine Ascent* will serve as windows onto sonically charged notions of “desert,” “solitude,” and “silence” as well as shifts in the ascetic ideologies of place and space as sensed, cultivated, and imagined.

Dancing with the Angel of Death: The Adulterous Woman of Numbers 5

Laura S. Lieber (Duke University)

For their audiences, the sensory experience of liturgical poetry is both rhetorical (literarily engaged through the medium of words) and performative (engaged through the experience of hearing and seeing the poem brought to life and even through participating in its performance through refrains). In his interpretation of Numbers 5, the ritual trial of the accused adulteress, the Jewish poet Yannai (sixth century, Galilee) makes rich use of both rhetorical and performative sensory engagement. He employs three overlapping rhetorical modes: the apocalyptic, the forensic, and the magical. The apocalyptic mode provides

Yannai with a means for transforming the accused woman into a demonic figure. The forensic mode enables Yannai to cast his male and female listeners as not only judge and jury but also accuser and accused. The magical mode permits Yannai to imagine the woman's seductiveness as a kind of love-magic that, through the power of his rhetoric, he could counteract. Through his synthesis of apocalyptic, forensic, and magical rhetoric, the poet both amplifies and nullifies the threat of the adulterous-demonic woman even as he renews and extends a defunct biblical ritual into the present-day context. By means of his rhetoric, as experienced in the synagogue venue, the poet and his community (male and female) are able to comprehend, navigate, and neutralize challenges of female sexuality and domesticity. Each of these rhetorical modes provides Yannai with a specific vocabulary, literary and physical, for engaging his audiences. The poem's density of active, vigorous verbal forms and visually vivid imagery collapse the distance between biblical past and theatrical-liturgical present, drawing the community into the scriptural scene as active emotional participants in the drama. The immediacy of the poem is effected through evocation of auditory, visual, and tactile sensations as well as the experiential elements of the precentor's bodily performance. Analytical terms from the Greco-Roman *progymnasmata*, particularly the concepts of *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*, help structure the analysis in this essay, as does the study of gesture and body language in antiquity from the fields of rhetoric, law, and theater.

To Touch or not to Touch: Erotic Tactility in Byzantine Literature

Ingela Nilsson (Uppsala)

Touching is not a central part of Byzantine eroticism; erotic tension is created rather by *not* touching the object of desire: you may watch but not touch, smell the fragrance but not bite into the fruit. This construct is significant especially in hagiography, where the temptation episodes are often created on the basis of the touchable vs the intouchable. The same tendency may be noted also beyond purely Christian texts, in novelistic and philosophical literature. In the present paper I shall explore the workings of erotic tactility in Byzantium with a special focus on this reluctance to touch and its presence and significance in Christian and profane literature. Particular attention will be given to texts that may be seen as generic borderline cases, that is, texts that may be seen as hagiographical or spiritual novels (e.g. *Barlaam and Ioasaph*) or novelistic Lives (e.g. *Life of Meletios* by Theodore Prodromos).

Toward a Sonic History of Byzantium

Amy Papalexandrou (University of Texas, Austin)

Like all human beings, the Byzantines were profoundly affected by their sonic environment. Despite this only a few components of the Byzantine soundscape – mainly orality but also theatron, music and acoustics – have become part of the scholarly dialogue, and the larger conversation on sound – of all kinds, both human and non-human, has yet to be fully embraced. In other words, while we have produced some interesting sound bites, we still lack a rigorous sonic anthropology of the Byzantine world. This is of course due to the ephemeral nature of sound, but another layer of separation stems from the profound differences between our own, hyper-mechanized acoustic horizon and the remote, quieter hubbub of the Byzantine Middle Ages. These constraints render any reconstruction of the

Byzantine soundscape exceedingly difficult, but not impossible. Assistance comes by way of literary sources, wherein individual perceptions and opinions concerning sound's organizing potential, its ability to soothe, frighten and amaze, its role in fighting oblivion and safeguarding memory, etc., have been recorded. In my paper I draw from several sources including saints' *vitae*, philosophical writings, ekphraseis, and divinatory manuals in order to shed light on how the Byzantines thought about and experienced sound. Also important is the survival of a number of architectural spaces, the sonic properties of which were occasionally commented on. I hope to show that dedicated sound studies are important not only to our knowledge of individual experience and cultural identity in Byzantium but also to the growing interest in the Byzantine sensorium.

How Bodies Know, How We Know Bodies

Glenn Peers (University of Texas at Austin)

Chrysippus's paradox can lead to understanding how we come to know complex identity in Byzantine art. Unsympathetically transmitted by Philo, it argues for restrictive identity: once Theon's foot has been cut off, he ceases to exist, and Dion the newly (de)formed man survives intact. In obedience to Leibniz's Law, if two objects are identical, then they share all properties, and so one must perish; identity must be consistent in objects in every respect of that Law. In its persistence and change over time, historical art cannot conform to that Law, and a question always answered by deduction, imagination and science has been the limits of our knowing a past culture through our bodies. Take the frescoes from the Church of St. Euphemitos, originally from Lysi, Cyprus, as an extreme, but revealing, example. Severed from its original context by looters, the frescoes were purchased and restored by the Menil Collection in Houston; they were housed in a purpose-built chapel there from 1997-2012, when they returned to Cyprus for display in the Archbishop's Museum in Nicosia. Each phase of this existence, still unfolding toward a hoped-for completion of a circular journey back to Lysi, determines our understanding of that artifact. Each challenges assertion of identity as well. Few conditions across this existence are consistent, predictable, controllable by experiencing bodies. And here we, as contemporary bodies wishing to know, run up against impediments to our own knowing. In other words, art-historically describing Hagia Sophia in all its splendor posits qualities the church timelessly has, but *has ceased to possess*. We give the same name, ascribe (intuitively) relative identity, and determine bodies' knowing in terms between Byzantine and us. Art historians perhaps too often describe Theon before amputation, when we are really examining Dion. And yet, another conundrum makes possible and clear that identifying the balancing point in restoration is crucial for our own apprehensions of the art we try to contextualize. The line between the authentic ship of Theseus and its recreation through cast-off materials (Plutarch and Hobbes are the reference points here, ultimately) is movable when trying to define authenticity of objects and perception of them. The relative identity of works that can be separately original and restored makes it possible to have two works occupying the same space at the same time. Two icons at the Menil Collection have salvaged passages of paint that make clear their subjects (the Virgin Mary, and the Archangels Michael and Gabriel), but the wooden bed for those passages is no minor part of the object, and so the point along which these icons fall in the spectrum from "real" and "remade" is not entirely clear and stable. In the recent exhibition *Byzantine Things in the World*, that very ambiguity made these icons perceptually rich encounters among historical and modern works. Not only recognizing, then, but also fully

exploring the ramifications of that relative identity are essential steps in addressing the Byzantine sensorium as *honestly* as possible. Increased interest in the domains of the senses over the last generation has led to scholarly self-knowledge of limitations. We know and recognize with difficulty our own bodies, and bodies of the past with compounded difficulty, therefore. But the only way into those bodies is careful imagining of those bodies by means of ours, and so expansive imagining is necessary for knowing the entry of bodies into Hagia Sophia and Lysi's timeless qualities no longer in time. The stimulations of these spaces infiltrate texts (primary and secondary), but always indistinctly, and the full range of those spaces' work on bodies could not even have been recognized fully by those experiencing them. Intuitively present and active, senses ample and fill more than the sufficient five, to include proprioception, exteroception and interoception. We need to recognize the identities of our objects of study and, likewise, in a self-knowing way contend with our senses of imagination in order to know those past bodies.

The Spiritual Senses: Monastic and Theological

Marcus Plested (Marquette University)

An appreciation of Byzantine sense perception would certainly lack luster without the dimension of the *spiritual* senses. These are the faculties within the human being corresponding in some manner to the physical senses of sight, taste, touch, smell, hearing but capable of direct apprehension of divine and spiritual realities. I shall in this presentation explore the nature of the correspondence between physical and spiritual senses, thereby opening up a number of questions surrounding the Byzantine understanding(s) of the role of the body in the spiritual life. I shall also consider the question of number: whether there is one spiritual sense, or five, or even more. Principal sources to be addressed include Origen, Macarius (Macarius-Symeon), St Maximus the Confessor St Symeon the New Theologian, and St Gregory Palamas. In the case of the last, the notion of the spiritual senses impacts directly on the controversy surrounding Hesychast practices of prayer, the vision of divine light, and the essence-energies distinction. Consideration of the spiritual senses brings us to the heart of the Byzantine theological thought-world with its distinctive intuition of the complementarity and co-inherence of the noetic and the sensible, the potentiality of matter to instantiate and channel divine grace, and, more generally, the sheer thinness of the line between the natural and the supernatural. Due attention will also be paid to the liturgical, ascetic, and aesthetic contexts.

Finding Scents in Islamic Gardens

D. Fairchild Ruggles (University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana)

Poetry, written descriptions, botanical treatises, and painted miniatures reveal that through history Islamic gardens were rich sensory environments that resounded with splashing fountains and chirping birds, and where colorful flowers and shady trees delighted the eye. The flowers brought more than sensory pleasure: they also symbolized the beauty of the beloved (a visual as well as aromatic quality), itself sometimes a metaphor for mystical union with God. Today, although we know that gardens of the past were filled with pungent and sweet herbs, blooms, and fruit, we have to rely on imagination and the memory of analogous scent experiences to try to recreate the scentscape of those lost places. The remembering requires a kind of restaging of the act of smelling, reliving the experience and engaging the

human body again and again in present time. But smelling is not only performative and temporal, it is also spatial: the body must be near the plants that emit fragrance. Similarly for tasting (a sense closely related to smell), the plant must actually be eaten, literally becoming part of the body. Historians who treat the Islamic garden as a purely visual design miss all of this, and yet with only the evidence of pictures and poems to guide us, the challenge is to use the visual and textual to get at the olfactory in order to recapture those ephemeral historic scents.

**Virtual sensations and inner visions: Words and the senses in Late
Antiquity and Byzantium**

Ruth Webb (Université Lille 3, UMR 8163 STL)

Appeals to the senses played a well recognized role in the rhetorical tradition inherited and developed by the Byzantines. Although the sense of sight was of primary importance it was far from the only sense to be involved in such imaginary recreations of scenes and events which could also appeal to hearing, smell and touch. It is clear from discussions and from examples of their use that such effects relied on the active emotional and imaginative involvement of both speakers and audiences. As a result, their function was less to represent than to imitate the effect of direct sensory perception, to make the audience feel “as if” they were in the presence of the things described in order to achieve a variety of effects: to move, to entertain, to persuade. This raises various questions about the ontological status of the resulting virtual sensations and about the potential benefits and dangers that were felt to attach to them. As far as rhetorical theory was concerned, at least, the practical impact of such effects was more important than their relationship to reality. In some Late Antique contexts, by contrast, it is possible to see a new emphasis on their ability to evoke spiritual or psychological realities which can be paralleled in neoplatonic theories of sense perception and the role of inner vision. This paper will examine examples from Late Antiquity (John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzenos, Chorikios and Prokopios of Gaza) and from early Byzantine sermons (George of Nikomedia, Andreas of Crete) in order to determine the range of different configurations of word, imagined or inner sensation, illusion and truth involved.