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**Panel: Smelling Rome**

**Panel convener: Mark Bradley (Nottingham)**

Chair: Shane Butler (Bristol)

From flowers and perfumes to urban sanitation and personal hygiene, smell—a sense that is simultaneously sublime and animalistic—has played a pivotal role in western culture and thought. From medicine to religion, from erotic literature to urban planning, Greek and Roman writers and thinkers lost no opportunity to connect the smells that bombarded their senses to the social, political and cultural status of the individuals and environments they encountered: godly incense and burning sacrifices, seductive scents, aromatic cuisines, stinking bodies, pungent farmyards and festering back-streets.

This panel will present approaches, ideas and arguments about Roman urban smells that have been examined in the recent volume *Smell and the Ancient Senses* (Routledge, 2014), exploring in particular the feasibility of the traditional approach championed by Alex Scobie that reconstructed the Roman urban environment as characteristically noxious, dirty and mephitic. Can modern sensibilities be mapped on to ancient experiences? To what extent are ubiquitous smells subject to habituation and adaptation? And how did Romans approach smelling each other and the world around them? Bradley will begin by addressing why smell occupied such a complex and controversial place in ancient aesthetics, and will examine how olfaction became such a potent tool for understanding and evaluating Roman bodies, characters and behaviours. Koloski-Ostrow will then explore material and archaeological evidence for smell in the cities of Roman Italy and its role in urban organization and management, while also addressing issues surrounding the naturalization of smells and the acclimatization of the Roman nose. Betts will extend this approach by examining the relationship between smell and memory in ancient experiences of space and movement around the city of Rome. Finally, Toner will explore the impact of Christianity on the classification, discussion and evaluation of smells and the shifting aesthetics of olfaction in late antique society and religion. In sum, this panel will explore and probe the ways that odours, aromas, scents and stenches became rich and versatile components of the ancient sensorium, while also examining what ancient Rome can teach us about approaching the history of smell.

**Mark Bradley (Nottingham), *Smell and the ancient senses: approaching olfaction in ancient Rome***

This paper will introduce the panel by examining some of the basic issues and problems underlying the study of smell and olfaction in antiquity, concentrating in particular on the exploitation of smell as a defining characteristic of bodies foul and fragrant in Imperial Rome. Smell was a base, animal behaviour associated with lust, greed and sensuality: the ancients themselves were acutely aware that the smell organs of animals were keener and more discerning than those of humans, and Aristotle struggled to explain olfactory perception much more than that of the other senses, on the grounds that humans made such poor use of it. Nonetheless, Roman satirical texts, Latin elegy and epigrams, biography and historiography regularly explored and probed the odours and stenches of the human body (bad breath, smelly armpits, concealing scents and perfumes) in order to sniff out and expose underlying patterns in behaviour and character. This paper considers the association of foul body odours with immoral behaviour, political corruption and marginal identities, and explores the relationship perceived by Roman thinkers between smells and sexual activity, lifestyle and social and economic status. It examines the relationship between bad smells and obscene habits, the

olfactory stigma attached to foul professions like prostitution and fulling, and finishes by exploring how smell has been used to characterise imperial bodies and the regimes that they governed.

### **Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow (Brandeis), Raising a stink in the Roman city**

This paper explores the smells of ancient Roman cities (Rome, Pompeii, and Ostia) using textual and archaeological evidence, in order to discover what smells existed and how knowing about them can sharpen our understanding of life on Roman streets, in public spaces, and in private dwellings. I review a series of smells from all the chief institutions and structures of the city: from the streets (dung, vomit, pee, shit, detritus, garbage, filthy water, produce moving to markets); from inside tenement buildings (mould, damp basements or first floors, fires, charcoal, stagnant well water, overflowing cesspits); from shops (burning ovens, smoke, meat and vegetable processing); from live animals; from crowded public venues (including theatres, *fora*, and markets); from urban disasters (fires and floods); from inside public baths and toilets; from games in the amphitheatre; from religious worship in and outside temples; and from the rituals connected to death and burial. Even if the Romans were “sensitized” to many powerful smells and could extinguish from their brains and noses noxious odours within seconds to minutes, as modern science is proving about the human nose (M. I. Greenberg, J.A. Curtis, and D. Vearrier, for example), and even if individual Romans could voluntarily learn to extinguish their reactions to olfactory stimuli at will, as other scientists are currently demonstrating (E. W. Corty, R. E. Minehart, and N. M. Campbell), an investigation into the sources and dissemination of ancient smells can revivify the complexity of the ancient city and contribute to a better understanding of urban zoning.

### **Eleanor Betts (Open University), Follow your nose: navigating by smells in imperial Rome**

Employing Drobnick’s concept of ‘pungent loci’, this paper explores the extent to which such locales existed in Rome’s cityscape. Did any areas of Rome have distinct smell patterns? The aim of the paper is to consider the extent to which the pungent loci of central Rome enabled construction of a smell-map by which the heart of the city could be perceived, navigated and understood. It will be argued that pungent loci acted in a similar way to buildings and other architectural features. They were landmarks, nodes, routes; a means by which to comprehend the layout of the city and to make decisions about how to move through it.

The role of smell memory in navigating the city will also be explored. Smell and memory are closely entwined. Any odour has the (potential) ability to create and to recall memories. The heady scent of frankincense encountered for the first time, in the Vicus Tuscus, would contribute to the creation of a memory of that place. In contrast, for someone who already knew the scent, the waft of frankincense might trigger a memory of another place or interaction, and that would make them react to the Vicus Tuscus in a different way. These are examples of the ‘olfactory affect’: odours stimulate subjective, sometimes emotional, sometimes physical, responses and are therefore a means by which place memory is constructed. These subjective responses cannot be recreated and any reconstruction of Rome’s pungent loci and smell-maps will be fragmentary. Nevertheless, exploring the smells of ancient Rome has the potential to give us a more nuanced insight into the way people experienced and moved around the city.

### **Jerry Toner (Cambridge), The smell of Christianity**

Ancient Christianity is often thought of as being an otherworldly, unphysical religion. But in fact it had its own way of using the senses, and its own particular set of odours. Whether it was the use of scents as part of their rituals and processions, the foul stench cultivated by later ascetic holy men, or the imagined fragrance of the afterlife, smell lay at the heart of how Christians defined themselves

and the structure of their communities. Many of these practices and ideas were influenced by pre-existing notions from the pagan and Jewish worlds. In part it represented an attempt to adopt a more readily accessible, popular language, which would help spread the word and encourage conversion. But by adding new forms of moral associations to certain odours, Christians were also able to differentiate themselves from the pre-existing religions they sought to replace. Rome became a place which stank of luxury and vice, whose lack of true religious belief was thought to be reflected in its lack of any properly holy odour. Through senses such as smell, therefore, Christians sought to establish a new sensory order, which replaced these immoral odours that could threaten the soul itself.

From the Roman point of view, many of these Christian ideas seemed to adopt the non-sensual to express their new type of religiosity, a feature which they criticised. In reality, though, Christianity relied every bit on the sensual to express their beliefs in a physical form. Moreover, the use of odours became a central medium through which the individual and the divine could express their relationship and communicate with each other. This represented an intensification of the religious use of the sensory and reflected what the Christians believed to be their more profound religious experience. Above all, it was the personal nature of that relationship between the individual and God which the Christian use of senses sought to capture, however obliquely and fleetingly. Smell, I argue, acted as a sensory metaphor for the proximity between individual souls and the God whose embracing love would bring them salvation.

### **Panel: The Senses in Roman Life**

#### **Jeffrey D. Veitch (Kent), Noisy Neighbourhoods: Soundscapes of the Baths and Streets in Ostia**

The cities of the Roman Empire were noisy places with sounds emanating from shops, bars, houses and baths. Roman authors commonly associate noises with spaces, connecting places within the city with particular noises. Taking these narratives as informal guides, the soundscape of the Roman city can be described. Recently, the views of the Roman authors towards their city have been explored, with only passing references to sounds of the city. In contrast, this paper will begin with the built environment, the physical structures of streets and baths, to understand the architectural influence on the sounds associated with spaces in the city.

Taking Ostia as a case study, the physical structure of spaces can be analysed for its acoustic influence. The absorption and reflection of sounds within spaces can be mapped to see the wider acoustic characteristics of the spaces. These characteristics enable particular hierarchies of space within Ostia in relation to potential levels of sound. The auditory hierarchies are in certain respects different from those normally studied, either implicitly or explicitly defined in visual terms. The inability to turn sounds off means that visually closed off areas (closed doors, enclosed spaces, etc.) can still be experienced. The sounds associated with bath complexes, described by Seneca, are experienced outside the baths. The basic architectural design of the baths in Ostia can be compared with acoustic measures of the space. A similar process can also be produced for sounds associated with streets. In the end, the comparison of the soundscapes for baths and streets in Ostia allows for a nuanced understanding of the division of spaces throughout the day based on the experience of sounds at particular times. By mapping the soundscape of Ostia, the non-visual divisions of space can help in understanding everyday life in the city.

#### **Giacomo Savani (Leicester), Sensing the Baths: Sensorial Experiences in Romano-British Private Baths**

According to a funeral inscription from Rome dating to the Julio-Claudian period (CIL 6.15258), baths, together with wine and sex, were among the pleasures that ‘vitam faciunt’ – ‘make life worth living’. Numerous epigraphic and literary sources from all over the Roman world reinforce this view of baths and bathing as among the few genuine traits of Roman-ness that spanned otherwise multifaceted and multicultural backgrounds. Accordingly, bathing can be seen as essential to Roman identity and core in the processes of cultural change promoted by Rome in her distant provinces, including Britain, as evident in the many bath complexes, often substantial and elaborate, excavated in Romano-British towns, forts and villas. However, most emphasis has been placed on the public *thermae* and far less attention given to private rural establishments which have much to tell us of private lives, identities and status. While my PhD research explores the nature of villa bath complexes in Roman Britain, this paper tackles a more basic and human aspect, namely the sensorial experience of bathing. All senses were involved in the daily ritual that took place in baths: on arrival, sight would be stimulated by the rich decoration of painted wall plaster and mosaics; the body swiftly reacted to temperature variations; there was the tactile experience of the increasing humidity on the wet surfaces of the rooms; the scent of perfumed oils might arise; conversations between other bathers stimulated hearing; and, perhaps, oysters and other delicacies satisfied taste. But how far can we trace these intimate components of bathing in the available archaeology? What might they tell us of the bathers and the rituals of bathing in rural Roman Britain? Was such rural bathing much different from the public, urban context? And can this study help in questions of provincial take-up of Roman ideals? In so doing, new light will be shed on the evanescent but essential role of the senses in our understanding of ancient practices and new ideas will be offered to the broader debate on the provincial acceptance and re-interpretation of the bathing experience.

### **Michael Beer (Exeter College), ‘I’m not putting that in my mouth!’: confounding culinary expectations at Roman aristocratic banquets**

A significant trend in modern cookery has been termed ‘molecular gastronomy’. It is an approach that attracts as many critics as adherents, adopting a deconstructivist stance, transforming dishes into playful experiments in wrong-footing the diner. Each meal becomes a *trompe l’oeil*, with textures and tastes radically manipulated, resulting in a discrepancy between what the diner sees and smells, his expectations, and what he will actually taste. Often, the chef will seek to enhance the culinary experience by the utilisation of sounds, smells, lighting, even the texture of the dining table and chairs, in order to create a gastronomic *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The sourcing of ingredients, the labour-intensiveness of the culinary process and the expertise required means that these meals are frequently restricted to the wealthy. However, the diners of the Fat Duck and El Bulli were not the first to experience such gastronomic delights. In several Roman texts, we learn of extravagant aristocratic banquets, where sumptuous and excessive consumption appears in the form of a series of elaborate culinary jokes and gastronomic innovations. The authors of the texts themselves tend to see these occasions as opportunities to criticise the perceived decadence or crassness of their hosts, but perhaps modern trends in cuisine can lead us to a re-reading and reappraisal of these occasions. This paper will focus on three examples of the ancient meal as sensory distortion. The first is the infamous ‘black banquet’ of Domitian, where themed dining was taken to strange and menacing extremes. Second are the culinary innovations of the third century emperor Elagabalus. The final example will be the fictional dinner given by the ex-slave Trimalchio, in Petronius’ *Satyricon*. This paper will examine how food innovation and experimentation reveals much about Roman attitudes to power, identity, an enduring fascination with the lifestyles of the rich and famous, and the way that extravagant and unusual dining was often explicitly linked with moral deviance and abnormality.

### **Jo Day (UCD), Making Sense of Saffron in the Roman World**

In recent years, a sensory approach to material culture has gained ground in archaeology, mirroring the broader rise in sensory studies across the humanities. The goal of such studies is not to recreate ancient smells or sounds, but to advocate the importance of past bodily interaction with artefacts and architecture, and the socially meaningful consequences. Usually such explorations focus on tangible aspects of the archaeological record such as buildings or vessels. While these are abundant finds in Classical archaeology, the Classical world also has left a rich textual record that can be used to explore the sensory affordances of less durable objects.

This paper will focus on the multisensory properties of one such ephemeral material in Roman times, saffron. No palaeobotanical remains of saffron have been recovered, but the expensive spice, produced mainly in Cilicia, had a range of uses from perfume to medicine to *sparsiones* in the amphitheatre. Moreover, the connection between olfactory stimulation and moments of transition made saffron especially important in funerary rituals and communication with the divine. Rather than simply providing flavour, colour or aroma, the spice was often presented by ancient authors as synaesthetic, delivering what can be termed “fragrant colour.” This paper will explore how fragrant colour was crucial in the creation and recollection of memories, and thus contributed to making sense of place and of self in ancient Rome.

### **Panel: Sacred Space and the Senses**

**Panel convener: Ghislaine van der Ploeg (Warwick)**

Chair and respondent: Michael C. Scott (Warwick)

In recent years there has been much scholarly interest in space (e.g. Scott (2013) and Hales (2013)) leading to the realisation that this concept is not static but is a fluid social construct. The diverse and versatile sensory nature of sacred space has not yet been fully explored, something which would better allow for an appreciation and understanding of its aesthetic dimensions. Sacred space determined the layout of a city but the wild space of rural shrines would have had a very different sensory impact upon the worshipper. Representations of divine epiphanic moments, for example in reliefs or hymns, offered models of emulation for the viewer and the gaze, caught between the god and worshipper, signals the reciprocity inherent in the relationship between these two parties. The sensory field allows for an exploration of the spatio-temporal relationship between gods and humans and also raises the question how this can be aptly represented and communicated. This panel will present a diverse range of case-studies, aiming to further our understanding of the multi-dimensional sensory experience of sacred space in both Greece and the Roman world, and via a variety of sources such as texts, architecture, and epigraphy. This multifaceted exploration is important as the languages of material, visual, and verbal arts developed side-by-side. The relationship between sacred space and the senses is examined in the Greek world by Taylor who looks at the impact of the natural environment on space and by Fearn who will consider the representation of the senses in Attic commemorative poetry. Jewell presents on experiencing colour in the forum of Augustus, examining the intersection between space and the senses in Rome, and van der Ploeg will focus on the sensory impact of an imperial visit to an Asclepieion.

### **Joanna Kemp (Warwick), Movement, the Senses and Representations of the Roman World: Experiencing a Roman Triumph and the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias**

In the West the five senses, as described in Aristotle’s *De Anima*, dominate. Yet elsewhere in the world, experiences such as balancing and kinaesthesia are also seen as key senses (Guerts (2002)). Yannis Hamilakis (2014) has also shown how senses could be political and Jacques Rancière (2004) highlighted what was allowed to be experienced and what was denied to individuals. In this way,

aesthetics accordingly became part of the 'arena of sensorial experience.' This paper takes two 'monuments': the imperial triumph in Rome and the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias and investigates how different the two actually are when the senses are considered. It takes an aspect that appears in both: representations of geographical landmarks or peoples with their labels, and asks how kinaesthesia and other sensory experiences contributed to the overall impressions that were taken away by the spectators. In a triumph, the spectators would have been static and the images were led past with placards declaring who was represented. However, in the Sebasteion, built in the first century AD to honour the Julio-Claudian emperors, the reliefs of various ethnē were placed above a portico, also with labels declaring who they were representing. In this setting the people were moving and the images static, either as the procession went past or as people wandered through. All of the five (or more) senses would have combined to create a 'sense' of the *oikoumene* or *orbis terrarum* in the mind of those experiencing the monuments.

### **David Fearn (Warwick), Contacting Aiakos: Ritual and Poetic Haptics in Pindar's *Nemean 8***

The variety of ways in which epinician poetry relates to the gods and to Greek religion has, for many important reasons, been the subject of a great deal of discussion. As yet, however, there have been relatively few attempts to interrelate Greek lyric poetry, material culture, and Greek religious experience, or ask the basic methodological questions of why, and on what terms, this particular brand of commemorative poetry can be seen to engage in a variety of ways with contemporary religious art.

In this paper I discuss the ways in which Pindar uses the language and imagery of vision and physical contact to express the relation between memorializing poetry and mythological and ritual frameworks. I focus on the arresting encounter between the Pindaric 'I' and the Aeginetan cult-hero Aiakos in lines 7–16 of *Nemean 8*. I seek to account fully for the statement 'a suppliant, I am clasping the hallowed knees of Aiakos' (lines 13–14), and to explore the potential for interfaces with contemporary art and ritual through contextual allusion to the Aeginetan Aiakeion shrine. This will be considered as part of the poem's broader use of visual and haptic metaphors – perhaps most notably 'delight strives to set before the eyes what is trustworthy', lines 44–5 – and as a way to emphasize the importance of the language of the senses within a wider-ranging Pindaric musing on poetry's potential to grant special access: to the mythical; to ritual; to heroes; to the deceased and to the past; to context; to truth.

This paper will go beyond illustrational or descriptive approaches to the relation between lyric poetry and material culture in this period. It will reveal the extent to which epinician poetry can both use and creatively interact with material cultural methods of framing encounters with the divine, in order to preserve and project its own distinctive take on Greek religious experience. The paper will demonstrate that a sensory approach to Pindaric aesthetics is a highly productive line of enquiry.

### **Victoria Jewell (Warwick), Paved with Marble: Experiencing Colour in the Forum of Augustus**

When we think about ancient architecture, we often imagine a two-dimensional plan, a line drawing of a reconstruction, or perhaps recollect the ruins themselves. We might be familiar with the site, its history and the message of the building in its original composition, but there is still a tendency to view it in monochrome. While we might make note of, and accept that, a piece of architecture or a statue would have been polychrome, very little discussion is accorded to the significance of this. It has become tradition, either because of lack of evidence, or through misconceptions of 'clean' white art, that the subject matter and form of a piece has priority over colour. This paper will highlight this issue in the context of the polychrome marble flooring of the Forum of Augustus. Several accounts mention the coloured marble floor of the forum, yet none examine and analyse this as part of the

arrangement of imagery and messages prevalent in the structure. Previous scholarship has addressed the importance of colour to our understanding of art in general and some have begun to address the use of marble as a medium for Roman art. I hope to bring these elements together using interdisciplinary research to offer a new insight into the Forum of Augustus.

I will examine how the selection of coloured marble was employed across the space to find connections and meanings behind their use. I will then investigate how colour was perceived in Imperial Rome, and how this would have heightened the experience of the monument for the visitor. In doing so, this paper will not only rediscover the display of colour but illustrate how the marbles were applied to harmonise with the design of the rest of the forum and consolidate the position of Augustus in Rome.

### **Ghislaine van der Ploeg (Warwick), The Sensory Experience of Caracalla's Supplication at the Pergamene Asclepieion**

An imperial visit to a city was a grand affair, from the emperor's *adventus*, to sacrificing at local shrines, to the commemorative acts which followed. This paper aims to examine the multisensory impact of an imperial visit to a sanctuary via the case-study of Caracalla's worship of Asclepius in Pergamum in AD 213-14. This visit was commemorated on a series of coins struck shortly after the event, which depict the acts of the emperor as he moved through the city to the Asclepieion and from secular to sacred space. These coins offer a two-dimensional image of an imperial supplication and it is possible for the visual and auditory impact of such an event to become lost in scholarly discourse. Upon his arrival, Caracalla greets the cult-statue of Asclepius which adds another sense, that of touch, and raises the issue of communicating with the god, through his image.

This paper aims to explore the multisensory nature of an imperial visit to a sanc sanctuary and examine the lasting effects of these supplications, such as the coin series and the alteration of the visual landscape of the sanctuary as Caracalla's cult-statue was added to the temple of Asclepius. In doing so it will bring new depth to the study of imperial and divine relations as well as address the issue that often events such as these were not as neat and as clean-cut as is sometimes imagined nowadays. This paper will address the following questions: How does our understanding of an imperial visit and supplication change when the sensory nature of such an event is examined? and How did Caracalla's patronage of Asclepius have a lasting impact upon the sacred topography of Pergamum?

### **Panel: The Experience of Ancient Polytheism**

#### **Panel convener: Heather Hunter-Crawley (Bristol)**

In recent years, the emergence of New Materialism has enabled increasingly sophisticated methodologies of sensory perception to be applied in historical contexts, offering advances in our understanding of medieval, Byzantine, and late-antique art and religion (revealing the sensory, embodied nature of early Christian belief and practice, e.g. Hunter-Crawley 2012). The cognitive turn has concurrently focused the study of ancient religion on the individual religious actor, inviting questions about the experience of religious ritual, particularly in mystery cults (Bowden 2010). This panel examines the extent to which sensory, cognitive, and New Materialist models of experience are helpful in making sense of ancient polytheisms, both Roman and Greek. It asks whether the question of religious experience is Christianising, and if it is therefore an appropriate framework for understanding pre-Christian religions; or, whether experience is an inevitable and essential feature

of all religious practice, neglected to the detriment of our understanding of ancient religion more broadly.

Papers on this panel will consider the relevance of an experiential framework for understanding religious practices that include: the mystery cult of Mithras; classical Attic funerary cult; the deposit of votive figurines; and Roman domestic cult. These practices are predominantly illustrated by material evidence, which furthermore invites discussion about the role that material evidence can play in our understanding of ancient religion.

### **Hugh Bowden (KCL), The Mysteries of Mithras: Meaning and Experience**

The first speaker will open the panel with the question of materiality and experience in: 'The Mysteries of Mithras: Meaning and Experience'. The Roman cult of Mithras notoriously has no texts securely associated with it (leaving aside the so-called 'Mithras Liturgy' *PGM* 4.475-834), though it does have a rich iconographic repertoire (focused on, but not restricted to, the so-called *tauroctony*). It is not clear whether this iconography reveals a consistent understanding of the mysteries of Mithras, and the cult activities associated with Mithraic 'caves'. We cannot assume that all Mithraic sites shared the same features, or that the iconographic material had a common meaning. One way to move forward is to consider the cult from the perspective of individual participants, with less concern for what the mysteries meant, and more for what it might have been like to experience them. This paper focuses on one specific site, London's Walbrook Mithraeum, and seeks to show what we can learn about the sensory and intellectual experience of participating in cult at that site.

### **Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis (KCL/Oxford), Materiality, the senses and religion: the experience of death in Classical Greece**

In 'Materiality, the senses and religion: the experience of death in Classical Greece', the second speaker will explore the culturally specific experience embedded in social and religious rituals surrounding death in Classical Athens. Her paper focuses on material and sensory experiences, in particular tactile and olfactory engagement with the dead body and funerary offerings from *prothesis* to burial. Unpublished nineteenth-century excavation notes and drawings relating to extant funerary offerings will be used for detailed reconstruction of the specific arrangement of the body and painted vases in a number of tombs; while methodologically the paper will draw on recent scholarship on the agency and integrity of material objects and the complex interplay between haptic and cognitive experience. Using this evidence and methodology the purpose of the paper is to tease out physical and sensory experiences surrounding funerary practice and interpret their range of meanings in the heightened personal and religious context of death in Classical Athens.

### **Emma-Jayne Graham (OU), Holding the Baby: Embodied Experience and the Ambiguities of Roman Votive Objects**

In 'Holding the Baby: Embodied Experience and the Ambiguities of Roman Votive Objects', the third speaker will explore the insights that a sensory, experiential approach can make to our understanding of votive practices. Recent studies of the sensory worlds of antiquity have stressed the importance of materiality as a stimulus for multisensory experience. This paper will advance the nuances of this approach by considering the votive models of newborn infants dedicated at sanctuaries in central Italy as objects through which ancient people could both think and feel. By exploring the significance of encounters with objects which might prompt conflicting sensory memories, it will ask what the implications were when the senses did not agree with one another. To what extent might sensory dissonance contribute towards the attribution of multiple meanings to



ritual objects, and what were the consequences for the experiences in which these sensorially ambiguous objects were implicated?

### **Heather Hunter-Crawley (Bristol), *Sense and Sympatheia: Viewing Domestic Images of the Divine***

In the final paper, '*Sense and Sympatheia: Viewing Domestic Images of the Divine*', the fourth speaker will re-orient our focus in Roman polytheism from the political to the personal and experiential, through an exploration of the viewing practices of images of gods in the Pompeian household. She will theorise how the god was understood to be present in the image, by utilising the Stoic notion of *sympatheia*, the cosmic 'inter-connection' of all material things. She will present the Roman household as suffused with divine presence, through architectural decor and artefacts that depicted divinities, suggesting that their overall function was amuletic. She will argue that Roman polytheism was a means of policing thresholds, through rituals performed at the level of individual embodiment and sensory experience. This perspective challenges the traditional opposition of Christian belief and polytheistic practice in our understanding of ancient religions.

### **Panel: The role of perception in making sense of space**

**Panel convener: Lukas C. Bossert (Humboldt)**

Chair: Ulfert Oldewurtel (Hamburg)

Recent approaches to the study of space in antiquity have increasingly focused on space as a multisensory environment, in which each of the senses - sight, hearing, smell, and touch - are recognized as having a considerable impact on its understanding and experience. This panel builds on that concept by asking in which manner - for example through architecture, or decoration - these different senses were actively shaped in ancient Roman spaces in order to enhance their functionality or to encourage a specific sensory experience.

Each of the papers in this panel is a case study on a particular aspect of the creation of perception in different spatial contexts. Both the first and second paper deal with urban spaces: in the first, an analysis of the visual perception of urban spaces is expanded by taking cultural and social conditions of a certain visual understanding into account. The second paper examines how (ephemeral) architecture was deployed in fora in order to facilitate auditory perception, an important feature for a space where public addresses were common. The next two papers investigate the role of decoration in shaping the perception of domestic spaces, on the one hand how movement through the house could be guided through use of designs of mosaic pavements, on the other hand how wall paintings depicting garden scenes were used to evoke specific sensory experiences. By considering the significance of various sensory experiences in the perception of space, this panel aims to contribute to a more dynamic understanding of ancient spaces in Roman antiquity.

### **Ulfert Oldewurtel (Hamburg), *There is More to Sight Than Meets the Eye. The Visuality of Urban Spaces in Roman Cities***

The study of ancient cities and their constituent elements - i.e. buildings etc. - incorporate visual elements to some degree. Certainly, the analyses of architectural elements, statuary decoration, and the like of architectural ensembles like fora and thermae rely heavily on the aspect of seeing things, on visual perception. But there is more to visual perception than just seeing things. As philological studies take intertextual elements into consideration, nowadays, we easily accept in the field of visual studies that seeing things is making sense of the world at the same time. Our social and cultural (visual) knowledge interprets the seen the moment we perceive it. This interpretation of

visuality - and this paper - not only recognizes the spatiality of cities, i.e. their physical dimensions, proportions and physical properties, it necessarily also looks into the visual aspects of social spaces and how they construct meaning or add functionality to spaces. Such an analysis of urban spaces of ancient Roman cities must consider therefore more than simply their size or decoration: It has to take the visual culture of antiquity into account, reconstruct the things seen (and unseen) and thus is able to add a layer to the understanding of the Roman city.

Two familiar phenomena shall illustrate the possible interpretational gain of this approach: the (artificial) creation of a city's past, as seen in Aphrodisias in Caria, and the perception of spatial units by visual means by examining the unity of capitolia and fora (or the absence thereof).

### **Lukas C. Bossert (Humboldt), Pits and perception. Acoustic consequences for ephemeral architecture in the forum**

Looking at Italic fora of the Roman Republic and Early Principate, this paper will focus on the pragmatic dimension of architecture and on how different architectures shaped the sensual perception of public space, specifically, the acoustic perception: What options were available in the forum, as a space of political and public communication, in order to optimize the acoustics of the space, for example, for an orator? And what was done to minimize acoustic disruptions, for example those occurring in crowded areas or from transit traffic? Considerations of possible architectural modifications are not limited to permanent architectural structures, but include also ephemeral architecture. Although they are no longer extant, pits found in various fora provide clues as to their possible reconstruction: Although ostensibly heterogeneous, they served diverse local needs and allowed the public space to be used for various purposes, whether political, religious or otherwise. Therefore, these inconspicuous ephemeral buildings provide important evidence on how ephemeral architectures were used to improve the acoustic perception in this public space.

Researching public spaces and their architectures while concentrating on their acoustic qualities opens new insights into the complex functioning of these places. Additionally, it necessitates far-reaching modifications to the hitherto solely historical interpretations of the configurations and diachronic transformations of these places.

### **Erika Holter (Humboldt), Floor guides: Movement and Mosaics**

Mosaics have traditionally been studied from a stylistic or iconographic point of view, as befits their publication as images often divorced of their context, making them for example visually similar to wall painting. Mosaics are however a completely different medium than wall painting, capable of influencing a viewer in a much more bodily way, ultimately because it is a medium a viewer comes into direct contact with by walking over it. For instance, in order to view the figures of a mosaic from the best angle, it may first be necessary to walk around it. This paper addresses the question of how the Romans exploited this physical aspect of mosaics in their domestic spaces in order to encourage a certain sensory, ambulatory perception of it: In what way were mosaics designed to guide movement through the house? How does an understanding of movement through the house in turn expand our knowledge of this space?

### **Panel: The Senses in Greek Tragedy and Poetry**

**Alessandra Abbattista (Roehampton), *Xouthos* like the nightingale: Song, dance and body in tragic laments**

In this paper, I will analyse the sense-term *xouthos*, with the aim of exploring its multi-sensorial meaning, function and effect in fifth century Athenian drama. The controversial term has been philologically commented (Fraenkel, Rutherford, Wilamowitz and Blomfield) in its association with the tragic nightingale (Aesch. *Ag.* 1142). The debate among the classical scholars has revolved around two different possible translations of the adjective, which are “golden-yellow”, in reference to the bird’s plumage, and “acute”, like the bird’s modulated song. However, the synaesthetic term *xouthos*, whose first meaning is “rapidly moving to and fro” (LSJ), cannot be translated into a single sense-term. By denoting one of the Aristotelian “common sensibles” (Arist. *de An.* 416b42-418b, *Sens.* 447a12-449a4), which is the movement, it should rather admit the coinciding of different sensorial aspects.

When the “quick-shrilling-clear” nightingale metaphorically appears on the fifth century Athenian stage, its contradictory lament discloses a multi-sensorial tragic experience. By analysing some relevant occurrences of *xouthos* (Aesch. *Ag.* 1142; Eur. *Hel.* 1111; Aristoph. *Av.* 214), I will show that in ancient Greek drama the term is employed as a synaesthetic form for performing ritual laments. The presence of the soloist, the rhythm of the song and the dance of the Chorus are signalled by the adjective, which does not assume a simple connotative function. Because of its high-evocative power, it rather functioned as a metatheatrical device in reproducing the mythological lamentation of Procne. Perceived both as a threatening and pitiable song, the nightingale’s lament gives voice to female avengers in particular key moments of tragic plots. As I will demonstrate, the term *xouthos* was considered particularly suitable by Attic dramatists to reveal the synaesthetic coinciding of suffering and revenge in tragic laments.

### **Hannah Silverblank (Oxford), Unsafe and Sound: The Monstrous Soundscape of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia***

Aeschylean tragedy makes itself home to an array of dangerous voices that function as sonically monstrous sites of insuperability, rupture, and disgust. An examination of the soundscape the *Oresteia* in particular reveals an acoustic atmosphere predicated on the negotiation of (in)appropriate noises, including but not limited to the monstrous potential of the human voice. This paper uses the *Oresteia* to ask, when sounds mean nothing linguistically, how can they mean more, or otherwise, in the tragic soundscape? What kind of sense does a sound have when it is disembodied and detached from a human agent? It is through sonic nonsense and moments of acoustic incomprehensibility that an extralinguistic, nonverbal supervention of sense emerges in the drama.

The Aeschylean chorus exhibits an anxiety about the strange power of noises and sounds, and in this paper I will explore the ways that the non-sense sound effects, which emerge from inanimate objects or whose agency is transferred from the human noise-maker, also contribute sense and offer a pathetic resonance to the entire drama. The choruses of the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi* each comment extensively on the non-sense, inanimate voices that haunt the soundscape and produce anxiety within the drama, whether from sounds of violence or sounds of lament. The Chorus of *Eumenides*, rather than merely reflecting on the non-sense soundtrack of their drama, instead issue a strange vocality which oscillates through the categories of subhuman and suprahuman, thus confounding the categories’ capacity to make sense and mean: their claims to powers of vocal destruction (*Eu.* 328-32) threaten and frighten amidst their snores, whines, and snuffles that mean nothing, and thus they function as a strange Chorus whose voices are primarily sonic and only secondarily semiotic.

### **Flaminia Beneventano della Corte (Siena), Defining ‘Phasma’ through sensory perception: the case of Eur. *Alc.* 1120 ff**

This paper tackles the issue of sensory experience focusing on one example of the complex and fascinating phenomenon of *phasma* in classical Greece. The term *phasma* belongs to the semantic field of *phaino* and is therefore closely related to the visual dimension of perception. Despite the preponderance of sight and vision in the sources which deal with this kind of phenomena and appearances, there are although a number of cases in which other senses play a significant role in the definition of what *phasma* is, tracing the boundaries between the perception of illusory phantoms and reality.

As a significant example I will examine the last episode of Euripides' *Alcestis*, especially lines 1120 ff.. Admetus' perception of Alcestis emerging from the Underworld is experienced through sight (*blepein, oran, opsesthai*), touch (*thiggano*), and hearing (*prosepein*, referring to verbal interaction). Admetus, both recipient and actor of a synaesthetic sensory experience, is progressively led to verify the material and live reality of Alcestis' appearance and to consequently admit that she is not merely a *phasma*. In addition, the study of Admetus' perception allows modern readers to move a step towards the clarification of what can or cannot be defined as *phasma* in classical culture. Considering the studies which have addressed the cultural representation of spirits and phantoms in classical Greece (Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux 2006) and those which have focused on image and double (Maurizio Bettini 2004; 2012) and on anthropology of the image (Alfred Gell 1997, Carlo Severi 2010), I intend to give an account of how crucial can the aspect of sensory experience be within an anthropological approach to Greek culture and letters.

### **Maria G. Xanthou (Harvard), "Songs of honey-sweet acclaim": sensory perception, literary reception and Identity of Pind. I. 2.**

In Pindar's second Isthmian ode sweetness is a constantly repeated gustatory sensation (Privitera 2001: 30). Terms such as *μελιγάρυας* (I.2.3), *μελιφθόγγου* (I.2.7) and *μελικόμπων* (I.2.32) promote a highly sensory appreciation of this epinician song. Towards the same aesthetic perception of I.2 point also adjectives such as *γλυκεῖται* (I.2.7) and *ἄδυσπνῶ* (I.2.25). The repetitive evocation of sweetness has been explained away as serving the Pindaric agenda of the particular ode, which is the celebration of an athletic victory. However, an epinician song is not only an artistic outcome of ritualized celebration of victory through bodily movement and sound (Clear 2013: 37). Its agenda might also include the evocation of the famous triad "wine, women/boys, song", the three major constituents of the symposium. In that sense, what I argue is that Pindar aims at evoking both the choral and sympotic performative context of an ode by employing the sense of taste, a major sensory component of the symposium. What I shall be looking closely at is Pindar's blurring the distinction of compositional requirements of monodic lyric composition and sympotic love lyric. What Pindar pursues is the fusion of the media, i.e. the choral and the monodic and their main attributes, the professional and the ethical and, ultimately the performance of I.2 both by a chorus in a civic context and by symposiasts, where professionalism was equally required (Nagy 1990: 340). Therefore, it is also important for our understanding of the double identity of I.2 as an epinician as well as a sympotic song, *alias* as both choral and monodic song, to explore why the sense of taste is especially privileged over the sense of sight or hearing. Ultimately, I argue that sweetness emanating from the song corresponds both to the aesthetic result as well as to the professional toil Pindar invested in composing such a song of double identity, as Pindar has already suggested in P.6, an ode related to I. 2.

### **Panel: Perception in Ancient Literature and Philosophy**

**Daniel Anderson (Cambridge), On the Priority of Sight: Juxtaposition, Metaphor, Abstraction**

There is a clear valuation of sight over the other senses for the Greek mind and indeed in much of Western thought. Vision is privileged even and especially when the faculty of sight is missing, at which point external vision is replaced by inner sight, rather than compensation by the other senses. We see this in literature in the connection of blindness and wisdom, in linguistics in the connection between verbs of sight and verbs of knowing, in philosophy with Plato's metaphor of the sun or Aristotle's theory of knowledge. We know of diachronic changes in ancient cultures of viewing; of text as image and, to a lesser extent, of image as text. But why is vision given priority over the other senses in the first place? I will argue for a connection between sight and abstraction which becomes an explicit issue in Greek thought to a certain extent, but whose specific difference over the other senses, namely its capacity to distinguish multiplicity and by this difference itself, is the precondition of this abstraction. Thus, my proposal is 1) to show the priority/privileging of sight over the other senses, and 2) to investigate vision as a precondition for abstraction, through a notion of both temporal and physical unity and difference rooted in the visual. A number of implicit and explicit metaphors connecting knowledge with sight control and justify what knowledge comes to mean. I will concern myself with a variety of sources and approaches in part 1), including passages from Pindar and Heraclitus; I will concentrate on philosophic texts in part 2), and in particular, the interconnected discussions of optics, knowledge and divination in Plato's *Timaeus*.

### **Pamela Zinn (TCD), Lucretius On Sensory Disruption**

Epicurean scholarship has been reinvigorated by the growing interest in ancient conceptualizations of sensory experience. For Lucretius, representing the experience is inextricably bound up with representing the process - i.e. how the senses work, or not, in humans and (other) animals. The reliability of perception is a major problem in Epicurean epistemology. The dictum of Epicurus, that all *aithēseis* are *alētheis*, is the cornerstone of scholarly discussions, e.g. by Asmis, Konstan, Striker, and Taylor. Fowler, Furley, and Sedley, among others, contextualize its development vis-à-vis debates with other schools - particularly the Sceptics - on the possibilities of knowledge. Gale also links it to Lucretius' rationalization of myth and general challenge to *religio*. Such scholarship notes well that, according to the Epicurean paradigm, when one seems to perceive the 'unreal', it is not perception which errs, but judgment. This paper asks: Why not perception; can the senses ever lie? It reconsiders from a mechanistic point of view Lucretius' account of the relationship between what we perceive, what we think we perceive, and 'objective reality'. Regarding each living creature as a dynamic system, the paper explores the ways in which one's senses are affected when the normal operating conditions of that system break down. On the basis of underlying physiological causes and mechanisms common to all living creatures, it argues that, according to Lucretius, genuine failures of perception are not impossible but merely exceptional. It also explains how Lucretius' treatment of major physical disruptions to the system - such as trauma, sickness, and drunkenness - alter one's sensory experience and incorporates this into the poem's epistemological framework. In the process, the paper sheds further light on the nature of the faculty of *sensus* and its relationship to both the *animus-anima* complex and the rest of the body, as represented in *De rerum natura*.

### **Giulia Fanti (Cambridge), *Ab sensibus esse creatam notitiam veri* (DRN IV.478-9): A Poem shaped by sensations**

*Inuenies primis ab sensibus esse creatam / notitiam ueri neque sensus posse refelli* (IV.478-9): according to Epicureanism, perceptions are the first step in order to achieve the knowledge of what we are surrounded by, of the cosmos and of all its components. It is from the senses that the concept of truth has come in the first instance: therefore, Lucretius seems to shape his didactic lesson to the relevance of perceptions, and, consequently, to the importance of a gradual learning process. The poet must have strongly felt the need of teaching his audience how to avoid false perceptions, which are the first cause of the collapse of reason, as if that of a building, when the

initial measures are warped (IV. 513-21). It is striking to note that the poet addresses his reader mainly with verbs of perceiving, thinking and believing, which identify the main steps towards the proper knowledge. Not accidentally, the imperative which occurs with the highest frequency is *percipe*, coherent with the theory of empiricism, the foundation of scientific inference according to Epicureanism. In particular, *uidere* is the channel through which the images coming from the outside world (*simulacra*) can be acknowledged, sifted (*cernere*) and, eventually, categorized, either as true or false (*credere* and / or *putare*). The present paper aims to analyse, starting from textual evidence, how Lucretius, didactic poet and philosopher at the same time, manages to lead his pupil *ex apertis in obscura*: perceptions are what the disciple needs to detect in the first instance, in order to be able to go beyond them. What will emerge is how the whole teaching and learning process (e.g. Lucretius' capability to rebuke the pupil on the basics, to grant him the change to take the floor when in the fullness of time) are regulated and shaped on their essentiality.

### **Calypso Nash (Oxford), Perception, the Refutation of Materialism and Poetic Reality in Virgil's *Aeneid***

This paper will analyze visions (e.g. Hector at V.A.2.270ff; Mercury at 4.265ff; the fake Aeneas at 10.633ff.) that appear to characters in the *Aeneid* using the philosophical theories of perception articulated by the Stoic and Epicurean schools of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC.

I will aim to show that Virgil is purposefully engaging with these 'philosophical' themes in his poem. This will involve looking for inter-textual allusions, and mapping the stages and mechanisms of perception described in the philosophical sources onto Virgil's text. I will show how we can draw 'literary' conclusions, for example concerning a character's moral responsibility for decisions encouraged by the vision, using these 'philosophical' tools of analysis.

I would like to use this analysis to further suggest that Virgil's poetry, and the 'images', 'impressions' and ideas that the text has the power to conjure for the reader, poses a conscious challenge to the materialistic theories of perception and imagination with which he engages. Contrary to the arguments of both Stoics and Epicureans, which base our ability to imagine and conceptualize on (conscious or unconscious) combinations of prior sensory experience, Virgil's poetry shows that words can create mental images of things we have never encountered, with an ontological and lasting reality that rivals that of the 'real world'.

### **Panel: The Skin in ancient thought**

#### **Assaf Krebs (Tel Aviv), Roman skins: Notes on material and symbolic aspects of the human skin in Ancient Rome**

One of the most recent aspects of the growing interest in the human body in Classical Studies is the emergence of what is known as 'the sensory turn'. In my lecture I shall focus on the largest sensory organ of the body: the skin. The skin is the oldest and the most sensitive of our organs. This huge body part, almost 20% of an adult's body weight, is related to touch, pressure, heat, and pain; it takes part in kinesthesia and corporeal equilibrium; as our somatic envelope it has functions of delimitations, holding and organization; it is related to language and culture and hence it carries symbolic meanings.

Ancient perceptions of human anatomy and physiology were quite different from modern ones. My lecture aims to review and sketch the materialistic features of the skin in the Roman culture and to discuss some of its symbolic meanings. Drawing on a wide range of literary sources, including

medical, scientific and other literary genres from Plautus to the second century CE, I shall present the skin's anatomy and physiology, its function and roles, and its nature and characteristics. I shall also explore salient medical notions of the skin and discuss some aspects of the body-mind-skin relations. Finally I shall refer to some of the skin's symbolic functions, concentrating on its metaphorical meanings.

I shall argue that the Romans referred to the skin as a paradoxical and ambiguous surface carrying inconstant and unstable characteristics and qualities. I shall demonstrate its function as both a concealing and revealing surface; its passivity and activity; its evolving nature and its spatial qualities. I shall furthermore maintain that the skin was usually conceived in negative terms and show how this fact was reflected in the Roman culture.

### **Jorge Torres (KCL), The limits of the skin: the role of sense perception in Hippocratic medicine**

The dissection of human corpses began at a relatively late phase in the history of Greek medicine. Before dissection was first permitted at the medical institute of Alexandria (circa 270-260 b.C), Greek physicians had to deal with a vast range of biological phenomena which were not accessible to the senses. This gave rise to the identification of two different kinds of diseases: what I call "external" and "internal" diseases (*On the Art*, 9). Whereas the former are easily identified by sense perception, the latter take place inside the body and thus cannot be seen. The Hippocratic treatise *On the Art* goes even further by stating that most diseases exist "beyond the skin". Such diseases are described as "obscures" (ἀδηλα, 11.2), although they can still be "seen" by human intelligence in some way (11.8-12). On the other hand, the claim that medicine is concerned with phenomena that escape sense perception is explicitly rejected by other Hippocratic treatises such as *On Nature of Man* (NM) and *On Ancient Medicine* (AM). In both of these treatises we encounter an enthusiastic defense of medical empirism; all those medical hypotheses that rely on phenomena that cannot be perceived (τὰ φανέα; μὴ τὸ φανερόν) should be rejected in medical inquiry (e.g., NM, 1.5; AM, 1). Now this suggests an overall inconsistency within the Hippocratic tradition. My suggestion is that the inconsistency is only apparent. A more careful understanding of this paradox requires us to examine in greater detail the role of sense perception in Hippocratic medicine.