

Jeffrey D. Veitch
jv99@kent.ac.uk
Classical and Archaeological Studies
School of European Cultures and Languages
University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NF

Jeff recently completed his PhD at the University of Kent, Canterbury (2016) on acoustics and Roman architecture. He is currently co-editing a volume on movement and the senses in Roman religious experience, titled *Movement, Sensory Studies and Religious Experience in Roman Antiquity* (Routledge 2017), and is one of the co-founders of the network Sensory Studies in Antiquity, www.sensorystudiesinantiquity.com.

Contact email: jv99@kent.ac.uk

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Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses, edited by Shane Butler and Alex Purves Durham: Acumen, 2013, 230 pages, \$44.95 USD, ISBN: 978-1-84465-562-5
Smell and the Ancient Senses, edited by Mark Bradley Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, 210 pages, \$39.95 USD, ISBN: 978-1-84465-642-4
Sight and the Ancient Senses, edited by Michael Squire Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, 313 pages, \$49.95 USD, ISBN: 978-1-84465-866-4

The ancient world was full of sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feelings, evidenced through a variety of sources from literature, art and archaeology. Despite limited engagement with the senses in past classical scholarship, a growing awareness of the importance of the senses in cultural and literary studies has begun and *The Senses in Antiquity* series is part of this growing interest. *The Senses in Antiquity* (SiA) series brings together a diverse group of authors on the role of the senses in Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, language, culture and history. The first three volumes, *Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses*, *Smell and the Ancient Senses* and *Sight and the Ancient Senses*, are already out, with *Sound*, *Taste* and *Touch* forthcoming. The series sets out to explore the 'relationship between perception, knowledge and understanding' in literature, philosophy, history, language and culture in ancient Greece and Rome' (series abstract).

It seems the order of those topics is important and emphasises the hierarchy within the series. *Synaesthesia* is biased towards literature in the Greek world (six out of thirteen chapters), while *Smell* is biased towards ancient history and Roman chapters (seven out of twelve chapters) with only two chapters dealing entirely with Greek sources (three take up Greco-Roman culture). *Sight* moves back to a more even division, while also having the first chapter that engages with post-ancient (third to seventeenth centuries CE) thinkers use of ancient sources (Smith), although *Synaesthesia* has three chapters devoted to reception of Classical literature in more recent periods (Keilen, Katz and Butler). Overall the division is fairly even, but within the individual books disciplinary divisions are more prominent based on editors interests and approaches. Taken as a whole, it seems archaeology is the noted exception (Day 2014) with one

chapter in *Smell* (Koloski-Ostrow), which is followed by a critical engagement with the historiography of Roman cities (Morley). The lack of engagement with archaeology is touched on at the end of this review and highlights the limitations of the series. However, despite these individual preferences, the series covers a diversity of senses, sources and periods available to those interested in sensory studies in antiquity.

In general the three volumes are arranged chronologically, which is by far the easiest way into the range covered in each. In the space available here, I cannot analyse every chapter in all three books, but will briefly summarise the chapters in order to draw out points of discussion. It is worth noting that *Synaesthesia* is the most wide-ranging, with individual chapters lacking the introductory and concluding connections of both *Smell* and *Sight*. While these references to direct connections between neighbouring chapters provide a narrative arc between the different authors, I wonder if it does not hinder the ability to read chapters individually. The ability to pick and choose chapters of interest has always been a part of edited volumes and the direct connection at times gives the feeling of continuation, when a clear break has been made.

Synaesthesia

Synaesthesia begins with a short introduction to the series and the volume in particular (1-7). Butler and Purves comment on this diversity of engagements with synaesthesia (1-2), stressing the inclusion of multiple definitions except for a clinical, as no ancient source discusses what could be identified as clinical synaesthesia (2). The most common, although at times problematic, definition of synaesthesia is the discussion of more than one sense. Following the introduction, the opening two chapters deal with Homer and Herodotus (Potter and Purves). Potter takes as a starting point the different numbering of the Muses, which opens up the discussion to the nature of sensory experience. Synaesthesia is broken into two component parts *syn-* and *aesth-* to display the way Greek aesthetics always involves a synaesthetic element (11). Potter closes with two case studies of visual depictions of sound, on stage and on vase paintings (20-24). Purves focuses on one sense, touch, to explore the potential for haptic historiography (28-29). Issues of gender, intimacy (light versus dark) and touch are central to the role of the body as explored in the two case studies from Herodotus (34-40). While limited to only one sense, Purves sets the role of touch within the two stories in contrast to the much wider discourse of male and female, light and dark, touch and sight.

The next three chapters deal with the Aristophanic corpus (Payne, Telò, Clements). This is the only group of chapters dealing with the same author and genre, which privileges comedy and Aristophanes within the book. This should not be taken uncritically, as the emphasis within the individual volume challenges the series' exploration of the diversity in literature. This preference reinforces the need for more critical engagement with other Greek authors and genres. In what ways do other genres develop their own understandings of sensory perceptions or what senses are the senses of choice for comedy in comparison with epic or tragedy? These questions warrant further study beyond the SiA series.

Payne explores the role of animal sounds in Aristophanes' *Birds* and pseudo-Propertius' *On Hunting* through Wagner's understanding of a 'seeing' and hearing' eye (46-7). Telò explores Aristophanes' self-project as olfactory encoded within *Knights* (53-4). By using incompatible odours, Aristophanes differentiates himself from Cratinus, an old comic rival (54). Clements takes a particular passage, *Knights* 629-631, to draw out the connection between sight and taste in Aristophanes' description of the Athenian Council

'looking mustard'. Clements argues for an experiential definition of the Greek in opposition to interpretations based on a priori differentiations of the senses (87).

Rosen deals directly with synaesthesia in Plato's *Symposium*, arguing that it is not a 'chaotic philosophical obstacle', but an 'aesthetic of multiplicity' on the way to complete understanding of Beauty (91). In this way, synaesthesia takes on a more radical form than the clinical kind, as for Plato it involves all the senses being assimilated into a coherent whole (95). It is in the mind, then, that this coherent whole of is cleared of the 'sensory noise of the world we find so attractive' (95). This act of synaesthetic multiplicity is the transcendence of sensory experience (97). Following Rosen, Volk takes up the cosmology of the *Astronomica* of Manilius to show how human interaction with universe engages all the senses in a way similar to Stoic *sympatheia* ('feeling together', 103). The cosmos, in Manilius, is not understood simply through vision, but requires insight into the ways humans are woven into the movement of the heavens, understood through the senses (109). Walter's questions the senses within the narration of death in Lucan and Lucretius. Exploring the Stoic and Epicurean approaches to death, Walter's relates the act of dying and the ending of sensory experience with the act of reading (124).

The next two chapters address issues related to visual interpretation of other sensory phenomena (Bradley and Dozier). Bradley uses a 'synaesthetic' approach to ancient colour, drawing on the various ways sensory experience was expressed beyond the visual paradigm (128), while Dozier focuses on the metaphors of 'clarity' in Quintilian to understand the way he uses visual language to instruct orators (142-3). The final three chapters deal with classical reception, moving beyond the ancient time period (Keilen, Katz and Butler). Keilen looks at the distinctions of distance in terms of perception in Chapman's *Ovids Banquet of Sence* (1595), relating the distance in sensory experience within the poem to the act of interpretation (158). Katz explores the synaesthetic obsession of Saussure in his notes on anagrams (174-5). Saussure's own synaesthesia, as Katz argues, highlights the ways in which sound and meaning were closely related through the hidden words in oral and textual literature (183). Butler closes with a discussion of Lacan's lost paper 'The Mirror Stage' and the role of the Narcissus myth in Surrealist Paris (186). As Butler argues, Ovid provides Lacan with a backdrop to explicate the world of literary and artistic metaphors with which surrealism and psychoanalysis engage (194).

Smell

Smell has a more directed feel than *Synaesthesia*, due in part to the focus on a single sense. In the Introduction, Bradley overviews approaches to smell from various fields and places the volume within that context (11). In particular, the volume sets out to 'identify and explore the principal domains of activity' in which smell contributes to ancient understandings of bodies, environments, behaviours and morality (11). Again, the epistemological motivation to move beyond sight and the visual paradigm is noted, alongside highlighting the interconnection between the senses (8-9). Following the Introduction, the first two chapters address the role of smell as an epistemological tool in physiology and philosophy (Totelin and Baltussen). Totelin covers a wide chronological span, from the Hippocratic Corpus (fourth and fifth century BCE) to Galen (third century CE) (18). The chapter is mostly a compendium of theories of smells, ailments that affected a person's ability to smell and smells as diagnostic tools within the medical texts. Baltussen turns to Greek philosophical texts, starting with the Presocratics before reviewing Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus (31). Baltussen argues

that despite the growing complexity in explanation, Greek philosophers maintained a level of uncertainty as to the exact nature of the sense of smell, which were positioned between the 'extremes' of pleasant and unpleasant (32). Together the two chapters set out the limitations in understanding smell for the ancients, who struggled to move beyond the physical side of smell.

The next three chapters delve into the positive aspects of scents and fragrances in Greek and Roman culture (Clements, Draycott and Butler). Clements begins with the construction of Greek divinities through smells and odours (46). The chapter focuses on literary sources and the symbolic effects of smell (46), which are given as dichotomies. Draycott looks at the literary, documentary (papyri, ostraca, and wax or wooden tablets) and archaeological evidence for smelling trees, flowers and herbs (60). It is worth stressing the point that it is 'smelling trees, flowers and herbs' and not their general appearance in the ancient world. Draycott, again, uses the simple dichotomy of 'pleasant' and 'unpleasant' to categorise the, difficult to categorise, ancient smells (62). Little space is given to the archaeological evidence, which says nothing about the judgements of taste (good or bad), but can offer insight into prominent plant types, yearly cycles of growth and environmental conditions of particular regions. All these topics are addressed in terms of ancient literary descriptions (66-7), however without the key element of time. The temporal aspect of smell is given little attention in the book, as a whole, and would certainly be central in the development of 'placeness' (see Betts 2011, p. 130). Butler explores the role of *amaracus* in literature and its developing connections and associations (74). In contrast to other chapters, Butler focuses on a single set of smells, all under the same name, to draw out the associations made between natural and artificial scents within literature (74).

The next two chapters deal with the smells of Roman urbanism from differing perspectives. Koloski-Ostrow describes the ancient city from the perspective of inefficiency or inability to remove foul smells, whether through sewage, administration or architecture, although this did not create city zoning of industry or activities evident in later periods (104). In comparison, Morley argues for an awareness of the difference in experience between ancients and moderns (117-8). The descriptive accounts of the literary sources are focused on particular things, and not analytical in approach (112). This is the key difference in between Koloski-Ostrow and Morley; do we interpret the literary sources as descriptive or analytical in their references to smell? It would seem that the complexity repeatedly argued for throughout the book would suggest the latter.

Following from smells in the urban environment, the next two chapters focus on the Roman social world. Potter explores the associations between dining and food preparation with social construction of elites (120). Bradley examines foul bodily smells within a diversity of Latin sources to show the way it characterised the worst in Roman politics and society (135). The following two chapters turn to particular groups within Roman society, namely Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity (Green and Toner). Green notes the similarity in practices with smells, such as oils, fragrances and perfumes, although used within rabbinic legislation (154). A notable difference is the symbolic role of scents in interpretations of the future, drawing on biblical language of 'soothing' or 'pleasing odour for the Lord' (155). Toner explores the way early Christian olfaction developed two general Roman ideas of the relationship of scent to supernatural presence and the centrality of scent in sacrifice (159). The closing chapter explores nose-mutilation across the ancient world (Bradley and Verner). The chapter draws out an important element of social construction, namely the disempowerment of a person through nose-docking (173).

Unlike *Synaesthesia*, *Smell* has several trends throughout the volume. There is a clear categorisation of smells into dichotomies, pleasant and unpleasant, foul and fragrant. At times, this produces an overly simplistic division taking the literary sources at face value, despite the stated ambition to provoke the complexity of smell (14).

Sight

In both *Synaesthesia* and *Smell*, there is repeated reference to the need to move beyond the visual paradigm, which is at the centre of *Sight*. Squire notes the trend within the series and sets out to place ancient 'seeing' within its complex and interwoven cultural histories (9). Part of those cultural histories, however, is the privileging of sight and it is with ideas about sight that ancients theorised the senses (9).

The first three chapters discuss the theoretical underpinnings of ancient sight, dealing with Presocratic philosophies, Classical Greek philosophy and Greco-Roman mathematical optics (Rudolph, Nightingale, and Netz and Squire). Rudolph categorises theories of sight under three headings: vision as a form of reflection, 'intermissionist' process (images from external objects enter the eye) and 'extromissionist' process (rays from the eye go out) (36). These categories appear throughout the volume and Rudolph contextualises both the theories and their conceptual understanding of knowledge; the theories carried universally accepted mimetic assumptions (52). Nightingale focuses on Democritus, Plato and Aristotle, using the 'interomission' and 'extromission' categories (54). As Nightingale points out, each of the philosophers conceive of vision as embedded in their theories of the mind and the physical cosmos (66). Netz and Squire turn to ancient optics, surveying the key writers and charting the 'limits' of a delineation of antiquity and its legacy (69).

Following from the theoretical stance of the first three chapters, the next four deal with the relationship between Greek reflections on vision in texts and images and objects (Grethlein, Tanner, Bielfeldt and Turner). Grethlein focuses on visual mediation in texts and Greek vase-painting (85-6). The reflexivity of the ancient images moves beyond the philosophical discussion of the previous chapters (86). Tanner explores the role of ancient Greek optical theory on *skēnographia* (theatrical 'scene-painting') and *skiagraphia* ('shadow-painting') (109). Bielfeldt looks at lamps and the way Greek thought could enable inanimate objects to enact sight (123). As objects that produce light and fire, ideas at the core of ancient Greek theories of sight, lamps were endowed with eyesight (123). Turner takes on the role of vision in mediating death and dying in funerals, tombs and myths (144). Without a chronological or geographical constraint, Turner provides a wealth of examples, however without much depth as texts, reliefs and tombs all discussed.

The next three chapters are based in Rome, covering the republican and imperial periods, and offer insight into the connection between Roman and early Greek ideas about vision (Platt, Elsner and Squire and Webb). Platt uses a Latin inscription from Roman Algeria to explore the problems for historian's approaches to 'seeing' gods and divine beings (163). Elsner and Squire relate the act of remembering to that of seeing, to draw out connections between Roman rhetorical theories of memory and the practices of Roman wall painting (181). Webb turns to the idea of 'imagination' and the ability of the mind to 'see' through language (205-6).

The last three chapters take up a variety of themes touched on in the other volumes, namely Judeo-Christian ideas, loss of the sense and the legacy of ancient sensory ideas (Heath, Coe and Smith). Heath emphasises the importance of sight in the Christian message, which in turn shaped later Christian attitudes to sight (221). Coe

explores the connection between blindness and loss of other abilities in the Greek cultural imagination (237). Sight and blindness are intertwined with song and poetry, as well as with artistic competition, in which blindness symbolises deeper poetic 'ability' (241). Smith ends the volume by considering the afterlife of ancient optics in third to seventeenth centuries CE (249). This broad chronological span also reflects the diversity of manners in which Greek sources were appropriated by Arabic authors, giving rise to the reintroduction of these sources in the Renaissance (261).

In conclusion, it is worth commenting on the series as a whole, especially in light of the further development of sensory studies within Classical Studies and the continuation of the SiA series. The series offers a glimpse at the potential in addressing the senses in antiquity beyond the confines of the individual volumes. In particular, three main areas of reflection are given, namely methods, balance and developing theories.

Taken together the volumes display the difference between sub-disciplines within classics generally. What is needed is methodological contextualisation. I do not mean a standard method, but, rather, methodological clarity at the level of individual chapters. Few, almost none, state their approach or method in evaluating sources, types of evidence and relation to sensory experience, understanding or perception. Instead, the series seems to continually fall back on close readings of literary sources, even when discussing material culture and archaeology. This creates an impression of a single methodology, which is assumed and never discussed. The lack of engagement with particular methodological approaches or theories turns portions of the series into catalogues of sensory terms with little wider cultural importance. The wider context of Greek and Latin literature allows for the particularities of the given text to come through (cf. Stevens 2016). The classification of 'intuition, 'gut reaction', affect, emotion, pleasure, or pain' as 'deep sense' is at odds with the theoretical importance of these responses in authors such as Lefebvre, Simmel or Sennet (*Synaesthesia*, p. 5; cf. Toner 2014; Betts, 2017).

The choice of material sources needs critical reflection, as the series does not strike a balance between literature, art and archaeology. SiA offers a variety of initial explorations about the role of the senses in the study of literature and art, but preference is given to texts and text based sources (epigraphy and papyrology). As noted above, the preference towards literature and art is at the expense of developments within the field of archaeology. The limited engagement with archaeology seems to overlook the importance of the growing field of sensory archaeology (see Hamilakis 2014, Day 2013, Skeates 2010). This is one of the implicit points made by the series; not every topic, theme or source type can be explored within the individual volumes. However even in references, little attention is given to archaeological theories and approaches to the senses, which emphasise agency, memory, embodiment and experience, all themes explored in the SiA (see note above).

In other ways, the series maintains the challenging balance between Greek, Roman and reception texts. The balance provides the series with a range of potential audiences. It is a challenging task to cover new research, expand a quite traditional field and bringing it into conversation with sociological and anthropological work of today. The series does address these tasks, often through internal conversation between the volumes, and with half of SiA series still to come, there will be further development. The series sets a goal of introducing sensory approaches to Classical Studies and it meets a need for such studies within the discipline. In this way, SiA is a resource for

undergraduate modules, supplementing specialised books on broader themes. What remains is the development of specific theoretical and methodological approaches for the field of Classical Studies. Here again the particularities of ancient sources require different approaches, as well as offering critical case studies to challenge traditional methods. In this way, the series can begin to address the important question of how the senses are themselves tools for understanding the ancient world and in what ways the senses can critically reflect our own shortcomings as ancient historians and classicists.

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