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Sensory Experiences in the Roman North: Emerging Themes and Future Directions

Thomas J. Derrick, Department of History and Archaeology, Macquarie University, AU, tjderrick@gmail.com

Giacomo Savani, School of Classics, University of St Andrews, UK, giacomo.savani@gmail.com

The senses were functionally significant to all aspects of Roman life and played a central role in private and public events, from religious ceremonies to gladiatorial fights. However, to date, these studies primarily focus on archaeological sites from Italy. The scope of this Special Issue, however, was on the sensory implications of archaeological material from a region so far neglected by sensory studies: the 'Roman North' (including modern France, western Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Britain and immediately adjacent areas), from the earliest interactions with Roman civilization to Late Antiquity. The contributing authors to this Special Issue come from several different sectors but they all have something in common: they use Roman material from the north to tell stories about Roman lived experience.

This editorial is a piece underscoring the present 'state of the discipline'. At this stage, however, it would be very generous to designate the research theme as a 'discipline'. We hope that this editorial and the excellent papers in this Special Issue contribute to addressing this disparity and will encourage others to explore these themes in their own work.



Sensory Approaches in Roman Archaeology

The senses were functionally significant to all aspects of Roman life, playing a central role in private and public events, from religious ceremonies to gladiatorial fights. While the sense of sight has dominated archaeological practice and theory for decades, scholars are now keen to address the ancient sensorium as a whole. The so-called ‘sensory turn’ in Classics/Classical Archaeology has generated a raft of high-profile publications and conference sessions in recent years (see Hunter-Crawley 2019a for an overview), but the allure of literary sources and high-profile archaeological sites in Latium and Campania has been strong.

This Special Issue, however, focused on the sensory implications of archaeological material from a region neglected by sensory studies: the ‘Roman North’ (including modern France, western Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Britain and immediately adjacent areas), from the earliest interactions with Roman civilization to Late Antiquity. We envisaged that our contributors would discuss the sensory impact that the influx of external material culture, behaviours, urbanism and populations had on indigenous communities in the northern provinces, reconstructing complex processes of negotiation, resistance and adaptation. We aim to use the impetus of the ‘sensory turn’ to reinvigorate debates and (re)apply approaches from other disciplines related to embodied sensory experience in the ‘Roman North’, for example phenomenology, sense of place, sensorial assemblage theory, design/craft theory and other approaches more traditionally rooted in anthropology, geography, sociology, science and technology studies, and urban planning.

We see this editorial as a piece underscoring the present ‘state of the discipline’. At this stage it would be, however, very generous to designate the research theme a ‘discipline’. We hope that this editorial and the excellent papers in this Special Issue make headway in addressing this disparity, thereby encouraging others to explore these themes in their own work. We had wished to include more content from scholars working on northern continental Europe. This, unfortunately, did not happen despite multiple outreach attempts. The resulting group of papers are overwhelmingly Britain-focused, but the applicability of these themes and approaches to other Roman contexts on the continent (and beyond, both geographically and temporally) seems clear.

Sensory approaches and studies are a toolkit that enables innovative, imaginative and academically rigorous approaches to archaeological material. A pathological disdain for speculation has traditionally plagued archaeology, particularly Roman archaeology. There has been an overwhelming focus on firm Roman ‘facts’ like chronologies, trade connections, infrastructure (especially roads), military campaigns

and troop movements, which often drown out the importance of what life was like for members of various communities in the Roman North (see Hunter-Crawley 2019a: 436). But, of course, these priorities are a product of their time: the preoccupations of the traditional school of Roman archaeology or Roman studies are rooted in their contemporary elite involvement and fascination with the colonial exploitation of the Global South (see Hingley 2000). These elites saw themselves as the intellectual heirs of the Romans and were keen to learn lessons from one of the most successful ancient empires.

One could argue that the modern preoccupation with individual personal identity and experience is rooted in post-Cartesian thought (Day 2013b: 4–5). Still, sensory studies usually take a group (or several groups) as the frame of reference. How an individual, conditioned by a rich framework of personal circumstance, experienced a given space or artefact is somewhat unknowable. This is a typical counter to the value of sensory studies. While it is not a commonly published opinion, many scholars who engage in sensory approaches to the past will have heard these sorts of intellectual ripostes after conference presentations or during departmental discussions. Laying out a series of responses to historical material and presenting a range of possible experiences seems a valid counterargument to the concerns of those who cannot look past the inscrutable ancient individual. Furthermore, while there were high-profile individuals, the description of ancient personal identities is usually given as a list of groups a person belonged to (Siedentop 2014: 7–32).

While a detailed literature review of sensory archaeology is beyond the scope of this editorial, it is important to acknowledge that there is a healthy body of work from which to draw inspiration for Roman archaeologists. The chapters in the volume edited by Day (2013a) laid the foundation for much of the archaeologically leaning proponents of the ‘sensory turn’ in Classics. A recent handbook, edited by Skeates and Day (2019a), has capitalized on this impact and this will be a key reference for years to come. It seems appropriate, next, to explain one of the main drivers of the workshop that led to the production of this Special Issue¹ — a direct reaction against the Mediterranean-centric sensory turn in Classics.

The Mediterranean-centric Sensory Turn

Most recent publications applying sensory archaeology to the Roman Empire have a geographical bias, focusing almost exclusively on Rome and other well-preserved Italian sites like Pompeii and Ostia (e.g. Betts 2017). As such, the ‘sensory turn’ is not yet fully mirrored in other provinces, especially in the Roman North. This gap was already

highlighted by Chris Gosden (2005: 199) almost two decades ago, when he noted how the debate concerning the appearance of Roman villas in Britain has mostly ignored ‘the sensory and emotional effects that new types of building in a novel landscape might have had on human subjects’.

Indeed, sensory archaeology has the potential to illuminate broader phenomena like the introduction of new buildings and religious rituals. However, it can also offer unique insights into specific aspects of life peculiar to the environment of temperate Europe. For instance, sensory approaches can promote new questions about artefacts related to food consumption, such as pottery or cooking implements. Alongside more traditional typological and distribution studies, microbiological analysis of these objects could help us reconstruct the defining tastes and smells of provinces like Gallia Belgica and Britannia.

The Empire’s northern provinces were shaped not only by specific environmental conditions but also by the interactions between different cultures. The sensory aspects of cultural exchanges, such as adopting Roman architectural styles or integrating local practices into the broader Roman way of life, remain a promising, if so far overlooked, area of investigation. Through the analysis of artefacts and architectural remains, scholars can identify the sensory signatures of processes of cultural exchange, reconstructing how different groups negotiated their identities through sensory experiences. For instance, studying the use of the hypocaust heating system and its sensory impact could shed light on changing attitudes towards heated and cold spaces during the first century after the Roman conquest.

Moreover, sensory archaeology could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of urbanism and space organisation in the towns of the Roman North. By examining the acoustic properties of urban environments, the distribution of olfactory stimuli (e.g. Derrick 2017), and the visual landscapes of cities, researchers could explore questions related to social stratification and the use of public spaces, assessing how the overall sensory fabric of towns like Londinium and Ulpia Noviomagus Batavorum differed from their Mediterranean counterparts.

Newer approaches to the movement of Roman material culture have utilized the concepts of globalization (Hingley 2005; Gardner 2013; Pitts and Versluys 2014), and recently glocalization (see Montoya González 2021), to great effect. We may even start to determine the ‘globalizing’ impact of Roman material practices on the senses of those living in the northern provinces. The less terminologically-charged ‘objectscapes’, as recently argued for by Pitts and Versluys (2021), may also be a useful way of describing the movement of objects (and potentially their sensory reception).

The application of sensory approaches within the ‘sensory turn’ in Classics largely happened aside from existing theory (with only occasional references to it, which in some cases arguably re-invented the wheel). However, the spectre of previous theoretical discourse looms large, particularly in the case of Britain. Innovative approaches to experiencing landscapes were common for decades in British Prehistory, although they did not make as much headway with Romanists; the discussion now moves on to this in the next three sections of this editorial.

Phenomenology (and reactions to it)

Creative re-imaginings of the past experienced somewhat of a crescendo in the 80s and 90s, particularly in response to Chris Tilley’s (1994) phenomenological reading of British Prehistory. This work was influential but found many detractors who deployed the same sorts of counterarguments often levelled at those who use sensory approaches to historical periods. However, Tilley’s phenomenology frequently employed more individual-focused sensory traversal of ancient physical remains as a heuristic proxy for exploring ancient experiences (e.g. Tilley 1994: 31–33). While Tilley (1994: 10–11; cf. Brück 2005) also counted on the universality of the human body as a point of analysis, to which the scholars of the ‘sensory turn’ would agree, the focus on an individual experience rather than a considered range of group responses left it open to attack.

The feeling that Tilley’s phenomenology/sensory re-imaginings of the past were found wanting may also be behind some of the reticence to engage in sensory approaches in the Roman North. The aims of this Special Issue, therefore, do not include an intention to simply continue the work of these phenomenologists and apply their methodologies. We should not, however, simply consign their work to be a discarded paradigm in histories of archaeological theory. Rather, we should interact with it and demonstrate how these approaches offer more insight into lived historical experience. While phenomenology had a more direct influence on British Prehistory and found little to no engagement in Roman archaeology, we should be keen not to repeat the same mistakes and instead build on the positive elements of these approaches.

Tilley (1994: 7–34) advocates for an interpretative framework that considers the subjective aspects of human perception and experience. By acknowledging the importance of embodied knowledge, phenomenology attempts to reconstruct how individuals in the past interacted with their surroundings on a sensory and emotional level. Thus, rather than analysing structures in isolation, Tilley encourages exploring how these spaces were inhabited and experienced within the broader landscape (Tilley and Cameron-Daum 2017; see Faycurry 2012). This approach has great potential

in approaching the layout of a Roman villa — the positioning of rooms, the flow of natural light and the strategic placement of courtyards — and its surroundings. Without disregarding the complex's functional aspects, such methodology could offer a more holistic interpretation of space and human interactions by identifying the deliberate crafting of environments to evoke specific sensory responses. This kind of broader focus, away from the canonical immediate and impactful archaeological phenomenology of Tilley (imagining one individual traversing one monument), found many scholars engaging in holistic approaches to landscapes (particularly with the lens of temporality); this is where we take our discussion next.

Sense of Place, Time, and 'Scapes

The work of Tilley also encouraged a more phenomenological approach to human-environmental relations. Similar preoccupations with bodies and landscapes emerge in the broadly contemporary work of social anthropologist Tim Ingold. In his seminal article 'The Temporality of the Landscape' (1993), he emphasizes the importance of considering both body and landscape as essentially temporal phenomena constantly under construction. Ingold (1993: 158) uses the word 'taskscape' to frame human presence and activities in the landscape, defining 'task' as 'any practical operation, carried out by a skilled agent in an environment, as part of his or her normal business of life'. These 'constitutive acts of dwelling' happen within an ensemble of other tasks: '[j]ust as the landscape is an array of related features, so — by analogy — the taskscape is an array of related activities' (Ingold 1993: 158). However, the taskscape was never intended as a separate, autonomous entity from the landscape. Despite Ingold's (1993: 164) dismissal of the idea as redundant at the end of his paper and his concerns that it might dilute the concept of landscape, the 'taskscape' remains popular in archaeological discourse. While it sometimes became 'a handy moniker for a descriptive account of the spatiotemporal layout of activity at a site' (Ingold 2017: 26), archaeologists claim to use the term — alongside an array of other '-scapes' like 'flowscape', 'roofscapes' and 'powerscape' (see Rajala and Mills 2017) — to emphasize specific, intersected aspects of the landscape (e.g. Edgeworth 2017: 252).

Significantly for this editorial, Ingold (1993: 155) stresses that 'a place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there — to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience'. This sensory exchange allows meaning to be gathered from the landscape. Despite the many references to the senses in Ingold's discussion of the taskscape (see, for instance, Ingold 1993: 160, 162–163), several classical archaeologists used this concept without exploring its sensory implications (e.g. Hamari 2017; Moore 2020: 579; Mallon 2021). This selective

approach is surprising because the senses could act as connective tissues, linking and giving structure to taskscape and landscape through time.

Eleanor Betts (2011) proposed a similar use of the senses to redefine the cityscape of ancient Rome, advocating for a multisensory map that ‘combines the “soft” (experiential) and “hard” (empirical) data of phenomenology with the “hard data” of known structures, urban form and fabric, within specific chronological periods’ (Betts 2011: 121). She distinguishes between smellscapes, tastescapes and soundscapes — each one with ‘its own temporal rhythm’ — and between different sensory spheres (Betts 2011: 122). In the public sensory realm of social interaction, we use the senses ‘to navigate, creating a multisensory map of the city which changes according to the individual (gender, age, status) and period (time of day, season, year, government)’ (Betts 2011: 123). This conceptualization resonates with David Howes’ (2005: 143) definition of ‘sensescape’: ‘the idea that the experience of the environment, and of the other persons and things which inhabit the environment, is produced by the particular mode of distinguishing, valuing, and combining the senses in the culture under study’ (on this concept, see Skeates and Day 2019b: 6).

Emma-Jayne Graham (2018) similarly engaged with the senses in her analysis of temporality and landscape. Looking at Roman funerary sites in the Vesuvian region during the Imperial period, she emphasizes their fluid qualities and the natural environment’s agency in creating a temporally specific sense of place. Like Hamilakis (2013), Graham recognizes the entanglement of senses and memories that shape the experience of particular locations, especially those associated with commemorating the dead. She uses the words ‘coalescence’ and ‘assemblage’ to describe the agents producing ‘place as the fluid product’, where ‘human bodies perfor[m] discrete activities which conform to certain shared forms of knowledge and expectations, the material world — including its non-human agents —, and time’ (Graham 2018: 12). To wrap up our discussion of (sensory) spaces, it seems worthwhile to zoom out from archaeology briefly and consider what we could learn from experiential approaches to landscape in the field of Geography, and add to the growing toolkit of sensory approaches.

Geographical Approaches

As we have seen in the previous sections, the focus of sensory archaeologists has started to shift towards the entanglements of memories and sensory affordances concentrated in specific locations, an approach informed by non-representational theories and post-phenomenological and posthumanist methodologies in human geography (see Boyd 2022). In particular, sensory archaeology and human geography, disciplines that examine the spatial organization of human activities and their relationship with the

environment, intersect in their exploration of emplacement and embodiment (Ethington 2007; Simonsen 2013). Emplacement refers to the ways in which individuals connect with specific locations, while embodiment considers the sensory experiences tied to the human body. Together, they have the potential to shed light on the rituals, practices and emotions associated with specific spaces, reconstructing the lived experiences of communities in the past and the present. These concepts can also be combined with ethnographic-oriented affective methods, focused on affective processes, such as sensations, feelings, emotions and memories (Drozdowski and Birdsall 2019).

The concept of cultural landscapes also aligns with sensory archaeology by recognising that landscapes are not only physical entities but also repositories of cultural meaning (see Taylor and Lennon 2011). Sensory experiences shape the perception and construction of cultural landscapes, as seen in the incorporation of symbolic elements, ritual spaces and sensory cues that influence how people navigate and engage with their surroundings (see Bunkše 2018). In turn, this process of ‘integration’, which allows memories to be inscribed in the landscape, encourages the construction of collective memories and identities (see DeSilvey 2012). Power dynamics and social relations are also embedded in the landscape. The design and use of spaces, the visibility of certain features and the allocation of sensory stimuli within a landscape all contribute to the negotiation of power and the establishment of social hierarchies.

Such a multilayered framework has many points of contact with the concepts of ‘dwelling’, which emphasises the importance of reading inhabited landscapes as temporal phenomena (see Casey 2001), and ‘affect’, which focuses on ‘the intensity that moves between bodies and places, registering as feelings and emotion’ (Waterton and Watson 2013: 554). As poetically expressed by Gibbs (2001: 1), ‘[b]odies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire: affect leaps from one body to another, evoking tenderness, inciting shame, igniting fear’.

We return now to archaeology, the next section deals with Sensorial Assemblage Theory, which will also hopefully see more application in the future.

Sensorial Assemblage Theory

As Fredrik Fahlander and Anna Kjellström (2010: 10) emphasized in their assessment of sensory studies, ‘[t]here is no ‘ready-made’ theory and method available especially designated for an ‘archaeology of the senses’. This lack of a well-defined methodology remains problematic, particularly in studies dedicated to classical antiquity (see Skeates and Day 2019c; Hunter-Crawley 2019a). Even important publications like Eleanor Betts’s *Senses of the Empire* (2017) attracted criticism in this respect (Hunter-Crawley 2019b: 695–696).

The framework developed by Yannis Hamilakis in his *Archaeology and the Senses* (2013) is one of the most sophisticated attempts to address this methodological gap. The book is a manifesto advocating a paradigm shift in archaeology towards a new, profound engagement with the past's sensorial, mnemonic and affective dimensions. In his theoretical discussion, Hamilakis applies to sensory archaeology the concept of 'agencement' (and its unfaithful but suggestive English translation, 'assemblage'), first explored by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Hamilakis (2013: 10) emphasizes that while sensorial experiences are universal and cross-cultural, the interpretations of sensorial modalities and interactions are context specific. In his view, the senses are deeply connected with memory and feelings and, together with objects and places, form what he calls 'sensorial assemblages'. Because assemblages are 'non-hierarchical, heterogeneous, contingent rather than permanent and stable', this notion 'foregrounds the co-presence of diverse entities, and at the same time connects the material with the sensorial and the mnemonic' (Hamilakis 2013: 126–127). This 'co-presence' reflects the multi-temporal nature of the senses and 'the simultaneous co-existence and communion of perception and memory' (Hamilakis 2013: 124). Building on this intuition, in a later article Hamilakis (2017) identifies three key features of assemblage thinking: sensoriality, linked to affectivity; memory, which generates multi-temporality; and a political element, reflecting the agency behind the assemblage.

While Hamilakis's work proved immediately influential, attempts to apply his sensorial assemblage theory to specific case studies are still limited (e.g. Savani forthcoming). This lack of engagement is particularly surprising in light of the many points of contact between Hamilakis's framework and the current exploration of creativity as a tool to investigate the archaeological record (e.g. Shanks 2012; van Helden and Witcher 2020), a practice explicitly encouraged by Hamilakis (2013: 130–134). On the other hand, *Archaeology and the Senses* has recently received criticism for failing to engage with disability in antiquity, a drawback that extends to sensory studies in general and reflects 'the dominant ideology of able-bodied normality, or ableism' (Adams 2021: 5; see Evelyn-Wright this issue). There is certainly scope for testing the capacity of sensorial assemblage theory for inclusivity, whose malleable and non-hierarchical nature can accommodate different forms of sensory impairment and diversity. Moreover, the flexibility granted by sensorial assemblage theory makes it a powerful tool to reconstruct the layers of meaning, memories and materiality that characterise various forms of classical reception (Savani 2022). For the same reason, it can also be an excellent starting point to contextualize outreach activities involving direct engagement with ancient objects. Indeed, Hamilakis's holistic approach appeals

to non-specialist audiences confronted for the first time with the complexities of archaeological records (Savani and Gault 2022).

Having just discussed the affective power of interacting with artefacts, we now move on to a discussion of material culture through the useful lenses of materiality and affordances. Material culture is a large part of archaeology and while humans and their experience with (and in) landscapes/space are important (and by necessity have dominated the preceding conversation), none of this experience happens without objects.

Sensory Affordances and Materiality

The materiality of archaeological artefacts is now part of the mainstay of most theoretically informed archaeology (Meskell 2005; Knappett 2014). Through thoughtful consideration of the physical characteristics of artefacts, we can imagine how humans interacted with them. In doing this, we can move beyond more traditional archaeological lenses in which artefacts are just symbolic of practices like trade, cultural exchange/influence, imperialism and even globalization. While it is, of course, completely valid to use these lenses, the wealth of human experience is hard to conceive of with only large top-down structural frameworks.

While imaginative reconsiderations of spaces and landscapes are now much more common in sensory Roman archaeology, objects are rarely considered a key point of analysis; for example, only two chapters of twelve focused mostly on objects in *Senses of the Empire* (Betts 2017). However, it is likely within the clearly allied interpretive approach of materiality that we can find more common ground. These sorts of considerations (sensory and materiality) are much more common in artefacts of other periods, especially prehistory. We should note, however, Meskell's (2005) demonstration of why these approaches should be agnostic of periodization. While at this point it is slightly hackneyed to say that Roman archaeology is behind other fields in terms of theoretical engagement, many finds specialists still treat Roman artefacts as representational, rather than as objects with their own agency.

In her monograph, Ellen Swift (2017: 5–10) effectively demonstrated the usefulness of the term 'affordances', expressly borrowed from craft studies (but also common in landscape studies), to talk about the material properties of objects (either by design or coincidence) and their place within ancient societies. A simple way to combine the spirit of the lens of materiality, while appealing to a more pragmatic Roman artefactual discipline, might be to consider the 'sensory affordances' of objects. Put short, what do the characteristics of an artefact or group of artefacts have, as experienced through the senses, and what might this say about those who interacted with them?

Having called for creativity and a wider application of these approaches above, it seems appropriate to move to our curated collection of papers sensorially approaching the Roman North. Accordingly, the final section of this editorial is a discussion of the papers which make up the issue, although these papers were not written as a response to this piece.

In this Issue

The contributing authors to this Special Issue come from several different sectors, but they all have something in common: they use Roman material from the north to tell stories about Roman lived experience. The first method is the application of sensory approaches to Roman material in an archaeological context. This type of use is the most common sort of interaction (or at least explicit interaction) with these approaches, albeit not on material from the Roman North. Nicole Berlin reinterpreted the fourth-century mosaics from the villas at Low Ham (Somerset) and Lullingstone (Kent) in the south of England through a phenomenological lens to consider how they were experienced and read by the communities using those villas. Stephanie Evelyn-Wright used osteoarchaeological approaches to disabled bodies from Roman contexts from Dorset to demonstrate how much we are losing from typical sensory archaeologies when we fail to imagine the embodied experience for those with impairments. Adam Parker chases the ephemeral sense of pain as embodied through pierced tooth amulets. Parker demonstrates that this is possible through a detailed multidisciplinary consideration of artefacts (and their materiality), archaeological context, a shared conceptual human body (albeit with an awareness of subjective experiences) and ancient literary sources, coupled with a considered imagination (strengthened by his own experience as a new father!).

We also, very fortuitously, had three authors that discussed Roman remains in a museum environment. Museums are one of the main ways that most people are introduced to Roman material — the way they present archaeological artefacts and remains (and the stories and artifice they weave around them) are crucial in many imaginings of the Roman past in the north. Nicky Garland brings digitally enriched experiential approaches to the open-air museum at South Shields Roman Fort (which features reconstructed Roman buildings), in the sort of environment that typically favours the more ‘scientific’ experimental archaeology. The result of this paper clearly demonstrates the heuristic potential of these reconstructed spaces for future research. Parkin’s paper as well as the contribution from Roberts and Petrelli both focused on two institutionally situated projects for making plain Roman stonework from Hadrian’s Wall more evocative and interesting. The *Roman Britain in Colour* project at the Great North Museum (Parkin) used projection mapping to bring life to their collection of sandstone

altars, and while this did not aim to reconstruct their decoration, it did demonstrate the sort of decoration they had and helped to construct their lived context through imaginative animation. At Chesters, however, the English Heritage-led *My Roman Pantheon* project (Roberts and Petrelli) used haptic feedback and accompanying oral instruction (coupled with a personalized souvenir print-out 'oracle') to target a certain audience sector that may not traditionally engage with the Museum's antiquarian foundations. All archaeology is destruction, leading to a jarring decontextualization of artefacts from their original place(s) in the landscape, to the protective and sanitized environment of the museum. However, the three papers discussed here used technology in an agile and effective way to help bridge this gap to better understand the past of these artefacts and effectively communicate that to others.

Imagining the sensory world of the past can be an evocative and useful tool in the classroom, but the integration of sensory approaches can often be piecemeal or non-systematic. Erica Rowan, however, has put together a detailed and considered discussion and reflection of how she has used sensory archaeology in her own teaching. This paper will be very helpful to those who teach the archaeology of Rome's northern provinces and, most likely, outside of those confines. The creative and archaeologically grounded meditations on the embodied and personalized experience she employed are an excellent example of what we advocate for. The final paper of the special issue is by Caroline Lawrence, in which she discusses her writing and world-building methods in her recent book set in Roman London. Creative engagement with displays at the Museum of London, scholarly research and the experience of re-enactors are crucial to her methods (as are sensorially grounded meditations), and much can be learned from the multisensory world of London that Lawrence is able to conjure for her young readers.

This editorial and Special Issue have demonstrated that archaeologically grounded approaches to material from the Roman North can coexist with more subjective sensory approaches. The recording quality of Roman period sites from this region makes them ripe for future reassessment. While we do not need to abandon the more typical lenses of analysis by bringing creativity and the senses to material from Rome's northern provinces, we can more effectively consider the lives of everyday citizens of the Roman Empire in unprecedented detail. Moreover, the integration of methodological approaches from different disciplines like human geography and craft studies has the potential to expand the scope of sensory studies further, transforming them into a forge for new archaeological approaches to landscape and materiality. We hope that anyone working on Roman material can use this (non-exhaustive) editorial and Special Issue as a jumping-off point and help unfurl and reveal our sensory past(s).

Note

¹ Sensory Experience in Rome's Northern Provinces was held at Senate House (London, UK) on 6 October 2018 [<https://www.romansociety.org/Events/Past-Events/Sensory-Experience-in-Romes-Northern-Provinces>, last accessed 11 February 2024]. However, only the Editors and two of the original contributors (Caroline Lawrence and Nicky Garland) contributed to this Special Issue.

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Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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