

# Conference Abstracts

## DAY 1: FRIDAY 21 JUNE

*Venue:* Berrick Saul Building, HRC, Heslington campus

Directions to campus: <https://www.york.ac.uk/hrc/contact/maps/>

### 0900 COFFEE & REGISTRATION

*The Berrick Saul Building Foyer*

### 0945 WELCOME ADDRESS BY DR MARK JENNER

*The Bowland Auditorium*

**1000 KEYNOTE 1:** Professor Chris Woolgar (University of Southampton): Creating the Sacred: The Senses, Perception and Material Culture in the Later Middle Ages  
*The Bowland Auditorium*

### 1100 PARALLEL SESSION 1

**Panel 1: Moral and Religious Instruction: Dynamic Worship and Domestication of the Senses** CHAIR: Gaby Leddy (University of York)

*BS/008*

**Kate Ash (University of Manchester): Alienating the Soul from the Mind: Sensation, Memory, and Confession in *The Doctrine of the Hert***

In the prologue to *The Doctrine of the Hert* the writer states that 'hertly redyng is a gracious meene to goostly felyng'. The emphasis within this fifteenth-century English translation of the Latin *De doctrina cordis* is on an affective approach to spirituality: it is through reading such texts as the *Doctrine* that one might prepare the soul for God, coming to spirituality through 'hertly' contemplation and a rejection of the fleshly sensations of the body. This paper will argue that, in order to achieve its moral instruction, the *Doctrine of the Hert* prescribes spiritual sensing and feeling as a way of achieving a contemplative union with God. It does so by establishing a step-by-step process of moving through layers of emotion, or states of being, to arrive at a final state of wisdom and knowledge of the 'perfit love' of the Divine. The treatise uses the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as a guiding principle of instruction, and links these gifts to the modification of the bodily senses as a way of preparing the mind and the soul for confession.

The Latin *doctrina* was originally addressed to members of the religious orders, although evidence points towards its availability to a lay audience. The English text is perhaps to be considered more an adaptation than a translation and the text clearly served a variety of devotional needs.

I will examine the ways in which the *Doctrine of the Hert* draws upon medieval theories of memory and of sensation to create the devotional subject. A consideration of this little studied text sheds new light on the ways in which sensation, motion and memory functioned in devotional practices, and were conceived as being fundamental to an understanding of active contemplation.

**Paul Murphy (Queen's University, Belfast): John Mirk, Reginald Pecock and the gestures of Late Medieval prayer**

Gestures play a significant role in how humans interact, both with each other and with their religious beliefs. They have the capacity to illuminate or clarify, denounce or reinforce. Yet their ephemeral nature means that they frequently slip between cracks in scholarly attentions; they are at once both deeply sensual, while simultaneously not easily aligned with one specific sense.

Christianity in late medieval England was rooted in a liturgy performed in Latin, but in a context that demanded explanation and teaching for an illiterate laity. This paper will examine how Christianity at this time centred around gesture, both as a relatable, typological body movement, as well as a powerful, ritualistic tool.

Departing from the teaching manuals for priests produced by John Mirk and contemporaries, I will suggest that the Christian faith relied upon gesture as a means of externally expressing their interior faith. In doing so, the stories heard by the laity during sermons, or viewed in the form of textual, artistic or dramatic sources became embodied in the performative gestures that characterised fifteenth-century faith.

Drawing on cognitive and phenomenological approaches suggested by Jill Stevenson, I will argue that while this communal, gestural performance was encouraged through the Church, it could not always be controlled by the Church, and as such, the flexibility of gestures can be seen as both an avenue to dynamic worship, while simultaneously susceptible to blasphemous inversion.

Consequently, this paper will highlight the often-overlooked value of gestures in late medieval culture, from the formal liturgy to the street drama and artistic re-appropriations of gestures derived from Biblical, apocryphal, and contemporary sources. Offering a silent explanation of faithful worship or discord, I will suggest their role in establishing shared responses to the liturgy while simultaneously enabling more individualised formations of faith.

**Joanna Wharton (University of York): Wonder and Delight: The Role of the Senses in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose***

This paper addresses the significance of sensory pleasure in Barbauld's highly popular and influential educational text, *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781). I argue that Barbauld's pedagogy is founded on a distinctly material understanding of the child's mind. Influenced by the nervous psychology of David Hartley's *Observations on Man*, Barbauld's project is one of applied, or practical associationism – of forging

physical connections in the mind. I address the primacy of the senses in the texts, arguing that Barbauld seeks to effect an immersion in pleasurable sensory impressions, directing the child's whole being towards God. The text is figured as a tangible and active intersensory experience; God is not just connected to ideas gained through seeing and hearing, but 'all that affects' the mind. Barbauld makes her work distinctly tangible in a number of ways: through her recommendation of the embodied practice of reading aloud, through the sensory images she presents to the reader, and through the materiality of the text itself. Grounding her work in the physical world through the use of what she terms 'sensible objects', she forms habitual patterns of association in order to make deep and lasting impressions on the child's mind. While associationist theory was also used by Anglican writers such as Sarah Trimmer, Barbauld's nondenominational emphasis on the natural world, and the sensuousness of her prose are, as Major (2007) has shown, functions of her dissenting background. In shaping her text to become a physical circumstance in the daily lives of her young readers, I suggest that Barbauld sought to effect the incorporation of dissenting ideas into mainstream society.

**Panel 2: Sense and Incense: Odours of Sin and Sanctity** CHAIR: Dr Mark Jenner  
(University of York)  
*The Bowland Auditorium*

**A. Katie Harris (University of California, Davis): "God help me! What smell is this?": The Senses and the Authentication of Relics in the Early Modern Mediterranean**

Throughout the early modern Catholic world, the veneration of the saints and of their physical remains remained a vital part of Christian belief and practice. For Catholic apologists, relics offered potent support for the Church's claims to exclusive truth. For devotees, relics made the saints present in the here and now, and their power to work wonders proved a compelling attraction. Indeed, miracles were considered to be the strongest evidence of the sanctity of a bone reputed to be the earthly remains of a saint. However, even those few holy bodies graced with the heavenly odors, marvellous lights, and miraculous cures so dear to apologists, devotional writers, and the eager faithful alike presented conceptual problems. Faced with an ancient bone newly discovered or of uncertain provenance, how did early modern Catholics know which remains were the bodies of saints and which were not? And for those few that did demonstrate miraculous properties, how was one to discern the truly holy from mere natural curiosities or demonic illusions?

My paper explores some of the ways that Catholics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries confronted the epistemological quandaries posed by relics. Drawing upon heretofore unstudied treatises on relics by early modern theologians and canon lawyers, and upon manuscript dossiers compiled by prelates in Spain and Sardinia who investigated and authenticated newly discovered relics, I consider how the senses were brought to bear upon the potentially holy object. The evidence of the senses, gathered through techniques of empirical observation and experimentation and through devotees' physical and emotional responses to encounters with newly

discovered remains, I find, was key to the investment of the objects with spiritual significance and the "creation" of the holy relic.

### **William Tullett (King's College London): More than the 'foulness of the diabolical?': The Metaphorical Possibilities of Incense and the Odor of Sanctity 1680-1830**

Whilst, post reformation, a criticism of incense as 'heythnythe wares' contributed to an English conception of incense as superstitious, there was still an Anglican debate over it.<sup>i</sup> By 1683 frankincense was still used during Bishop's processions. Henry Dodwell's 1711 *A Discourse Concerning the use of Incense* testifies to Anglican uncertainty regarding its use.<sup>ii</sup>

My paper will study a few specific ways in which ideas about religious censing were deployed outside of this liturgical context. For example I hope to look at how 'ideal womanhood' and female piety played on the 'odor of sanctity'. Richard Allestree in his *The Ladies Calling*, reprinted throughout the long eighteenth century, argued that 'a Lady... will cast a much sweeter savor in Gods nostrils, with the smell of unguents and balsoms, then with the most exquisit odors and perfumes'.<sup>iii</sup> I seek to trace this rhetorical usage of the concept of 'odor of sanctity', which seems far way from the supposed reprimanding of saintly odors in official Anglican circles, through the rest of the period.

Secondly the use of incense as a Catholic ritual could be deployed to criticize the idolatrous worship at the altar of luxury practiced by fashionable young women. Yet in *The Macaroni Sacrifice* (1773) censing is depicted as a positive ritual that would 'revive degraded manhood'.<sup>iv</sup> I wish to examine how religiously charged scents could be rhetorically deployed in contradictory and gendered ways.

Thirdly, in the context of flattery, ideas about religious idolatry mixed with contemporaneous physio-pathological medicine. Diarists talked of the 'incense of flattery', linking it to the 'vapors'. In a 1778 letter Elizabeth Carter argued that if one 'snuffed up the incense of flattery in great abundance' one could 'grow giddy by the perfume'.<sup>v</sup> The 'incense of flattery' could create unease through association with religious idolatry. Elizabeth Montague wrote in 1755 'though as an *idol*, I may accept the incense of flattery, you may be assured that friendly admonitions will be still better received'.<sup>vi</sup> Thus rhetorical uses of religious 'incense' could be integrated into epistolary demonstrations of politeness and conduct.

Jonathan Gil Harris has argued that by the seventeenth century 'all that remained for the nose in religious representation was the foulness of the diabolical'.<sup>vii</sup> My paper will question this. We should move beyond dichotomies of good/bad, incense/lack thereof and Catholic/Protestant to recognize the fluctuating rhetorical uses of religious censing in eighteenth-century Britain. These concepts could be used in a variety of extra-liturgical contexts and approve or deride religious odors with highly gendered and unstable meanings. This follows Mark Jenner's call for historians to

explore 'the cultural meanings of particular odors in specific locations or within particular discourses'.<sup>viii</sup>

**Jay Zysk (University of South Florida): Incense and “Incensuous” Ritual from Lollardy to Laud**

This paper examines the religious, aesthetic, and historical uses of incense and “incensuous” ritual from the Middle Ages to the Laudian reforms. It sets forth incense as an example of how a particular ritual-object can encapsulate the history of religious devotion and religious dissent across a trans-reformational period. The paper unfolds in two major parts. The first outlines a brief history of incense. Common to both pagan and Christian rituals of sacrifice, incense was used historically in the medieval church, how it was rejected by reformers as part of sumptuous Catholic worship and highlighted as an example of excessively sensual devotion, and how it, along with other devotional implements like vestments and altars, was re-introduced to England during the contentious tenure of William Laud in the 1630s.

What emerges from this discussion is the point that incense and its attendant rituals permeates the various periodic divisions of medieval and early modern, Catholic and reformed. The second half of the paper examines these trans-reformational lives of incense by looking to its place within one cultural venue: the public theater. Here I examine how post-Reformation dramatists like Shakespeare, Middleton, and Nathaniel Lee all expressed an interest in this holy smoke as a dramatic prop – one that brings together pagan sacrifice, sacramental ritual, and reformist dissent. I offer three examples of how dramatists both appropriated and revised the ritual significance of incense, and how they upheld and challenged its religious significance. Shakespeare upholds its ritual function associated with royal coronation and royal burial in plays like *King John* and *Henry VIII*. Middleton resignifies it as an instrument of murder at the end of *Women Beware Women*, which features a censer of poisoned incense used to kill Isabella during a concluding ritual that combines pagan and Christian elements. Finally, the post-Restoration dramatist Nathaniel Lee uses it as a figure of anti-Papist sentiment, in *Lucius Junis Brutus*, written during the hysteria of the Popish Plot of 1679.

**Panel 3: Embodying Ritual: Drama and Death CHAIR: Emma Kennedy (University of York)  
*The Treehouse***

**Paula Barros (Université Paul-Valéry, Montpellier III): Beholding Grief in Early Modern England: Sight, the Spiritual and the Experience of Humanity**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the uses of sight in early modern English texts about grief and mourning. A first section will explore how early modern discussions of the senses, which define sight as unreliable while positing a relationship between seeing and feeling, sight and sorrow, influence the debate on the outward expressions of grief and mourning in the Elizabethan and Stuart church.

A second section will focus on contemporary commentaries and sermons on the miraculous resurrections performed by Jesus. A close reading of these texts will show how Christ, gazing on and responding to the visible grief of the bereaved, emerges as a model of compassionate mourning.

The value placed on the emotional effect of visible grief and outward mourning and on the beholder's capacity of being moved by these displays complicates our understanding of the senses in the early modern period. Discussions of the senses construct an opposition between a carnal and a spiritual use of sight: denouncing the eyes as "inlets of sin," they encourage spiritual seeing—for example the contemplation of sin—as conducive to repentance and conversion. Sinners, it is argued furthermore, are to expose themselves to the gaze of God, unveiling their sins and asking for forgiveness. Discussions of appropriate responses to grief and mourning do not question the desirability of such spiritual sensing, but suggest that the opposition between the carnal and the spiritual is complicated by the existence of a third category, that of the human. Powerfully illustrated by the figure of Christ incarnate, human sensing lacks the negative connotations associated with carnal sensing and is linked instead to the positive values of fellow-feeling and community.

#### **Sarah Betts (University of York): 'ravish'd Senses': Mourning the Death and Celebrating the Apotheosis of Queen Mary II**

The death of Mary II, just four years after the 'Glorious Revolution' was a profound shock to the sensibilities and securities of Protestant England. Since childhood, Mary had represented Protestant hope in the face of the religious sympathies of her uncle, her father and their Catholic wives. As such her public image became one of piety and chastity, Protestantism resolutely impervious to the sensual, indulgent trappings of Catholicism.

At odds with this vision of restrained un-worldly piety, her death unleashed an outpouring of public emotion imbued, experienced and reported in profoundly sensual terms. Her funeral procession and service was the largest royal funeral service ever held, a public spectacle, set to the music of Henry Purcell. Medals commemorating the Queen's death and bearing her image were distributed, encouraging her subjects to mourn her through tactile interaction with a material memento, in a manner reminiscent of Catholic saint culture. However, there was another layer to the sensual experience of Mary's passing. James Talbot wrote of the funeral ceremony that, 'mournful Musick in melodious Sounds,/The ravish'd Sense at once delights and wounds'. The mixed emotion invoked by the funeral music is representative of the sensory rhetoric of the general experience of the Queen's death which not only expressed pain at her loss, but also celebrated the sensuality of her elevation to heaven, and the 'sweet odour' that her piety and Protestant duty would leave 'throughout all Ages'.

This paper will explore the binary emotional nature of the experience of Mary's death as both a sensual agony at her earthly passing, and a euphoric numinous

experience of the senses at her apotheosis. It will consider this in the context of Mary's public Protestant image before her death, and the political considerations of encouraging this apotheosis to help cement the new regime in the face of Catholic Jacobitism.

**Clare Wright (University of Nottingham): Affective Drama: Embodied Experience and Devotional Response in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament***

This paper will explore how embodied memory is used to shape audience response to Middle English religious drama. It will draw on cutting-edge research from the cognitive 'turn' in performance studies to examine the unique and complex Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, a late fifteenth- to early sixteenth-century miracle play. *The Play of the Sacrament* is well known for the spectacular special effects used to illustrate the Jews' desecration of a consecrated Host. This section of the play is marked by rapid alliterative verse, feverish kinaesthetic movement, explosions and gory visual effects; but, following the appearance of an "image" of Christ as the Man of Sorrows, the tone and tempo of the play shifts as the audience are invited to participate in specific ritual activities (a penitential procession, a baptism and the singing of the *Te Deum* hymn, for example). While the first half of the play indulges and excites the senses, drawing the audience into the performance in spite of the Jews' actions, I will argue that the second uses the audience's embodied memory of ritual beyond the theatrical frame to reinstate a more appropriate devotional attitude. Furthermore, I will suggest that the play, in requesting the audience's bodily participation in the re-enacted ritual, unites past, present and future devotional experiences. According to medieval *ars memoria*, physical sensations had the capacity to recall ideas, emotions and spiritual states and, therefore, repeating ritual activity in the play creates a further emotional layer associated with that ritual action, one that may then also be recalled when the ritual is again experienced post performance. Drama, like religion, is characterised by embodied experience and, as this paper will show, it was uniquely placed to influence the audience's devotional responses both within and beyond the theatrical frame.

**1230 LUNCH**

*The Berrick Saul Building Foyer*

**1330 PARALLEL SESSION 2**

**Panel 1: Taste and Knowledge: Pious Palates, Godly Gustation CHAIR: Kathryn Crowcroft (Cambridge)**

*The Bowland Auditorium*

**Ruth Mullett (Cornell University): Spicing the Soul: Internalizing Olfactory and Gustatory Sensation Within the Anchorhold**

In Revelation 10:10, St John eats a book that is sweet to the taste, but bitter in the stomach: 'And I took the book from the hand of the angel, and ate it up: and it was in my mouth, sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter' (Douay-

Rheims version). As the body ingests the book, its taste and meaning changes. The potential danger of misinterpreting bodily sensation was something that concerned the anonymous author of the thirteenth-century guide for anchoresses, *Ancrene Wisse*. For the *Wisse*-author, it was specifically the exteriority of these smells and tastes which, when brought into the body, made negotiating the uneasy juncture between physical and internal sensation risky. The correct treatment of the external senses, however, could result in their transformation into edifying and spiritually-productive interior smells and tastes. This paper will examine the treatment of the olfactory and gustatory senses in *Ancrene Wisse* with particular attention to the body as receptor and the soul as interpreter, and demonstrate that the internalization of smells and tastes made them simultaneously both dangerous and desirable.

**Elizabeth Swann (University of York): 'A taste of spirituall things': Spirituality and Sweetness in Early Modern Devotional Literature**

All the major English translations of the bible in the early modern period follow the Hebrew in describing the Fall as occurring when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. In commenting on or retelling this pivotal moment, however, many writers shift the emphasis: the Fall is almost ubiquitously described as prompted by the first couple's *tasting* of the fruit.

Bringing early modern Protestant pious literature, including poetry, sermons, and polemic, into dialogue with the material culture of dining and medical ideas about gustation, my paper will investigate the significance of this subtle yet profound change. Surviving instances of tableware decorated with images of the temptation indicate that the lapsarian myth haunted quotidian gustatory experience. Nonetheless, a pervasive sense of taste's culpability for mankind's sin and subsequent misery is complicated by an equally pervasive interest in taste's redemptive potential: in particular, its centrality within Eucharistic ritual. This distinction between fallen and salvific tasting corresponds to the distinction between physical and spiritual tasting; but it does not, as we might expect, entirely compromise the former, which retains some devotional value.

Throughout, I focus in particular on the language of sweetness, which is used both to indicate a commendable intimacy with the divine, and as a weapon in the anti-papist polemical arsenal. The final section of my paper establishes the frequency with which - following Eve's initiatory part in the Fall - the sense of taste was gendered as female. Zooming in on Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, I show how Lanyer appropriated and reconfigured the traditional association between her sex and Eve, emphasising instead the role of Eve's typological antitype, Mary, as bearer of the 'sweet fruit' of Christ.

**Sarah Townsend (University of Pennsylvania): The Forbidden Fruit and the Salvific Fruit: Tasting as a Way of Knowing in Clemence of Barking's *The Life of Saint Catherine and the Jeu d'Adam***

Clemence of Barking's *The Life of Saint Catherine* and the anonymous *Jeu d'Adam*, share a sensory mode of expression, conveying meaning through physical sensations and sensory metaphors. Both works emphasize the strong connection between the external (bodily) senses and the internal (spiritual) senses, demonstrating how the senses can act as ways of knowing the world and God.

In Clemence's poem, Catherine uses the language of sensory perception to explain spiritual truths. In particular, she develops the metaphor of tasting as a way of knowing, noting how all things experience/taste/know (*sent*) God's goodness. While Catherine rhetorically aligns the bodily and spiritual senses in order to translate truth to her audience, in the *Jeu d'Adam*, the Devil and Eve carefully develop equivalence between physical and spiritual ways of knowing in order to lead their listeners to sin. Simultaneously amplifying Adam's longing for the taste (*savor*) of the apple and the wisdom (*saver*) it contains, Eve and the Devil lead Adam from sensory temptation to spiritual sin.

In this paper, I analyze the relationship between tasting, knowing, and speaking. Investigating the verbal fabric of two Anglo-Norman works, I examine the way in which the equivalence between tasting and knowing is registered on both a semantic and metaphorical level. Noting the way in which characters construct rhetorical bridges between the bodily and spiritual senses for either productive or destructive ends, I explore how the senses can paradoxically lead an individual to either salvation or damnation. To elaborate this tension, I focus on the striking metaphor of Jesus as fruit that serves as a dramatic and rhetorical climax in both works. This powerful sensory image of the salvific fruit stands in opposition to the forbidden apple and encodes a complex relationship between sensory curiosity and spiritual understanding.

**Panel 2: A Sense of Doctrine: Metaphors of Sensing the Divine** CHAIR: Dr Abigail Shinn (University of York)  
BS/008

Victoria Blud (University of York): "Drowned in the Ocean of Divine Love" – Sensations of Surroundings in the Writings of Gertrude More

While the medieval period saw something of a golden age of English mysticism, the religious turmoil and doctrinal oscillation of Tudor England saw mystic and visionary literature almost drop off the map. The idea of the unattainable, always-dislocated space that is the union with the divine takes on a new aspect in a work such as the *Spiritual Exercises* of Gertrude More. Written at a convent in Cambrai, More's own location – displaced from the Protestant land of her birth in a Catholic convent in France – sees her performing a spiritual role that itself seems displaced from an earlier time. This paper will use More's writings to weigh up the impact of changes in the 'real' world – significantly the New World – on mystic writing and their vocabulary of spatial and sensory metaphor. The experience she recounts in her confessions is subtly tactile, harnessing sensations of heat, chill, drought and

drenching to the sensuous and romantic narrative of her spiritual progress. Alongside the time-honoured mystic images of fire, heat and dazzling light, More's spiritual journey takes place amid oceans, fountains and storms – the topography of seafaring exploration – and appeals to notions of bodily sensation to convey her yearning to be harboured in and surrounded by the object of her devotion – to drown in a sea of divine love.

**Michele Campopiano (University of York, Universiteit van Amsterdam): Music of the Universe, Harmony of the Soul. Francesco Zorzi's *De harmonia mundi***

Francesco Zorzi's *De harmonia mundi* (1525) represents an interesting synthesis of Franciscan religious traditions, Renaissance Neo-Platonism and kabbalah. In this work, the sensual metaphor of music, which informs the entire structure of the work, divided into tones, represents a theological view of a world as an harmonic creation of God, whose presence is found in the microcosm and macrocosm. This shows how Neo-platonic immanentism influenced also the theology of the Franciscan order, and even the representation of religious practices like the pilgrimage to the Holy Land (described in Zorzi's work). The harmony of music stresses the idea of the immanent conciliation of Creator and Creature, challenging views of Christian spirituality that underlined the distance between God and Men.

**Austin Powell (University of York): Crying for God: Pious Responses to Visual Stimuli in Late Medieval England**

This paper argues that in late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century England one would expect to see pious lay people sobbing and weeping, particularly when presented with dramatic visual stimuli. Through readings of both the anonymous *Dives and Pauper* and William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, I suggest that preachers in late medieval England, like those in contemporary Spain and Italy, intentionally sought to drive their audiences to tears through the use of graphic verbal and visual imagery. In making this argument, I will also devote special attention to the weeping done by the early fifteenth-century female lay mystic and visionary Margery Kempe, and the reception that she had from her contemporaries. The harsh judgements which she was subject to were due to the non-devotional circumstances in which she wept, rather than on account of the tears in themselves, or because of their non-monastic context. Tears of contrition, which had existed in monastic environments since Christianity's earliest centuries, were now subject to scepticism from fifteenth-century clerics. These doubts can be seen as a reaction to the recent developments in lay piety. Likewise, clerical uncertainty concerning pious weeping was a response to the impact that these changes had on the Church's control over lay practice and expression.

**Panel 3: The Dynamics of Place: Pilgrimage and the Senses CHAIR: Professor John Arnold (Birkbeck)  
The Treehouse**

### **Dee Dyas (University of York): Tactile piety and the dynamics of place in Christian pilgrimage through the centuries**

In the fourth century, as Christian pilgrimage to holy places was coming into being, Cyril of Jerusalem wrote jubilantly 'Others only hear, but we see and touch.' The explosion of what Robert Wilken terms 'a new tactile piety that attached itself to things, to bones and relics, to places and shrines', significantly fuelled by the growth of the cult of the saints, has remained at the heart of Christian pilgrimage experience ever since. Yet even then it posed a profound theological conundrum for a faith, which at least in theological theory, has no place for holy places. God who became human - physically present -in the person of Christ, is in the Gospels a being who touches and can be touched. Following the Resurrection, however, he is presented as only to be encountered through the Holy Spirit and the elements of 'place' which had characterised Jewish tradition are discarded by the Early Church. It is nevertheless the case that throughout succeeding centuries, this apparently clear theological principle has fought a (largely losing) battle against the profound human instinct to invest place with spiritual significance and associate spiritual experience with the tangible and material. The debate reached new heights at the Reformation but even in largely Protestant cultures the lure of holy places has been reasserting its power in recent decades.

Using a wide range of visual material and insights from literature, social anthropology and theology, this paper will examine the dynamics which drive 'tactile piety', together with other ways of 'doing pilgrimage', including 'virtual pilgrimage', pilgrimage of the imagination and inner journeying.

### **Emma Wells (Durham University): From King to Commoner: Sensing the Pilgrimage Experience of the Medieval Cult Church**

For the medieval pilgrim, cult churches were not only visited sites but *experienced* through the vibrant array of sculpture, artefacts, and images, with interactions moving them physically, emotionally and mentally. Pilgrims were directly involved in the sensorially intense environments around which they moved, desiring to touch, feel, smell, hear and even taste their surroundings. The art and architecture of cult sites were therefore designed for interaction and, accordingly, patron, artist and visitor had an underlying interest in creating works that inspired such reactions.

Using a methodological framework built upon principles of recent socio-anthropological and archaeological analyses on the sensory culture of the past, this paper aims to illustrate how the medieval 'pilgrimage experience' was socially constructed for and by three distinct participatory groups - royalty, laity and a parochial society - across the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The church building is presented as a 'theatre of devotion', in which the art and architecture functioned as much more than 'devotional furniture', but rather as staging devices promoting interaction. In this way, the research considers a building

not only as a complete sensory structure, but also how its construction was intended to impact on its visitors to prove their design was produced for a wider audience in order to encourage devotion towards the resident cults as a continuation of ritualised practices: for example, how specific materials were chosen for their tactile qualities, shrines for their ability to allow bodily engagement with the holy, or galleries added for amplification. Were experiences created in order to suit different social groups and, if so, how did they impact on the church building? Did the common layman have some influence on how cult churches were built and embellished? What imprint did these transient and ephemeral visitors leave? And, most importantly, how did pilgrims experience them differently?

**Sophia Wilson (King's College London): 'You're Entering a World of Pain!': Manipulation of Pilgrims' Senses and the Painful Power of Saints**

Medieval literature frequently describes miraculous cures in painful terms, pilgrimages to saints' shrines therefore associated with an increased awareness of the body's pain threshold. Through this paper, I not only contend that a heightened awareness of the body's feelings is aligned with experiencing saintly power, but also that the intensified sensitivity to bodily pain or sensation is created through church architecture's manipulation of sensory experiences. I argue this through analysing two particular architectural features at Winchester that allowed the veneration of St Swithun: namely, the tomb-shrine which covered Swithun's empty tomb, and the more unusual feature of a tunnel (known as the 'Holy Hole') that allowed pilgrims to crawl beneath the altar which held Swithun's relics. Reaching into the empty tomb-shrine or climbing inside the dark interior limits vision and causes an increased tactile awareness. This heightened awareness of touch both counteracts the emptiness of the tomb and makes the pilgrim more aware not so much of their surroundings but rather of the feelings associated with their own body. This emphasis on the feelings within one's own body – most often pain, bearing in mind that pilgrims frequently sought bodily cures – due to the manipulation of one's sensory experiences by church architecture is also suggested by the 'Holy Hole'. The tunnel both muffles sound outside and amplifies the noise within, it limits one's vision, and by alienating the pilgrim from their surroundings causes an increased tactile awareness and therefore an increased attentiveness to the feelings within one's body as well. In analysing how the sensory experience created by church architecture increases the pilgrim's focus on their bodily sensations, and how these sensations are often aligned with experiencing saintly power, I draw on medieval reports of miraculous cures and Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*.

**1500 COFFEE & CAKE**

*The Berrick Saul Building Foyer*

**1530 PARALLEL SESSION 3**

**Panel 1: Propaganda and Pain: Sensing (Pseudo)Martyrdom and Persecution  
CHAIR:**

*The Bowland Auditorium*

**David K. Anderson (University of Oklahoma): Edgar the Pseudo-Martyr: Pain as Leverage in Shakespeare's *King Lear***

I wish to propose a paper on the theme of pain Shakespeare's *King Lear*, focused on the character of Edgar. Driven into hiding because of a lie spread by his brother, Edgar is sympathetic to audiences and critics alike. While I acknowledge Edgar's heroic qualities, I argue that they must not blind us to the darker elements in his character. When Edgar is first forced to flee from his home he offers a soliloquy that provides the key for his character in the scenes to come. In the speech Edgar declares that he will disguise himself as a beggar to avoid capture. But the description of his disguise is striking. He will not merely appear impoverished, but will pose as a mad, self-mutilating "Bedlam beggar"; the sort who "Strike in their numb'd and mortified arms / Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary." So degraded and repellent will Edgar become that he will terrify and disgust all who see him, so that he can "Enforce... charity" from those he encounters. Edgar, in other words, uses his pain as a tool of manipulation.

In my paper I will argue that Edgar's impulse should be understood in the context of early modern debates over martyrdom. Religious writers on both sides in the period were quick to deny that the victims of their enemies were true martyrs, and instead labeled them "pseudo-martyrs." So potent was this charge that theologians sternly warned their own co-religionists never to seek out martyrdom as an end in itself. One should be prepared to suffer for Christ if circumstances require, but a vainglorious or cavalier courting of persecution for its own sake was regarded as sinful. By reading *King Lear* against texts such as Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr* I will contend that in his characterization of Edgar Shakespeare is reflecting on how pain can function as psychological leverage.

**Rafael-Dorian Chelaru ("Al. I Cuza" Academy): Confessional discourse and sensibility in missionary sources regarding early modern Moldavia**

Starting with the year 1623 (when the first Catholic mission sent by the Propaganda Fide Congregation arrived in Moldavia), the Roman Church strove to maintain and even increase the tiny Catholic communities living in this small Orthodox principality dependent on the Ottomans. Naturally, many of the accounts sent by the Catholic missionaries active in Moldavia in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> c. (mainly Franciscans and Jesuits) contain significant portions of anti-Orthodox polemic, focusing more on cultural and civilizing aspects than on theological issues. "Barbaric" (often violent) rituals, superstitions, debauchery, lack of moral values etc. mentioned when describing the Orthodox world, represent typical post-Tridentine cultural references, documented generally throughout the whole missionary correspondence dealing with the territories outside the Western European world. In parallel, missionaries insist on the danger of multiple "contaminations" affecting the Catholic populace living in Moldavia and underline their efforts for the purification of those corrupted

rituals and beliefs, which composed the well known picture of what scholars coined as “popular religion”.

To the present, the missionary sources on early modern Moldavia were not analyzed as regards to the role of the senses and sensorial motifs present. Profiting from the occasion given by the theme proposed for the prospective conference organized in York, I intend to make a full inquiry of the relevant sources dealing not only with anti-Orthodox polemic, but also with popular religion, in order to identify and analyze the place and significance of all sensorial motifs included in these texts.

### **Lucy Wooding (King's College London): Experiencing the Crucifixion in Early Modern England**

*Set this lyknesse in your remembraunce,  
Enprenteth it in your Inward sight...*

[from John Lydgate, 'The Dolorous Pyte of Crystes Passioun']

In John Lydgate's poem on Christ's Passion, the viewer is urged to participate in the crucifixion through beholding his Saviour's agony. Late medieval contemplation of the Passion encouraged the believer to see Christ's suffering, hear his reproaches, even touch his wounds. The immediacy of this experience also produced a highly physical reaction, prompting sobs and screams, convulsions and swoons, as well as the more ordered liturgical responses of processions, prostrations, and 'creeping to the Cross' on Good Friday.

What happened to this wealth of sensory experience as Reformation flowed over the religious landscape of sixteenth-century England? Images were obliterated and the use of the senses brought into question with profound anxieties about idolatry and superstition. Yet the Crucifixion remained at the heart of the Christian message, and the 'imitation of Christ' was still a powerful devotional tool within Protestantism. This paper will explore the sensory resonance of the Passion within religious devotion over the course of the sixteenth century. It will argue that the affective devotion of the past was not vanquished so much as recalibrated, emerging in different forms but still focusing on the intense experience of the Crucifixion.

### **Panel 2: Sense and Sensuality: Tactile Piety and Erotic Exegesis CHAIR: Dr Piers Brown (West Virginia University) BS/008**

#### **Lara Farina (West Virginia University): Sticking with It: Practicing Uncanny Tactility with *Handlyng Synne***

Robert Mannyng of Brunne's vernacular preacher's manual, *Handlyng Synne* (begun in 1303), is well known for its collection of provocative, even outrageous, exempla illustrating the wages of sin. Among the most notorious of these are narratives in which body parts stick together against the wishes of the people to whom they are attached. Lovers having sex too near a chapel get stuck together "like dog and bitch"

(l. 8956); sacrilegious carolers feel their hands lock together as they are condemned to dance for years; and a dancer's sundered arm refuses to stay buried, returning aboveground again and again. Mannyng is a master at using such tales to evoke a visceral sense of the uncanny, which appears--much like Freud describes that sensation in his essay "On the Uncanny"--as an experience of unwilling yet continuous return to a place or thing.

Yet unlike Freud's, Mannyng's uncanny is most often a form of tactile sensation, wherein bodies, objects, and environments literally refuse to unhand one another. Surprisingly, this continuous and/or recursive gripping echoes Mannyng's instructions to his readers about how his own manual should be physically handled, first in the touching of the book with the hands and then in the somatic absorbing and performance of its discourse. My presentation will discuss the structuring and representation of a devotional practice of repetitive, "sticky" tactility in Mannyng's work, arguing that, although such practice would seem to challenge both the causal logic of the exemplum as a form and the teleological thrust of sacred history, *Handlyng Synne* nonetheless pursues it as both pleasurable and necessary for the spiritual care of the self.

**Laurence Lux-Sterritt (Aix-Marseille Université): When Spirit Speaks through Flesh: Religious Experience and the Senses in the English Benedictine Convents in Exile**

In the seventeenth century, English Benedictine nuns wrote about their personal experiences of the divine whilst in exile on the Continent. Although they sometimes followed very different spiritual paths – some advocating the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* whilst others preferred the Bakerite approach to an unmediated relationship with God – these religious women all relied heavily upon the language of the senses to describe their lived experience of the sacred.

In the Cambrai community, authors such as Margaret Gascoigne and Gertrude More looked forward to death as a time which would finally unite them to their divine lover; both called upon all of their senses to represent the perfection of this bliss. They anticipated their bridegroom's sweet embraces and through the common metaphors of burning, drowning or melting, they imagined merging entirely with God and becoming lost in His immensity. They also yearned to be penetrated, pierced and filled by divine love, in emotional longings which they described, in turn, as an insatiable hunger or an unquenchable thirst. Such sensual prose echoed the rich heritage of the European mystics; through the ages, mystical union with God was ever expressed in the language of the senses and of emotions. At Ghent, some called upon the senses in a much more immediate manner. For Lucy Knatchbull, the body was the very locus of religious experience, and the reports of her many visions emphasize the crucial roles of sight, hearing and smell as conveyors of divine revelation. Such sensory/sensual expressions of spiritual experience raise interesting questions, especially in the context of Catholic religious communities where the very definition of a good nun was one which suppressed the senses

through courageous acts of daily asceticism. The senses appear to have been both denigrated and praised, depending on whether they served earthly or spiritual ends.

This paper will be based upon the original and mostly unpublished manuscripts of the English Benedictines who, in the seventeenth century, were settled in Brussels, Ghent, Cambrai, Paris, Boulogne (relocated in Pontoise), Dunkirk and Ypres.

**Bronwyn V. Wallace (University of Pennsylvania): *Desideria Dilata*: Robert Southwell's Erotic Exegesis**

In a sixth-century homily on the bereft Mary Magdalen who stands weeping at the empty tomb of Christ in John 20, Gregory the Great writes that "She sought [Christ] a first time and found nothing; she persevered in seeking, and so it happened that she found him. It came about that her unfulfilled desires increased [*desideria dilata crescent*], and as they increased they took possession of what they had found [*et crescentia caperent quod invenissent*]." A thousand years later, in his long prose meditation on *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*, Robert Southwell describes Mary's tears, "in which shee moste uttered the great vehemencie of her fervent love to Christ," as providing "scope to dilate upon the same." For Gregory, the dilation – in the senses both of expansion and of deferral – of Mary's desire for Christ, paradoxically, generates the presence of the desired object. For Southwell, Mary's tears are analogous to the text of scripture in their discursive capacity as utterance to be "dilated" in exegesis. Taken together, Gregory and Southwell begin to reveal an intimate relationship between desire and interpretation. This paper thus takes up the trope of "dilation" in order to address the coordination between eroticism and exegesis in Southwell's work particularly, and in patristic and early modern commentaries on John 20 more broadly. For a hermeneutic model of how exegesis operates in the exchange between the devotional text and the reading body, I turn to Origen's theology of the senses of scripture and the senses of the body as analogous systems of interiority and exteriority: in the movement between letter and figure, flesh and spirit, Origen offers a model for grasping how a reader "senses the sacred." In Southwell's Magdalen, I argue, emerges an understanding of exegesis as desire – in the embodied readerly engagement with the dilatory text as in Mary Magdalen's dilatory desire for the presence of Christ.

**Panel 3: Visions of the Sacred CHAIR: Dr Amritesh Singh (University of York)  
*The Treehouse***

**Justin Byron-Davies (University of Surrey): Visions of the Passion in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Margery Kempe's *The Book of Margery Kempe*.**

This paper explores the significance of the Passion narrative upon the respective writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. I contextualise this focus on the Passion by considering its influence on the consciousness of medieval society, as evidenced in the iconography of the time. I examine the centrality of the Passion within these women's evocative and, often, disturbing visions. I show how the

emphasis on descriptive details, such as blood, in these vivid passages marks a powerful appeal to the senses. In doing this I refer to Julian's concepts of 'bodily' and 'spiritual' sight as approached through contemplation of the Cross and its significance. I compare and contrast the conclusions which these writers reach through their lengthy meditations which they devote to their respective visions and then expound in writing. I explore both the images themselves and what they can tell us about the period in which they were written – the functions that they serve as part of conversion narratives, devotional texts and in the case of Kempe's text, 'autobiography'.

I argue that in the area of receiving visions and in their interpretation, whether orally or in visionary writing, some women were able to fulfil a respected and influential position in society, despite being marginalised in other areas. I draw analogies between the relationship between death and life in the Passion and the Resurrection and also address the matter of the life-giving role of women and the importance of blood and the implicit life/death dichotomy in the medieval consciousness. Finally, I consider the context of Marian devotion in relation to these visions.

### **David Manning (University of Stirling): Seeing the Light: Spiritual Discernment in Seventeenth-Century England**

'The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly'  
(Prov. 20:27, KJB)

The biblical notion of divine illumination was significantly developed in the Christian neo-Platonic tradition. St Augustine's theological epistemology was formulated on the basis that spiritual light emanated from God to believers, making them cognisant of Him and their belief, and this idea was subsequently appropriated by John Calvin amongst others. Spiritual light was an essential part of spiritual discernment: it allowed believers to have and develop spiritual sight.

In seventeenth-century England, conflicting ideas about divine light and spiritual sight proved highly influential to the polemical theology of the age. The 'Cambridge Platonists' appeared to conceptualise divine light within humans only in the very limited sense that God had created and set alight the candle of human reason, which now burned brightly without any further involvement by the Almighty. In a rather mystical sense, 'seeing the light' was all about seeing one's own reason. By contrast, the Quakers develop a theology of the Light Within, pressing a notion of direct revelation that was a powerful expression of spiritual enthusiasm. Here 'seeing the light' amounted to seeing Christ Himself. In the historiography these two groups are often represented as being near opposites; but, by avoiding the twofold trap of critiquing the 'Cambridge Platonists' as 'rationalists' and viewing Quaker light in metaphorical terms, a quite different picture emerges.

This paper will investigate the discourse of spiritual sight and divine illumination in the polemical apology of these two groups. Particular attention will be given to: evolving notions of Calvinism and anti-Calvinism, contemporary engagement with neo-Platonism and the Patristics, as well as subtlety different versions and interpretations of a potentially significant biblical passage, Proverbs 20:27. Spiritual sight will be shown to be a powerful force in the polemical theology of spiritual discernment, a point of solidarity between 'Cambridge Platonists' and Quakers.

**Alicia Spencer-Hall (University College London): A Touching Sight: Medieval Spiritual Visions and Cinematic Somatism**

A medieval saint's divine vision is rooted in her own body – she is able literally to see God during orgiastic raptures, commonly brought on by self-mortification, or torture. In addition, medieval optical theories of extromission and intromission emphasised the necessity of the viewing subject to be touched, quite literally, by the viewed object in order for the transmission of an image (Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*). Seeing anything, including God, involves a dynamic physical interplay between the viewer and viewed within the medieval optical framework. That which is viewed is incorporated into the viewer's own body. This brings about the physical transmission of divinity, alongside the visual perception of its existence, in a saint's spiritual visions. According to Vivian Sobchack's theory of cinematic somatism (*Carnal Thoughts*), when watching a film, the spectator both touches and is touched by the images/bodies on the cinema screen. This paper will interrogate the points of contact and divergence between medieval optical theories and Sobchack's modern somatism hypothesis to shed additional light on spiritual devotional practice rooted in both the visual and material.

**1700 PITSTOP**

**1715 KEYNOTE 2: Dr Matthew Milner (McGill University): Vernacular Knowledge of the Senses in Reformation Europe**  
*The Bowland Auditorium*

**1815 WINE RECEPTION**

*The Treehouse*

**1930 CONFERENCE DINNER - £25 per head for 3 courses and wine**

**DAY 2: SATURDAY 22 JUNE**

*Venue:* Berrick Saul Building, HRC, Heslington campus  
*Directions to campus:* <https://www.york.ac.uk/hrc/contact/maps/>

**0900 COFFEE**

*The Berrick Saul Building Foyer*

## 0930 PARALLEL SESSION 4

**Panel 1: Natural and Occult Philosophies: Number Symbolism, Colour Spectrums, and Pyramidal Symmetry CHAIR: Andrew Cheetham (University of Huddersfield)**

**BS/008**

**Rachel Davies (Newcastle University): 'Thou hast ordered All Things': Sacred Number and Marian Piety in Medieval Motets'**

It is a commonly held belief in cultures and religions across the Globe and throughout the Ages that hearing divinely inspired music can evoke the sacred and facilitate the listener's understanding of the divine. Taking a selection of songs about the Virgin Mary from the thirteenth-century French Montpellier Codex as a case study, this paper explores how sacred music from the northern French High Middle Ages reflects the belief that on hearing music whose structure embodied divinely instituted mathematical principles, the listener would experience an enhanced sense of the divine, without necessarily seeing or understanding these principles). The Apocryphal Book of Wisdom says of God: 'Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight.' Meditating on these words, the new scholasticism flourishing in Northern France during the High Middle Ages contemplated the divine use of mathematics in the created Universe, and taught that mankind's creative works should aim to imitate and illuminate God's perfect Creation through the use of sacred number and proportion. This philosophy is reflected in the musical works of the era, and this paper presents some hitherto unexplored ways in which the mathematical structures of thirteenth-century song employed sacred number symbolism for the expression of marian piety, that hearing marian music might enhance the listener's spiritual sense in relation to the Virgin.

**Ros Powell (Liverpool Hope University): 'Musical in Ocular Harmony': Colour in Eighteenth-Century Poetry**

As Joseph Addison expressed in *Spectator* number 416, 'Colours speak all languages.' It is this universality that enables poets during the eighteenth century to use the medium of colour as an ideal expression of 'philosophical' order. This paper will demonstrate how colour analogies are manipulated in the early eighteenth century to answer the expressive ambitions of certain pre-Romantic Christian writers against the categorising analyses of Newtonian science.

This paper will look at a number of spectrums, including those suggested by Christopher Smart and Louis Bertrand Castel, in comparison to Newton's well-known identification of seven colours. First, the question of counting colours will be surveyed, from Ovidian and Virgilian ideas of many colours to Castel's 145-colour circle of 1740. Secondly, artistic accounts of colour mixing will be examined in terms of how they might be more applicable than a strict empirical account of refracted light for a poet trying to describe divine plenitude. Thirdly, it will be shown how

religious poets often express a preference for aesthetic pleasure over empirical analysis, regarding colours as personal sensory experiences that are analogous to God's creation.

With this background in place, some examples of the use of colours in natural description will be presented, contrasting the accounts of scientifically sympathetic contemporaries such as Thomson and Akenside with those who prefer to present the subjective aspect of colour in their descriptions. Reference will be made to romantic tropes, such as synaesthesia, as they are used to explore alternative poetic languages without reducing nature to measurements.

This investigation will help us to see how these religious accounts of colour contribute to the production of "Romantic" modes of expression and imagery that are drawn from an anti-rationalist and often strongly religious source that is fixed in the eighteenth century.

**Laura Seymour (Birkbeck, University of London): Pyramids and Mannikins: the Communicative Function of Symmetry**

In this paper I would examine a prevalent but understudied image in literature on the sacred: the pyramid. Drawing a pyramid between the self and a much larger object (such as the stars, or an oncoming iceberg!) enabled seafarers to calculate the distance between themselves and that which was greater than them. Drawing a pyramid between a smaller and a much larger object (such as a mannikin and a giant) which had the same proportions allowed mathematicians to establish symmetry between these two objects. Interestingly, this image of the pyramid was co-opted by poets and theologians writing about the sacred (both pagan and Christian). These writers describe a process of triangulating between the senses and the infinite divine being which allows us to sense the divine. Sir John Davies writes for example that the eyes' ability to make smaller copies of massive objects allows us paradoxically to contain these objects within our minds 'These Mirrors [the eyes] take into their little space, | The formes of Moone and Sunne, and euery Starre'. One day he states, if we are virtuous enough to make it to heaven, the eyes and (or of) the mind may even perform the greatest spatial paradox and take in the infinite sight of God. Chapman evokes this in *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* in beautiful terms as he describes sensually taking in the infinite majesty of his apotheosised beloved: 'Betwixt mine Eye and obiect, certayne lynes, | Moue in the figure of a Pyramis, | Whose chapter in mine eyes gray apple shines, | The base within my sacred obiect is...'. Having discussed some key examples of this use of the pyramid-trope in discussions of the sacred, my paper would examine its implications for ideas of space, time, and the infinite in the early modern era as a whole.

**Panel 2: Soundscapes of Exile and Resistance CHAIR: Dr Nicky Hallett  
The Bowland Auditorium**

**Susan Brown (Fullerton College): Sounding the Inner Landscape: Singing in English Devotional Thought and Culture.**

My proposed paper would be excerpted from my book, "Singing and the Imagination of Devotion: Vocal Aesthetics in Early English Protestant Culture," which was published by Paternoster/Authentic Media in 2008 in England.

My subject entails the value of singing and the physical voice according to devotional writers from the period c. 1585-1710. Anglican and Puritan divines wrote extensively on the voice's connection with the soul and the "inner landscape" of devotion. The voice was considered an organizing medium for rationality, but it also played a role according to the faculty psychology of the time, dealing with imagination and the affections. Early English Protestant culture was also very interested in the senses, using sensual images and vocabulary such as "the senses of the soul" and "a spiritual spicery." The voice was elevated in their estimation because it was an emblem of a safe and sanctified sensuality. Within this Christian culture, the singing voice also became the focus of a personalized "voice" which was intensely individual and intimate, while at the same time forming community and unity with others.

**Erin Lambert (University of Virginia): "Beside Still Waters:" Hearing Exile and Homecoming in the Dutch Stranger Church**

After the accession of Mary Tudor in 1553, a community of Dutch exiles left behind their London church and set sail across the English Channel. They referred to themselves as Strangers, articulating an utter lack of place in a fragmented world. As the Strangers were turned away from one potential haven after another on the continent, they carried with them their liturgical books and metrical psalters. Through these sources, this paper explores the role of devotion in the definition of an exilic community's orientation to physical and imagined spaces. Focusing on the liturgies of burial, excommunication, and readmission—rites of passage in and out of the congregation—I first ask how the acts of singing and listening created sacred spaces and bonded a community, no matter where the Strangers went. The positioning of singers' bodies within liturgical space, for example, made visible the Strangers' particular understanding of communal boundaries and each individual's relation to others in the congregation. Second, by viewing the metaphorical imagery of the Strangers' metrical psalmody in the broader context of Reformed writings on exile, I explore singing and listening as modes of envisioning a future home in heaven. Although they had no home on earth, the Strangers sang together of food in abundance, a dwelling place in God's house, and suffering as transient as spring flowers. In this light, exile, for the Strangers, was much more than a journey from one refuge to another. Instead, the entire earth was an exilic space in which they were always equidistant from heaven, the home they awaited. Raised together in song, the Strangers' voices thus articulate their orientation to the wider world, and more broadly, begin to reshape our understanding of exile in the sixteenth century.

**Emilie K M Murphy (University of York): A Sense of Place: Soundscapes of English Catholic Exile**

The importance of English Catholic exiles to the story of post-Reformation English Catholicism is one that has, until very recently, largely been neglected. This paper will add to the emerging literature that emphasises the importance of these exiles alongside their counterparts in the homeland. For this paper I will be focussing specifically on evidence provided by the communities of English Catholics that settled around the first of the exiled convents founded in the Spanish Netherlands: The Benedictine Monastery of the Glorious Assumption, established in Brussels in 1599 and the Augustine community of canonesses at St Monica's, established in Louvain in 1609.

Alongside an eclectic range of sources - from rule books and constitutions, ceremonials, chronicles and benefactor's book - this paper will focus upon exiled English Catholic Richard Verstegan's *Odes in Imitation of the Seaven Penitential Psalmes, with Sundry other Ditties Tending to Devotion and Pietie* (1601), dedicated to the English Benedictine nuns within the newly established exiled convent of Our Lady of the Assumption in Brussels. From the evidence, this paper will recreate the aural landscape of the exiled English Catholic communities in order to argue that the devotional lives of the exiles were unimaginable without music. Song, chant, prayer, ritual and the ringing of bells, all provided the essential material to narrate their daily lives. This aural landscape has been dubbed by scholars as a "soundscape" and it is necessary to attempt to recreate and understand this "sacred soundscape" if we are to fully understand the religious experience of the exiles. Moreover, this paper will show how this soundscape evoked a multifaceted sensory response from its inhabitants, which was fundamental to their experience of the sacred and to the construction of devotional identities.

### **Panel 3: Pathological Bodies, Sacred Souls: Perception, Anatomy, and Medicine**

**CHAIR: Dr Sophie Weeks (University of York)**

*The Treehouse*

#### **Naomi Billingsley (University of Manchester): Healing the Doors of Perception: Embodying Imagination in Blake's Representations of the Healing Miracles**

William Blake (1757-1827) describes the five senses as an 'abyss' (*MHH*, pl. 6, E35), calls them 'inclosing' (*MHH*, pl. 7, E35; *VDA*, pl. 3, E47), and their perceptions 'gross' (*Ann. Berkeley*, p. 213, E663). Reacting against the Enlightenment elevation of rational inquiry and observable knowledge, he asserts that Imagination is the only way to religious truth. Yet his idea of Imagination is closely linked to the language of sight, vision and perception, and he claims that his work is informed by his own visionary experience. For Blake, Imagination is identified with Christ, as Imagination itself. Thus, perception for Blake, is a religious activity - properly directed, it is an act of Imagination and the embodiment of Christ. This paper explores these matters by examining Blake's images of the biblical healing miracles. I argue that they present encounters with Christ as embodied acts which effect healing, in which the sensory and spiritual are intimately related, thus reinterpreting the biblical notion of the healing power of faith in terms of the transformative power of Imagination. The paper will engage in visual exegesis with these images, examining the relative roles

of Christ and the healed in the act of healing, and consider how they relate to Blake's invocations to his spectator to move beyond mere sensory perception to visionary insight, and thus transform his/her own perception through the embodiment of Imagination.

**Sophie Mann (King's College London): Diagnosing Sanctity in Seventeenth-Century England**

This paper focuses on the sense of sight, and how contemporary looking practices were involved in the appraisal and commemoration of individuals considered to be exceptionally virtuous, even, sanctified. It considers the qualities that people admired in these individuals, two of which stand out in the primary literature: their physical appearance and physical comportment, in sickness and in death. Professional attendants at the sick-bed, both clerical and medical, employed their sense of vision to carefully record physical markers they viewed as direct evidence of an individual's sanctity. Markers included exceptional strength; the miraculous absence of pain; the progression of an illness that appeared to contradict natural laws; and the discovery of extraordinary internal features during post-mortem dissections. These findings were then corroborated and often published, usually within a funeral sermon or biography.

To study this process in detail, I examine three Catholic women's final illnesses - Lady Montague (1538-1609), Dorothy Lawson (1580-1632), and Catharine Burton (1668-1714) - the first two recorded in funeral sermons, the latter in a spiritual biography. In each of these cases professional attendants recorded the appearance of their patient's body during sickness and following death. By examining their accounts I aim to highlight how such observations functioned as effective channels through which notions of sanctity and confessional identity could be mediated. I also wish to draw attention to the specific ways in which religious and medical practices interrelated within this context. It is particularly important to note that contemporaries brought a number of *shared* visual skills and habits to bear upon their looking practices. For example, clerical and medical professionals both engaged with physiognomical concepts, engendering a *shared* impulse to look for the ways in which the state of the soul could be deduced via the appearance of the face and body. This enabled *all* attendants at the sick-bed to use the surfeit of visual bodily signs to move from the visible to the invisible, from nature to God.

**Jennie M. Votava (New York University): Donne's Neuroanatomy: Soul, Sense, and the Mind-Body Problem**

A central controversy in early modern theology was the relationship between body and soul, as mediated by both "external" and "internal" senses. In the early seventeenth century, a focus of this debate emerged surrounding the anatomy of one of the body's most complex organs: the brain. With reference to developments in early modern neuroscience and sensory physiology, my paper examines three poems and two sermons by John Donne, which use neuroanatomical conceits to articulate how the senses join body and soul.

In "The Funeral" and "The Progress of the Soul: Metempsychosis," Donne's depictions of cerebral anatomy emphasize the brain's reticular emanations – nerves, "sinews," and even hair – and how these structures, via the senses and the spirits, tie body and soul together. This "subtle knot" is complicated in both poems, however, by problematic gender relations. It is not surprising, therefore, that in a 1617 sermon Donne returns to the same motif, but deploys the netlike image of the nervous system, rather, as a figure for the binds of sinful sensuality upon the immaterial soul. In the poem "The Cross," Donne is directly concerned with the five senses' potentially sinful influence upon the brain. In spite of its sensual propensities, however, the brain is situated within a vessel – the skull – marked with the holy shape of cruciform sutures. Through this literal mark of the cross, Donne presents the brain as fulfilling a spiritual variation on what was believed to be that organ's physical, purgative office. The image of the skull as a vessel recurs in a 1621 sermon, where its receptacle function becomes a symbol for empirical science's fundamental inadequacy to comprehend either body or soul via the earthly senses. Thus Donne's neurosensory depiction of the mind-body problem comes full circle: from doubtful certainty, to certain doubt.

#### **1100 COFFEE & BISCUITS**

*The Berrick Saul Building Foyer*

#### **1130 PARALLEL SESSION 5**

**Panel 1: Sensing Scripture: Experiencing Devotional Texts** CHAIR: Elizabeth Swann (University of York)  
*The Bowland Auditorium*

**Eyal Poleg (University of Oxford): Experiencing Scriptures**

The twelfth-century theologians John Beleth commented that 'Men must hear the Gospel with bare heads, so that the five senses should be wide open to listen.' In medieval Islam, Judaism and Christianity, Scriptures were indeed a sensory (if not sensual) experience. This paper will explore Sacred manuscripts of the three Abrahamic religions, tracing how these material objects became tangible manifestation of God's words, through the use of rituals, parchments, ink and image. Talismanic use of Scriptures was common to all three religions. From the use of Gospel Books in Christian oaths, through the veneration of Torah scrolls in Synagogues, to amuletic use of Qur'ans, ways were established for the sacred to become physical. These often incurred the wrath of both orthodox and heterodox, who saw in it the degradation of the sacred word.

Analysing the sensory experience which was facilitated by sacred manuscripts reveals an unexpected facet of medieval religion. Some uses delineated religious classes - employing touch and kiss as means of separating believers from professionals. However, these did not necessarily lead to a differentiation between low and high culture - as has been suggested by reformers in the Middle Ages and

modernity. Rather, in tandem with other forms of mediation - primarily oral and visual - the use of sacred manuscripts linked believers with what was seen as the ingrained, and often esoteric, truth of God's words. This can be seen in all three religions. However, beyond the similarities between the three faiths, this paper will briefly present points of convergence, as in the use of Jewish oaths in Christian courtrooms, as well as the quintessential differences between the three faiths, which pertain to the very concept of Scriptures.

**Lucy Razzall (University of Cambridge): 'One Rich Handfull': Sensing the Book in Post-Reformation England**

In recent years, historians of the Reformation period, most notably Alexandra Walsham, have persuasively shown that the Protestant battle for control over where the sacred might be found in sixteenth-century England was in many ways one of modification and adaptation, rather than simply an iconoclastic assault on all material traces of Roman Catholicism. While shrines and the relics they contained were subjected to physical and rhetorical violence in the earliest years of the Reformation, and officially removed from religious practice, the *idea* of the relic persisted in Protestant England. The metaphor of the relic often emerged in connection with the book, an object which could be understood to provide a tangible link to its (usually deceased) author, through the sense of touch. Just as the medieval reliquary had been perceived as a porous boundary through which the holiness of its contents could seep into the believer, the book was also something whose numinous contents could be absorbed in different ways, often involving the potentially dangerous intermingling of physical and intellectual apprehension. This paper considers the sensuality of the early modern book as material object, especially in Protestant life-writing, and explores the ambiguities and anxieties this potent sensuality raised for a culture which emphasized both the supremacy of the written Word, and the incorporeality of the divine.

**Aisling Reid (Queen's University Belfast): The Synesthetic Reading Practices of Northern Italian Confraternities**

Manuscript illuminations such as that found within the Bolognese *Comforters' Manual* (Therpstra 169) or the *predella* panel of the Florentine painter Paolo di Stefano Badaloni Schiavo's (1397-1478) tabernacle in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge (Henderson 126-7) visually record the performative reading methods of late medieval confraternal reading communities and indicate that confraternal books were used in commune as part of a broader performative religious practice.

This paper explores the significance of material devotional objects within the religious practices performed by Florentine lay confraternities in the later Middle Ages. It will demonstrate how the physical, sense-orientated religious cultic practices of Northern Italian confraternities influenced the textual content and the performative reception of religious manuscripts they produced.

The paper will underline the importance of material objects within cultic religious practices in Tuscany during the later Middle Ages. In instances where the material cult was withdrawn, as for example during periods of papal interdict, lay persons had recourse to the alternative sensual religion provided by the confraternities, who produced books which appealed to the devotional imagination of its users.

The sensual, 'material' quality which characterizes many late medieval Italian confraternal texts was likely supplemented by extra-textual objects designed to heighten performative devotional meditation, for example *tavolette* and life-like sculptures. The content of confraternal texts was shaped by the sensual physicality of the religious cult in which they were produced and used; confraternal books were likely only one small part of the wider performative cultic religion of the confraternity, in which material objects supplemented synesthetic textual devotion.

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#### **Panel 2: Sensing Medieval Parish Churches CHAIR: Dr Kate Giles (University of York)**

**BS/008**

#### **Anthony Masinton (University of York): Perceiving the Presence of God in the Late Medieval Parish Church**

The parish church was the place where the human and the divine met and this meeting was structured through sensory experience in a complex discourse between people, clergy and the divine. By reconstructing the sensory experience of these spaces, the development of this dynamic conversation can be glimpsed, providing insights into how people perceived the presence of God and how they responded. Taking a buildings archaeology approach, combined with computer modelling techniques, this paper will investigate the relationship between people and God from 1215 to 1540 in five Yorkshire parish churches in terms of its sensory expression. Space, light, movement and sound will all be used to help trace the contours of the late medieval daily engagement with the divine in these mundane yet miraculous places.

#### **Welleda Muller (Université Paris-Sorbonne): Sensing the Sacred in Medieval Choir Stalls**

Medieval choir stalls engaged all the senses of the canons or monks; the human body was relieved by the misericords, the eye was solicited by the profane scenes represented on the stalls and the ear received the full effect of the acoustic provided by the dorsals. Each singer could hear himself as well as the sound from the entire

group of singers. The fullness of Gregorian chant was fully brought out by the acoustic of the choir stalls made of wood. The natural resonance of the high gothic choir was attenuated and at the same time sublimated by the configuration of the stalls. While other senses would seem to be less solicited in the choir stalls, the sense of smell is engaged by the use of incense and it has even been suggested that taste is evoked in the eating the consecrated host.

More than a mere element of liturgical furniture, the choir stalls had become an element to sense the sacred by the end of the Middle Ages. These elements serve to put the human body at the forefront of liturgical experience. This solicitation of the senses and the iconography – especially on misericords and armrests – that presents the body in all its states (work as well as recreation), including its lowest functions (defecation), suggest that choir stalls were designed to make clergymen accept their bodies in their totality. In a context in which the balancing of the three ‘planes’ of humanity (the body, the mind and the soul) is paramount, clergymen could find harmony between these three planes by sensing the sacred in the choir stalls.

Following the research of Eric Palazzo on the activation of the senses through the liturgy in the Middle Ages, I propose to examine the relationship between liturgical furniture (the choir stalls) and the senses in the most sacred place in the church: the choir. Furthermore, I will develop hypotheses to explain the juxtaposition between sacred space and the importance of the senses in the choir stalls.

#### **Ellie Pridgeon (University of Leicester): Audience and Imagery: Sensory Experience and Gesture in the Medieval Parish Church**

This paper will consider precisely how medieval audiences interacted with images in the parish church environment, highlighting the fact that specific image-types functioned in a variety of manners for different individuals. These subtleties of function are rarely acknowledged by the complex medieval vision theories of Robert Grosseteste and Peter of Limoges, whose philosophies were unfamiliar and remote to the vast majority of parishioners. Accordingly, the primary texts selected for this study (which include Reginald Pecock’s *Repressor*, William Durandus’ *Rationale*, John Mirk’s *Festial*, and testamentary documents) refer directly to the parish milieu and (where possible) to personal interaction with imagery.

Visual and textual evidence indicates that parishioners experienced imagery (and ultimately God) through the physical senses. By their very nature such representations (which included wall painting and sculpture) demanded visual contact (sight), and in the case of St Christopher the benefits of protection against sudden death and illness were gained simply by *glancing* at the image in passing. Other image-types required supplementary prayer and / or physical gestures (for instance kneeling, prostration, genuflection and ‘creeping’ – or crawling – to the cross). Physical contact with imagery was common, and at St George’s Chapel in Windsor, visitors are recorded as kissing and licking the alabaster Virgin behind the high altar (touch and taste). It is also clear that several viewers supposed images

capable of speech (hearing), physical movement and even reciprocal gesture. Thus Mirk describes how the knight who forgave his enemy in church on Good Friday was verbally praised, touched and kissed by the crucified image of Christ.

**Panel 3: Sensory Overload from the Middle Ages to the Metaphysicals CHAIR: Emilie Murphy (University of York)**

*The Treehouse*

**Anne Baden-Daintree (University of Bristol): Sensory Overload and Spiritual Affect in Middle English Devotional Lyrics**

This paper examines the literary techniques of devotional lyrics in their encouragement of an affective response in the reader/listener. It considers, in particular, a selection of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century lyrics that employ the language of the Song of Songs with its highly eroticised framework that explicitly draws on all five senses. When this framework (often reduced to single signifying terms such as 'spices', 'honey', or 'lilies') is applied to a contemplation of either the Crucifixion or the Assumption, how might the reader respond to such sensory 'stimuli'? The emphasis, in particular, on touch, scent and taste deriving from the Song's erotic narrative implies a devotional response that combines the metaphoric with the intensely physical. Does the reader of such poems enter a state of imaginative re-creation of the sensory, or is reference to the senses intended to spark a less tangible response?

This paper will draw on the later example of George Herbert's 'Prayer 1', with its juxtaposition of the concrete and the intangible, as a starting point for interrogating medieval relationships between prayer, language, and the senses. It will explore the way in which the sensory overload generated by the language of the Song of Songs enables late medieval devotional lyric to chart the boundaries between the bodily senses and the spiritual senses in acts of prayer and meditative devotion.

**Jenny Ferrando (University of York): John Donne and the Redness of Adam: Colours and the Sacred in Early Modern England**

Christianity was interwoven into the very fabric of early modern culture and so too was colour, most obviously because colour was everywhere, superficially and fundamentally. Colours went beyond material culture and the decorative, encompassing the eternal as well as the everyday. In this paper, I will show how colours were part of this religious and sense-oriented culture in which the boundaries between the sacred and the profane were often blurred. Experiencing colours is not just about sight. Rather, it also involves the other senses, the memory and the imagination while depending heavily on socio-cultural context. Focusing on seventeenth-century sermons, I will explore how John Donne and other so-called 'metaphysical' preachers used colour words for maximum sensory impact and how, in turn, colours facilitated a multi-sensory interaction with the sacred in post-Reformation England. Donne, for his part, took colour usage in sermons to a whole new, almost *theatrical* level. In his hands, colours became complex, challenging and counter-intuitive. Most importantly, I will argue that Donne's most powerful sensory

image was to portray Adam, the first man, as red. In so doing, Donne placed colour at the heart of Creation; colours were there from the beginning.

**Rob Lutton (University of Nottingham): 'Honey in the mouth, music in the ear, a song in the heart': The Sensuality of the Name of Jesus in Late Medieval England**

From St Augustine, who first extolled the unsurpassed sweetness of the Name of Jesus, sensory metaphors were used to describe and encourage devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus throughout the middle ages. This sensory language was developed in particular by Bernard of Clairvaux and then by John of Howden, and was taken up by Richard Rolle in his Latin and English writings in the fourteenth century. Whilst all of these writers used the terminology of the senses, and of sensory pleasure in particular, in a metaphorical sense to describe the spiritual benefits of meditation on and devotion to the Name of Jesus, they and others consistently alluded to the physical pleasure of voicing 'Jesus' and the somatic dimensions of the ecstatic experiences that could arise from such practices. Many statements employ sensory language in ways that suggest both the physical and spiritual dimensions of religious experience and blur the boundaries between them. This paper asks if the permeability between the physical and spiritual that this afforded helps to explain the wide popularity of devotion to the Name of Jesus in England. In other words, to what extent did the sensuality of the Holy Name contribute to its success as a devotional form, alongside its more intellectual and logocentric elements? The paper examines the transmission of Holy Name writing up to the sixteenth century and the development of popular devotional practices both within and outside the liturgy. It also comments on the possible implications of these sensory dimensions for the nature of pre-reformation piety and, in so doing, asks if there might be more widely applicable lessons to be learnt from the late medieval cult of the Holy Name in terms of the relationship between the intellect and the senses in religious experience.

**1300 LUNCH**

*The Berrick Saul Building Foyer*

**1400 PARALLEL SESSION 6**

**Panel 1: Sensory Experiences in Seventeenth-Century New France CHAIR:  
Professor Chris Woolgar (University of Southampton)  
*The Treehouse***

**Donald L. Boisvert (Concordia University): Of Snow and God: The Sensory  
Mystical Experiences of Blessed Marie de l'Incarnation**

What might be the impact of extreme weather conditions on the mystical experience? Can one experience God in the blinding snow, or in the sub-zero cold? How might this be related, if at all, to a masculinized colonial context in which consecrated women were a distinct minority?

This paper will explore these seemingly peculiar questions through an analysis of the unusual life and extensive writings of Blessed Marie de l'Incarnation (1599 -1672), an Ursuline nun, mystic, educator, founder and superior of a convent and school for aboriginal girls in Québec City, then known as New France. In her letters and journals, Marie Guyart (her lay name) was amazingly frank and descriptive about the unique difficulties of the natural environment in which she found herself, and equally forthright about the colonial context in which she had to function as a religiouswoman and a very capable administrator. She drew explicit links, in fact, between her physical, social and cultural environments, on the one hand, and her own mystical experiences on the other. These were always embedded in both the natural world that surrounded her and the relations she had to establish with colonial, almost exclusively male, authorities.

More broadly, the paper will seek to delineate some of the sensory points of intersection between mysticism, gender and the physical environment, while paying close attention to the distinctive quality and impact of a colonial context on the embodied religious experience.

**Andrew Kettler (University of South Carolina): "Ravishing Odors of Paradise;" Jesuit Retention of an Increased Olfactory Sense in Seventeenth Century North America**

Processes coinciding with European state formation, alongside subconscious social controls associated with the civilizing process, limited the olfactory in daily life during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, French Jesuits in North America, due to previous Catholic acceptance of odor in religious exercises and their proximity to native tribes who valued odor in their own daily practices, increased their use of the olfactory in an effort to convert Native Americans and retain their own fervent beliefs while in the American wilderness. These Jesuit priests lauded Native American use of smell by focusing on the spiritual, medical, and subsistence nature of aromatic wilderness life in their writings. When that admiration faded, as Europeans began to dominate powerful native neighbors, a continued acceptance of odor transformed Jesuit sentiency towards a deeply altered limbic order that accepted the nose for numerous classificatory and existential activities of frontier life. Especially during the seventeenth century, these Jesuits sustained the mechanism that increased the use of smelling beyond their European cousins and urban/coastal American neighbors. In order to survive on native borderlands, the pungency-based limbic systems of this Jesuit frontier sensory hierarchy applied a heightened Catholic sensorium that tasted a more effervescent diet, created alliances through the lower senses, converted natives with the sensory seal of tobacco, and subsisted from the environment dissimilar to Early Modern European sentient manners. Because smelling is a culturally flexible sensitivity, these Jesuits living in areas of native cultural power adapted their ways of scenting to better accommodate their varying predicaments by consistently applying native sensory habits and relying on medieval era Catholic sensory hierarchies.

**Robin Macdonald (University of York): "To Go to the Heaven Where the French Went": Embodied Spiritual Experiences in Seventeenth-Century New France**

Since the nineteenth century, histories of New France - the area of North America colonised by the French between 1534 and 1763 - have been framed in terms of territorial conflict and acquisition, and have focussed on the 'taming' of the wilderness and its peoples by European settlers and missionaries. Recently, historians of New France have challenged this view. According to historian Muriel Clair, the creation of sacred spaces in New France was a process of cultural co-operation which resulted in the emergence of 'hybrid' spaces of worship that were both European and Indigenous in nature.

Whilst most historians now accept that religious and cultural boundaries are far from absolute, they have rarely analysed boundaries between physical and non-physical (or spiritual) worlds. Through an examination of letters and relations (in particular, the *Jesuit Relations*, annual accounts written by Jesuit missionaries to their superiors in Paris, this paper will argue that boundaries between physical and spiritual worlds in New France were far from clear. For Indigenous peoples living in New France, these worlds were constantly overlapping and this created complex notions about sacred spaces. Through an analysis of Indigenous spiritual beliefs and dreaming practices - dreams were of particular importance in Indigenous societies owing to their prophetic qualities - it will be argued that Indigenous conceptions of sacred spaces were not only distinct from Indigenous notions of space; they could also challenge the spatial categories which Jesuit missionaries sought to impose.

**Panel 2: Sense and Reformed Sensibility: Spiritual Perception, Conversion and Religious Identity** CHAIR: Professor Brian Cummings (University of York)  
*The Bowland Auditorium*

**Joe Moshenka (University of Cambridge): 'Double Conversion: The Spiritual Senses in the Devotional Works of Sir Kenelm Digby, 1630-40**

Around 1630, in search of respectability and social advancement, Kenelm Digby took communion in the Anglican church and renounced the faith for which his father had been executed in 1606 as a participant in the Gunpowder Plot. When his wife Venetia died in 1633, Digby began moving back towards to faith into which he had been born, publically announcing his reconversion in 1635. He went on to produce a series of devotional works, notably *A Conference with a Lady about a Choice of Religion* and the *Letters Concerning Religion* that he exchanged with his kinsman George Digby. This paper will consider these works in light of Digby's conversion and reconversion, and focus on the ways in which he describes and discusses the sensory basis of spiritual experience. It will argue that the ambiguous status of the spiritual senses at this point in English religious history afforded Digby particular latitude as he reshaped his confessional identity, and that the implications of this reshaping can be seen in the discussion of the senses in his major philosophical work of 1645, the *Two Treatises on body and soul*.

**Sophie Read (University of Cambridge): The Odour of Sacramentality: George Herbert's Poetics of Smell**

This paper will take as its subject the imagery of perfume and scent that suffuses Herbert's 1633 collection of devotional poems, *The Temple*. Concentrating on 'The Banquet' and 'The Odour', it will investigate Herbert's use of an inherited complex of sensory imagery to explore his devotional stance. In each poem, sacramental participation is figured in olfactory terms: as a 'curious broth' of salvific 'smells', and as a redemptive scent emanating directly from the broken body of the sacrificial Christ. This paper will think about the flexibility of expression the sensory trope allows in this context; it will also argue that these instances, and Herbert's wider interest in the sacramental possibilities of the sense of smell, need to be read against both the use of incense in the suppressed Catholic rite, and the scented plague remedies of uncomfortably recent memory.

**Abigail Shinn (University of York): Corporeal Rhetoric: Testimony, Proof and the Senses in the English Conversion Narrative**

Conversion narratives, texts which recount an individual's change of faith or spiritual awakening, are designed to justify or bear witness to a process which in the Protestant and Catholic traditions leaves no physical marks. Consequently, in order to persuade the reader of the 'truth' of their conversion experience converts harness figures and tropes which conflate the rhetorical and spiritual 'turn'. One of the most pervasive rhetorical forms wielded in conversion narratives is the language of sensory awakening: metaphors and similes which ally the acquisition of faith to a recovery from blindness and deafness, refer to the sweetness of grace or a growing appetite for the spirit and recount touching or even smelling the presence of Christ.

Focusing on texts by Protestant and Catholic writers from the early seventeenth century which incorporate figures concerned with sensory perception, this paper will argue that the aesthetic force of these compositional choices results in a form of rhetorical embodiment. The convert deploys figures and tropes which evoke the permeable boundaries of the eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue in order to subvert the stubborn resistance of their own bodies to the marks of their spiritual metamorphosis. In doing so they inscribe the 'truth' of their conversion onto the metaphorical flesh of the text.

**Panel 3: Heavenly Harmonies: Devotional Music, Mathematics, and Neo-Platonism** CHAIR: Dr Michele Campopiano (University of York)  
BS/008

**Charlotte Poulton (Brigham Young University): Hearing the Divine: Images of St. Cecilia as a Musician**

After Saint Cecilia's remains were discovered in 1599 and her body was reportedly found in a perfect state of preservation, Cecilia's fame escalated in Italy through paintings depicting her in her role as patron saint of music. Cecilia's connection to

music derives from the fifth-century *Passio Caeciliae*, which recounts the alleged circumstances surrounding Cecilia's wedding day when she was forced to marry against her wishes. While instruments played, she apparently "[sang] in her heart to God alone" that she might remain pure. Therefore, the physical performance and implied aural sounds of music conveyed in paintings of Cecilia function as part of a sacred story of access to the divine. While it is not unusual for St. Cecilia to be depicted with musical instruments, I propose that what is unexpected and innovative in early seventeenth-century images of Cecilia is the increased presence of stringed instruments and the way Cecilia is depicted actively involved in playing and listening to, not just holding, her instrument. Remarkably, with rare exception, no pictorial tradition exists in which male saints are depicted in form, manner, or action similar to St. Cecilia as a musician.

This paper will examine the instruments Cecilia plays in context of the controversial use of stringed instruments in sacred music performances during the early decades of the seventeenth century to consider how violins, lutes, and theorboes in the hands of a female saint served as a conduit between heaven and earth. Additionally, correspondences between the intense musical engagement evinced in seventeenth-century paintings of St. Cecilia as a musician and accounts of the musical rapture induced by instrumental musical activities of nun musicians reinforce music's transformative quality in facilitating direct contact with the divine.

#### **Hyun-Ah Kim (University of Toronto): Body, Music, and Spirit: the Revival of *Musica Humana* in Renaissance Neo-Platonism**

Renaissance Neo-Platonists cultivated music as contemplation, an intensive intellectual and spiritual exercise associated with the moral state of human beings. The 'contemplative music' was based on a serious enquiry into the relationships between the human body, soul, and spirit, an enquiry which led to a fundamental shift of perspective on the question of *music-ethos*, linked inextricably to the notion of 'spiritual sacrifice.' Ficino is a precursor of reviving music as *contemplatio divinorum*, intrinsic to human nature that pursues union with the Divine (*Theologia Platonica*, XIV. 9). In more Christian terms Erasmus stresses the ultimate goal of music as prayer and as spiritual sacrifice to lead the 'confessors' to immortality, highlighting the psalmody which aims to elevate the soul to God and to contemplate the Divine.

This paper elucidates the classical notion of *musica humana* (music of the human soul and body) which lies at the heart of Renaissance Platonic theology – of which music as contemplation is an integral part – yet is hitherto left unexplained. It demonstrates that the *musica humana*, leading to 'temperance,' was embodied in the Platonic practice of 'poetic music,' especially in 'modulated recitation' (*modulata recitatio*). Furthermore, it reconsiders the significance of Ficino's music-spirit theory in light of the *musica humana*, thereby explaining why the poetic music, especially metrical psalmody, was essential for the Renaissance reforms of sacred music in the pursuit of *musica divina*.

Although this paper focuses on the ideas that underlie the Christian-Platonic practice of music in early modern Europe, the themes in question are equally important for studying some of the key factors of 'sacred music' in a broader sense. From my own studies of music as part of cultural-religious and intellectual traditions, most musical forms in the non-Western traditions which are categorized as sacred/religious music share roughly the same goal as *musica humana*.

**Andrew Cheetham (University of Huddersfield): *Maria Triumphans: Henrietta Maria and Richard Dering's Few-Voice Motets***

In 1625, following the marriage of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, the catholic composer Richard Dering (c.1580-1630) returned to England from the Continent and was appointed organist to her private chapel. The Royal marriage, as is so common in English history, was embroiled by religion: Charles was the head of the Church of England and Henrietta Maria a devout Catholic. Nevertheless, papal requirements were built into the marriage treaty and Henrietta Maria was permitted to exercise her religion freely. The proselytising zeal, however, of Henrietta Maria – and her Capuchin friars – had a profound religious effect: Catholicism prospered under her auspices during the 1630s. Devout Humanism was practiced by the Capuchins (a reformed Franciscan order), which placed great emphasis on the senses, the imagination, and the emotions, embodying an element of Neoplatonic idealism: its central aim was to bring religion into everyday life by making it simpler, and to extend its influence through society by making it attractive.

It is my contention that some of Dering's few-voice Latin motets, of which there are over 50, were almost certainly written for performance at Henrietta Maria's chapel and, I conjecture, were used as a means of proselytising. Dering's few-voice motets were composed according to the *seconda pratica* style which is based on Platonic principles and, furthermore, in these works he demonstrates a complete assimilation of the latest Italian compositional trends – their continued popularity suggests they were attractive. Moreover, the prevailing aesthetic dictum of the Baroque era was coterminous with elements of Devout Humanism, namely the appeal to the senses. The latent rhetorical strategy in Dering's motets, I argue, was employed deliberately to stir the emotions of the listener which, for a Devout Humanist, was the way to God. Dering's few-voice motets are therefore congruous with Henrietta Maria's religion, her promotion of Neoplatonism, and her proselytising zeal.

**1530 COFFEE & CAKE**  
*The Berrick Saul Building Foyer*

**1600 PARALLEL SESSION 7**

**Panel 1: Prayer Beads and Proof: Tactile Piety, Sanctification and the Phenomenology of Faith** CHAIR: Robin Macdonald (University of York)  
*The Treehouse*

**Emmanuelle Friant (Université de Montréal): To Touch in Order to See. A Multisensory Affective Experience: Prayer Beads in Early Modern France (1450-1650)**

Through the study of sensory and affective practices attached to prayer beads in early modern France, this paper aims to demonstrate how, through the sensory and emotional appropriation of the rosary, Catholics managed to build and express their individual spiritual identities.

An accounting tool and medium for the Marian devotion, the rosary appealed to the sense of touch as well as, to varying degrees, to smell, hearing and sight. The collaboration of these external senses helped the believer to generate the necessary emotional condition for the exercise of his or her inner senses.

A gradual paradigm shift in the 17th century redistributed the hierarchy of the senses by placing a new emphasis on sight – both external and inner – to the detriment of physical contact with the material media of devotion. This dichotomy between the proximity and the social senses tended to differentiate a cultural elite – able to reach the divinity by purely spiritual means – from the mass of ordinary believers rooted in a desperately concrete world.

Yet, touch remained predominant in the use of the rosary. Rubbed and kissed, it also provided a receptacle for the sacred when affixed to relics, thus becoming a talisman providing protection and healing. When worn, it disseminated its sacral charge through the metaphysical barrier of the skin, enabling a connection between body and mind and between the worshiper and God. By allowing for a variety of practices by means of which Catholics could appropriate the rosary, and by conveying familiarity and intimacy, touch thus imposed itself as the perfect vehicle for the domestication of the sacred.

Therefore, syncretism between a prescribed and a daily religion, and between an imposed sensory model and experienced sensations, operated at an individual level. From that perspective, the rosary functioned as both a witness and an actor of permanence and change in sensing the sacred, thereby shaping the individualisation and the spiritual “intimisation” in early modern society.

**Adam Morton (University of Warwick): Sanctifying Sight: Images and Faith in Elizabethan Emblem Books**

This paper examines the Papal imagery in Stephen Bateman's, *A Christall Classe of Christian Reformation* (London, 1569). These emblems were some of the earliest post-Reformation depictions of the Papacy in England, and provide interesting insights into the nature of anti-papery during the late sixteenth century. Peter Lake and Anthony Milton have demonstrated how “popery” became a language used to criticize institutions, practices and persons not directly related to the Roman Church, part of a vocabulary of insult levelled at a target that a given author or group found undesirable. The images in Bateman's book work in a very

similar way, employing images and symbols of Catholicism as a language or vocabulary to critique vices and ills within society and, crucially, within the souls of the Elect. The first thesis of this paper will thus be that anti-Catholicism worked at a micro as well as a macro level in English society, and acted as a soteriological/theological language as much as a religio-political one. This paper will then suggest that: 1) images continued to play an important place in Reformed piety, being understood as useful tools of practical divinity necessary to fulfil the process central to a Reformed life in faith: sanctification; and 2) that deeming Protestantism as an abstract/austere/rational 'religion of the Word' underplays the role of the senses in coming to knowledge of God vital in achieving a life in faith. In light of the latter thesis, it will be noted that Protestants must be understood as rhetoricians as much as Reformers; and that their attitudes to images were shaped by aspects of early modern society other than 'iconophobia'.

**Subha Mukherji (University of Cambridge): 'O she's warm': Sense and Assent in Face-to-face Art-Forms**

Sceptical distrust of the senses was a commonplace in the early modern period, as were theological devaluations of their heuristic relevance. The epistemology of the law-court, on the other hand, was based on the assumption that first-hand sensory experience would provide the best proofs. But given how difficult these might be to obtain, designated substitutes were acceptable. These included not only witness testimony but also concrete, sensuously apprehensible material tokens which were remarkably effective in court, even though, theoretically, they did not count as full proof. Significantly, this pragmatic strain was not unknown in theology either. But there is a simultaneous anxiety that often results in a dissolution of the physical into the figurative. This talk will examine the paradoxical function of the senses in a strain of reformist writing (e.g. sermon literature) as well as in law, and proceed to focus centrally on Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* as an example of how face to face art forms such as drama actively embrace this duality and collapse the mechanics of doubt into the workings of faith in sensory experience. This is a play where the exploration of proof and belief straddles the religious and the secular: the status of the senses as evidence will be a link across the different disciplinary spheres that the talk will address, as indeed plays do in their syncretic way, using their particular medium to forge what we might now call a phenomenology of faith. *The Winter's Tale*'s intermeshing of Biblical and pagan narratives, meanwhile, will be shown to feed into both the scandalous improbability of the kind of faith that the play elicits, and its grounding in process.

**Panel 2: Representing Martyrdom in Visual Art CHAIR: Dr Cordula van Wyhe (University of York)**  
*The Bowland Auditorium*

**Bogdan Cornea (University of York): Touching the Sublime Body: The Depiction of Sanctity and Flesh in Jusepe de Ribera's Martyrdoms of St. Bartholomew**

Beginning from the premise that Jusepe de Ribera's art is a constant pursuit and cultivation of sensations, this paper aims to show that Ribera's recurrent portrayals of the *Martyrdom of St. Bartholomew* engage viewers in an active response, going beyond the obvious sense of sight by additionally appealing to the most instantaneous of the senses: touch. In particular, it will argue that Ribera emphasised the physical qualities of his paintings, their materiality, in order to appeal to the viewers' senses, to disclose a tactile dimension and thereby creating a paradoxical relationship of a "touch in separation" between the viewers and painting.

According to seventeenth century sources, Ribera's violent and immediate portrayals of the flayed saint produce a paradoxical experience of living presence. Immediacy and corporeal presence comprise a strategy meant to suspend the medium, subsequently confronting viewers with the materiality of paint as flesh and thereby transforming representation into presence, attested through touch. Conspicuously, Ribera inserted several motifs that point to the material nature of the artworks and the desired viewers' experience, such as the gesture of the executioner introducing his bare hands into the wound of the saint. The sense of physicality coupled with the complex nature of touch points to the image's powers in touching us, appealing to our senses as embodied viewers and thus urging us to "make sense" of them. Ribera's images underline the idea that spirituality, exceeding the mind/body divide, engages believers above all through their material bodies. Viewers are invited not only to see, but also to go beneath the surface of the flayed saint and, thus, untangle the apparatus that sets an overpowering emotional response into motion, designed to bring them to a sublime, saintly presence. In their essence, Ribera's works, by presenting themselves like painted materiality as living flesh, depict the embodiment of sanctity.

#### **Agnes Fazakas (University of York): Sensing Sacrament and Sacrifice: The Dead Body of Christ in the Art of Rosso Fiorentino**

Rosso Fiorentino painted panels of the uncanny dead Christ repeatedly throughout his career, in the first half of the sixteenth century. Whereas most contemporary depictions of the theme feature conspicuous and virtuosic veils covering the Saviour's body and forming barriers between his skin and those who touch him, Rosso's versions of Christ's body are disturbingly bare and exposed, and as such, they are directly touched by the surrounding figures wearing voluptuous and colourful draperies. Examining Rosso's four paintings, this paper will argue that the unconventional and seemingly inappropriate way in which Rosso represents the dead Christ aims to engage the viewer in the futile process to verify the body on display as "real" by stimulating primary sensory vehicles, mainly touch.

At the dawn of Reformation and shortly before the council of Trent, the very theme of these panels, their emphasis on corporeality, and their possible function point towards Eucharistic connotations. However, a Eucharistic reading would be a limited interpretation of these panels, as Rosso shows Christ in full possession of his sensual qualities between death and Resurrection, whereas the presence in the host,

according to the doctrine of transubstantiation, is in substance only, which cannot be verified through sensory experience.

The paper will contend that Rosso's remarkable emphasis on sensual touch (to the sensitive side wound or the upper inner thigh of Christ) is a key in how these paintings involve and convince the viewer of the "true" nature of the Represented. Although touch is a primary vehicle of bodily verification, it was regarded as controversial in Christian tradition (testified by stories such as *Noli me tangere* or *Doubting Thomas*). Nonetheless, touch in Rosso's paintings can be understood as the link leading from sensual to spiritual understanding and pleasure. Christ's ecstatic state and expression, notable on all four panels, is of spiritual nature, but his reaction to somatic touch also plays a role in underlining his transcendent experience. This tactile link allows the beholder to relate to and to partake in the intangible mystery of Christ's peculiar and paradoxical bodily state: being divine and human, dead yet alive, vulnerable yet victorious.

### **Edward Payne (The Morgan Library and Museum): Sensory Extremes: Pain and Punishment in the Art of Jusepe de Ribera**

The five senses play a central role in the work of Spanish artist Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652). His preoccupation with bodily perceptions can be traced back to his Roman years, where he executed a series of five paintings representing the five senses. After establishing himself in Naples, Ribera embarked on a short-lived career as a printmaker; among his earliest etchings are studies of eyes, ears, noses and mouths. The senses remained of considerable interest to the artist, as he returned to the theme explicitly in later allegories of the subject, and fundamentally in his frequent depictions of religious violence.

This paper investigates the complicated relationship between Ribera's portrayals of physical suffering and the issue of the five senses. It argues that, rather than conforming to a fixed *hierarchy* of the senses, Ribera's depictions of saintly martyrdom unfold a complex, *multisensory* experience of bodily suffering, in which the artist foregrounds the problematic processes of inflicting, representing and witnessing physical pain. It further examines how Ribera's allusions to the five senses in these works, which so heighten the graphic 'realism' of Christian suffering, may be regarded as visualised echoes of contemporary discourses on the senses in early modern Italy and Spain. Drawing on texts such as Fabio Glissenti's *Moral Discourses Against the Displeasure of Dying* (1596) and Saint Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1548), the paper offers a reading of Ribera's images of violence in the contemporary context of such sensory discussions. Taking as its focus a selection of works representing the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew, who was flayed alive for his Christian faith, this paper will address the complicated relationship between the 'sight' of suffering and the 'touch' of torture, unveiling the subtle tensions between looking and not looking, sensing and not sensing.

**Panel 3: Touching the Sacred: Women, Needlework, and Conversion in the Early Modern Period CHAIR: Dr Laura Crombie (University of York)  
BS/008**

**Claire Canavan (University of York): 'If I may but touch the hem': The Haptic Spirituality of Early Modern Women's Needlework**

Recent attention to the spiritual expressivity of early modern women's stitchcraft has focused on the biblical stories which formed the most common subject of domestic embroideries. Scholars have largely viewed these as static, flat pictures with a purely visual appeal, effacing the haptic stimulation provided by the textural diversity of stitches, embellishments and the padded fabric sculptures of stumpwork. As Mark 5:25-29 reveals, handling textiles could become an embodied and transformative devotional experience through which the toucher was also touched; these verses relate how a sick woman was cured by touching the hem of Christ's garment. Bringing contemporary considerations of this passage into conversation with extant embroideries, this paper will examine the spiritual and physical practices of touch applied to and generated through women's stitchery.

The interpretation of Christ's garment as a metaphor for the Scriptures, for example, acquires particular pertinence in relation to the embroidered bindings within which women hemmed their bibles. This suggests how, through the touch of these books' "clothes", women might have shaped affective engagements with the enclosed text. Women's textile handiwork would have fostered skills in feeling fabric and, when considered alongside the woman cured through Christ's cloak, raises questions about the gendering of devotional textile touching.

However, concrete interpretations of Christ's garment attracted ambivalent reactions and indicate potential tensions between the physical and spiritual touch of sacred "material". Literal readings of Christ's garment could generate anti-papist anxiety, provoking railings against the sumptuousness of priests' copes; in the context of the recycling of Catholic vestments in women's embroidery, this suggests that women's work might have preserved traces of pre-reformation sensitivities.

By exploring what it meant to touch and be touched by women's biblical needlework, I will reveal how women's embroidery might be understood as constructing the ways in which they and others felt their faith.

**Amanda Pullan (Lancaster University): Moral Instruction for Young Women: The Five Senses in English Seventeenth-Century Needlework**

In England and Scotland, during the middle years of the seventeenth century, young women embroidered images of the Five Senses as part of their education, alongside representations of biblical scenes and the Virtues. Some have argued that moral structures associated with older medieval Christianity such as the Seven Deadly Sins were giving way to different models of moral instruction informed by the Reformation such as the Ten Commandments. Yet, these domestic materials,

embroidered caskets and panels, mostly worked on by young women show us that the imagery of the Virtues and the Five Senses persisted alongside the new models.

Taking the point that artistic representations of the Five Senses were never about the senses alone but about moral choices, this paper will analyze and contextualize two needlework projects which use images of the senses to convey moral instruction for household life. Needlework is important material to study for the imagery it contained, but also because it was an activity where the senses were essential to production. The significance of the Dame à la Licorne tapestries in the Musée du Cluny, Paris, make this clear. This paper, however, will show how this was not only imagery that concerned the elites or those at court, but it was important for young girls of middling backgrounds. This discussion will contribute to a wider understanding of the relationship between the senses and religious education during the seventeenth century.

### **Helen Smith (University of York): Touching Faith: Feeling Conversion in the Late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries**

#### **1730 PITSTOP**

#### **1745 KEYNOTE 3: Dr Nicky Hallett (University of Sheffield): Sensate Certainty: Cognitive Care in a Convent Community**

*The Bowland Auditorium*

#### **1845 CLOSING NOTES FROM ROBIN MACDONALD, EMILIE MURPHY, AND ELIZABETH SWANN**

*The Bowland Auditorium*

#### **1900 INFORMAL DINNER TBC**

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<sup>i</sup> Holly Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England*, (John Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp24-32, Matthew Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, (Ashgate, 2011), pp314-315

<sup>ii</sup> Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume*, p 30, Henry Dodwell, *A Discourse concerning the use of incense in divine offices*, (Dublin, 1711), Anon, *A Brief Answer To a late Pamphlet, Entitled A Defence of the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of England, Against some Modern Innovations, &c.* (London, 1712)

<sup>iii</sup> Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*, (Oxford, 1673). See also William Gouge, *Of Domestical Duties*, (London, 1622).

<sup>iv</sup> James Gillray, *La Belle Assemblée*, (1787), hand coloured etching, 248x348mm, (London, British Museum), Anon, *The Macaroni Sacrifice*, (1733), etching on paper, 198x206mm (London, British Museum)

<sup>v</sup> Carter, Elizabeth, 1717-1806, Letter from Elizabeth Carter to Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, April 28, 1778, in *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Montagu between the Years 1755 and 1800*, vol. 3. London, England: F.C. & J. Rivington, 1817, pp. 358.

<sup>vi</sup> Montagu, Elizabeth Robinson, 1720-1800, Letter from Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, 1755?, in *The Letters of Mrs. E. Montagu, With Some of the Letters of Her Correspondence*, vol. 4. London, England: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1809, pp. 374.

<sup>vii</sup> Harris, 'The Smell of Macbeth', p485.

<sup>viii</sup> Mark Jenner, 'Civilization and deodorization? Smell in Early Modern English Culture', in P. Burke, B. Harrison, P. Slack ed. *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), p138.