With its new approaches to a wide range of topics this volume offers an example of how sensory studies can enrich our understanding of the Roman empire, whilst aiming to develop an awareness of the methodological problems encountered when attempting to recover the effectiveness of sensation for culturally and temporally distant people. The Roman empire afforded a kaleidoscope of sensations which interacted and collided with one another. When we begin to consider how the whole sensorium affected human experience, behaviour and memory, we learn to access those sensations and use them to better understand the human past.

Notes

1 Jo Day provides an excellent summary of the development of sensory studies in archaeology in the introduction to her edited volume (2013b; see also Fahlander and Kjellström, 2010a, pp. 1–7).

2 For a concise overview of phenomenology see Thomas, 2006, pp. 43–50. For critique and discussion of Tilley, see Brück, 1998; Day, 2013b, p. 7.

1 The sounds of the city
From noise to silence in ancient Rome

Ray Laurence

We may be able to walk down a Roman street, observe wheel-ruts in the roadway and visually comprehend the parts of buildings that no longer survive; but what would that street have sounded like? Most sensory experiences of the past are lost to us and recreating them tends to be beyond the imagination or our comprehension of Roman space. As a result, the surviving visual remains have always been the focus of attention and vision has become the dominant sense in the study of space in the Roman city. This situation causes our understanding of Roman urban space to be, at present, limited and not embracing all the multisensory possibilities of the streets and other public spaces, a situation which several chapters in this volume seek to address (see also Betts, 2011). This chapter takes a step towards a better understanding of the contrasting soundscapes of ancient Rome. Whilst the chapter includes subjective, qualitative descriptions of my personal experiences, the primary approach taken is to identify sounds from a selection of Latin literature and to give a flavour of the extent to which they can contribute to the texture of the cultural soundscape of Rome. In so doing, the chapter aims to draw attention to the richness of sound data that can be obtained from Latin literature and to use it to create a series of vignettes of real and imagined soundscapes in the city of Rome and its environs.

Why sound?

Sound is deliberately privileged in this study to draw out an area of investigation that, when focused on the perceiver rather than the emitter of sound, is associated with subjective rather than objective data (Bull and Back, 2003; see also Vincent, this volume; contrast Vetch, this volume). Sound is chosen for the reason that it adds a dimension to the visual or visualisation of the past. The intention of the chapter is to set out how sound can be used to better understand the identities of places within the city of Rome (Smith, 2007, p. 45) whilst recognising that the variation in the intensity of sound from 'disruptive' noise to silence created acoustically textured spaces (Ihde, 2003). The control of this texture was something the elite could architecturally manage in their villas (see Pliny Letters 2.17), but the city of Rome presented them with an encounter of sound that was uncontrollable. The noise of slaves at a Saturnalia dinner or of
the plebs in the city of Rome was seen by the elite as a negative aspect of their social world; but the very existence of these phenomena help characterise the ancient Roman soundscape. Mapping the representations of sound in literature onto the spaces of ancient Rome allows us to contemplate that city as an acoustic map (Bull and Back, 2003, pp. 12-14 for the concept). The fragmentary nature of our data means that our acoustic map of ancient Rome will not be as comprehensive as that of Bruce Smith (1999) for early modern London, but we still need to consider the intersection of ambient sound, speech and the place of music in the city (see Smith, 2003). However unsatisfactory our evidence for auditory spaces and places in ancient Rome, we need to at least think through how the city may have sounded. I would suggest that this approach is no different from visualisation, such as that found in Rome Reborn (Frischer, 2013), which seeks to represent urban environments from the past, including parts of it for which no evidence actually survives. Both visualisation and soundification seek to do the same thing: through fragmentary evidence they seek to create knowledge of the experience of the past. At present, we can only look forward to the full development of intersensoriality, in which all the senses can be rejoined to consider how it was to be human in the city of Rome (see Howes, 2005b, pp. 7–12).

Sound is combined in this chapter with another aspect of sensory experience, the kinaesthesia of movement, which is itself an element of haptic experience. This builds on an area of investigation driven forward by David Newsome, where movement is a means to re-conceptualise the relationship between people and monuments (Nowsome, 2009; papers in Laurence and Newsome, 2011). The combination is a counter to the curation of the visual representation of the past that becomes fixed and is static (Favro, 2014, p. 85). If the city is to be moved through, how do we enrich that movement with an understanding of the body’s experience of space and the sensory perception of urbanism that is presented as dirty, smelly, noisy and/or crowded in Latin literature. It is notable that the visual experience of the city is often omitted in the subjective realism of an author such as Martial, who creates urban experiences through the bodily perception of his literary persona. The actual haptic experience of the city was as ephemeral and fleeting as movement. Yet, it would seem from Eleanor Betts’ observations on sound in the Forum Romanum that sound can be recoverable through the study of texts linked to the study or experience of sound within the standing remains of archaeological sites (Betts, 2011, pp. 126–9), alongside the representation of crowds in sculpture.

Lost in Roman space

Academic writing on the city of Rome can travel in a number of directions. Most people’s knowledge of Rome begins with seven hills and a concept of geographical space based on area; whereas in literature the deployment of the phrase “the Seven Hills” could mean all of Rome or just the city of Rome as a place (Vout, 2007). Area in any case does not provide us with an experience of the city, which can only be gained through knowledge of routes and spaces. For example, the Via Lata, “the wide street”, a descriptive nomenclature that identifies the other streets as narrower, provides a greater conception of urbanism than knowledge of the distinction of the Palatine from the Aventine, from the Esquiline and so on. Naming, mapping or describing an urban element does not create an urban history for Rome, but instead prevents a history of urbanism from going beyond the knowledge listed alphabetically in a topographical dictionary, or within the linguistic frame of a textual source. The limits to scholarly endeavour need to be understood, so that we may shift forward towards a different academic knowledge base for understanding the Roman city.

Scholars tend to produce a city of Rome that is so situated in Roman history that the history of urbanism is lost on the way and this is particularly true of the non-visual perception of the city. Instead, the structure of this form of writing of the city plays up contact with the Hellenistic cultures of the East through conquest, the transition from Republic to Empire, the shift to Christianity, but there is little actual urban experience here (see, for example, Dyson, 2010). Appropriately subtitled “A Living Portrait”, the visual is emphasised in art history, as seen in Paul Zanker’s The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus, which combines the textual with the visual representations of monuments and archaeological remains (Zanker, 1988). Alternatively, architectural historians (for exampleScar, 2006) tend to collect building types together, such as theatres or circuses or temples and so on, and to write a history of buildings that seem to come into existence and have their form described. These stories of buildings seldom place the city back into space. To give one example, few students can connect the building of the Theatre of Marcellus with the major access route into the city of Rome associated with the urban extension of the city into Region XIV. The theatre is deliberately placed and becomes a monument as prominent as the future Colosseum was for the Flavian emperors, or the Mausoleum of Augustus was for those entering Rome from the North. Interestingly, Diane Favro had to use the imaginary realism of an adult male leading a child through Strabo’s Geography (5.3.7–9) to create a sense of the changes associated with the long reign of Augustus to 14 CE (Favro, 1996, pp. 252–80). Her work is much about the image of the city, with the visual perception of, or gaze on, these monuments to the fore. Meanwhile, Simon Malmberg has pioneered the thick description of the urban transect of ancient Rome in his presentation of the urban section of the Via Tiburtina (Malmberg, 2009). Innovators such as Favro and Malmberg are seeking to break the mould that is conditioned by past historiographical and topographical traditions.

Running right through both archaeological topography and the study of Rome in ancient literature is a preoccupation with mapping or visualising texts to comprehend literary journeys across the city; notice the play on sights in Lamour and Spencer’s Sites of Rome (2007, pp. 6–7). The emphasis on the view of a landscape, rather than on an experience of a landscape, can even cause a waterfall at Troia to be described visually, and for its loud soundscape to become lost (Spencer, 2010, p. 108; description of Figure 7). Anyone residing in
a hotel next to such a waterfall at Tivoli will quickly discover the soundscape of their balcony overlooking the waterfall becomes intolerably loud after less than five minutes. This real, subjective example demonstrates how our access to sound is experiential and that a waterfall can have no sound if considered from the view of a photograph or a painting reproduced in a book. The link between my experience of the waterfall today and that of the waterfall in antiquity is not precise: changes in the landscape and built environment mean that we cannot actually know that the volume of the sound was the same, and even if it was, it may have been perceived differently. In consequence, we can only begin to hint at the possibilities of reconstructing Roman sound.

The role of sound and, in particular, song and music in the lives of the Roman plebs has been discussed by Nicholas Horsfall in a pioneering study that documented the presence of these phenomena in the city (Horsfall, 2003; also Wiseman, 2014, p. 51). What is far more tricky is for us to associate music with a place or a time in which a place might be transformed by music in the manner of public buildings today inhabited by the music of cultural events (Bull and Back, 2003, pp. 12–14; Finlen, 2003; Kahn, 2003). We can know that Romans danced and played instruments, as well as listening as an audience to musicians, but we do not know where they practised or created the sounds of a novice learning a musical instrument for the first time. The experience of music was recognised as a phenomenon that caused a reaction amongst an audience, such as leading reclining diners to dance (Plutarch Moura 705E–F). Such bodily expression, like many others, was regarded as connected to drunkenness (Cicero, De Legibus 4, 13). There was also a sound in a wedding that had its place and some places in the city should be kept free of some sounds. Singing and dancing in the Forum was seen by Cicero as at odds with civilised behaviour (De Officiis 1.145, 3.93); it was also the place in which Julia the daughter of Augustus held her infamous party in 2 BCE (Dio Cassius 55.11.12–16).

**Soundscapes in texts**

In Latin literature noise was associated mainly with two aspects of citizenship: warfare, and the political processes associated with the Forum and assemblies of the people. The Forum Romanum was a place with a rich acoustic texture (Betts, 2011, pp. 126–9), often associated with noise and the words of anger (Cicero For Archias 6 (strepitus)), and just stopping short of stone throwing and violence (Livy 2.29). During a speech, however, the Forum would be associated with the silence of the Roman people listening (Cicero For Rutilus 6; compare Horace Art of Poetry 73). There was a requirement for silence, so its absence was a sign of the resistance of the people to the power of magistrates (Livy 8.33, 3.49). The crowd was seen by Livy to have been able to determine a particular sound to be associated with licctors clearing a way for a magistrate (Livy 8.33). Horace could imagine the loudest noise in the Forum to be three funerals with trumpets and some two hundred carriages (Horace Satires 1.6.42–4; see also Hope, this volume). There were also subtler sounds, such as a particular noise of a debtor being pursued by his creditor (Plautus Pseudolus 4.7). In all cases, sounds were picked out to be associated with actions taking place in the Forum.

The loudest noises in Latin literature tend to be associated with disorder. Storms are recorded for their sound and linked to the disapproval of the gods (Livy 8.6, 31.12; Cicero Hanseis 10), something to be wary of and associated by some with fear (see Suetonius Gaius 51.1). There is a sense by which the vanished, or about to be vanished, fear noises (Livy 32.24), which crosses over into the realm of the law court and politics with the broken man, Piso, an ex-consul, startled by every noise (Cicero Against Piso 41). The Bacchanalia conspiracy of the second century was associated with drums and cymbals, the sounds of which drowned out violence and murder (Livy 39.8). Ultimately, these instances point to the distinction between order and silence, and disorder and noise. In the representation of warfare we find a milieu for ancient authors to recreate the multisensory experience of episodes of military service: sounds not experienced directly, such as battle or even defeat, could be represented to the population of the city in texts, and also in the amphitheatre and theatre. These accounts provide us with a reference point from which to consider how sounds in the city were placed on a scale that features at one end ordered silence and at the other disorder and noise.

Whilst the soundscape of a military camp would have been rather different from that of a city, both had some resonances that were very similar. Approaching a military camp and a Roman city need not have been so different, since in both cases there was an expectation of sounds associated with a higher concentration of population (Livy 9.45). The soldiers in a military camp provide us with an ordered contrast to plebs in the city of Rome, and thus need to be considered here as a reference point for the contrast between that metropolis and other forms of settlement. One of the objections to life in Rome was that sleep was not possible (Juvenal Satires 3.234–8). In contrast, the soldiers’ camp would have been quiet at night unless they were under attack (Livy 2.62, 4.59). Soldiers could also march silently to represent the ordered nature of their progress (Livy 24.40, 25.23), something that was so different from the crowded streets of the city of Rome associated with noise.

The order of the soldiers silently marching is contrasted with battles in which it is noise that is associated with fear (Livy 10.28; compare Livy 5.37; Tacitus Agricola 35). The representation of the battle of Lake Trasimene featured slaughter and the sound of slaughter that was in itself disorientating. It was so loud that it caused a major earthquake to go unnoticed by those at the battle (Livy 22.5). The scale and ferocity of battle was represented, or even measured, by sounds carrying from a battlefield to nonparticipants (Livy 4.41, 9.43); perhaps as far as twelve miles (Livy 44.4). Those hearing the sounds interpreted them not only as an indication of defeat, but also of what followed defeat: a siege of a city (Livy 2.53).

Captured cities also have their soundscape in Livy, with the crowd in panic and the noise of collapsing city walls (Livy 21.14; Altar: Livy 1.39; Veni: Livy 5.21; Sora: Livy 9.24; and Bovianum: Livy 10.42). The capture of the city of Tarentum
by Rome during the second Punic war presents a narrative of three soundscapes: the quiet part of the city, the city called to arms and the city captured (Livy 27.15; compare Livy 29.6, 36.22, 38.5).

Thus we can say that sound was incorporated into the historical narratives of Rome's battles. It provided an additional element with which to imagine or create the subjective realism needed to experience an event through a text. Descriptions of battles, like the triumph parading through Rome, brought elements of the experience of war to urban dwellers who never experienced it first-hand. Lucius Norbanus, consul for 19 CE, provides an unusual example with which to comprehend how the imagination of warfare affected the inhabitants of Rome. We are informed that Norbanus had always been devoted to the trumpet (Dio Cassius 57.18.3). He practised regularly and at dawn on 1 January 19 CE, as people were gathering at his house, he played to mark the beginning of his consulship. His visitors did not expect this sound and interpreted it as an omen, or a signal for battle, demonstrating the comprehension of warfare and battle by a population isolated from military service in the early Empire.

For Roman writers, sound provided a means to describe Rome, but if we are going to fully understand the nature of sound in Rome we need to delineate the boundaries of the urban soundscape by comparing it to others. On the one hand, Rome was perceived as noisier than the countryside: Horace (Odes 3.29.12) linked noise (spreitus) to both the smoke and wealth of the city to present a contrast with the humble man's abode in Tibur (Tivoli). On the other, disorientating noises of battles, and some other soundscapes, were represented as louder than the metropolis. These examples of sounds in texts point to a key fact for understanding Roman urbanism: knowledge of sounds included both those that were physically heard in the city and those that could have been imagined, or were less frequently heard. The point of intersection between imagined and real, Lucius Norbanus playing his trumpet, points to the affectiveness of those imagined sounds. Roman soundscapes should be understood as both the real, situated in the physical spaces of the city, and the imagined, situated in historical narrative and other forms of literature. A sound of battle, a trumpet blast, could have been interpreted as a sound of battle even within Rome of the first century CE, so far from Rome's armies.

Saturday night Pantheon

The discussion so far has used texts to illustrate how a few particular soundscapes were represented by Roman authors. A different approach is to consider how we might understand the role of sound in the ancient city through our own senses and our ability (real or imagined) to inhabit spaces constructed in the Roman period. The aim here is to demonstrate how contemporary qualitative experience of sounds within an extant architectural space in Rome can increase our understanding of a Roman audience's experience of that space.

In a recently published work by Henri Lefebvre (2014) that prefigures The Production of Space (Lefebvre, 1991), the body, and in particular Lefebvre's body, is placed at the centre of the analysis of the new spaces of pleasure of the 1970s, such as Benidorm. What is revealed in this remarkable piece of analysis is how the subjective and the sensory were essential to Lefebvre's development of his writings on space, although the subjective was far from explicit in his later works. Indeed, the manuscript Towards an Architecture of Pleasure (the book's title) creates an intersection between intellectual thought on space and the sensory and/or sensual experience of the body. What Lefebvre saw, felt and heard in Benidorm informed his intellectual analysis, just as what we see, feel and hear affects our understanding of Rome. Physical distance is experienced by us today as we walk across the city of Rome (even within the confines of the ancient city space) and some interior spaces remain; so, methodologically, we can begin to access the residual haptic experiences of ancient Rome. This might be described as thinking through the body to create a better understanding of experiences of the past.

The Pantheon is probably one of, if not the, most famous pieces of Roman architecture that can still be experienced today. It is almost impossible to convey, with however many pictures, measurements, axiometric reconstructions and so on, what it is like to experience the building. In terms of visual perception there is the fact that the Pantheon, once inside, constitutes a volumetric space with the light from the oculus falling in a different manner according to the time of day (and time of year) at which a visit is made (Thomas, 2007, p. 68 interprets the interior space via a reading of Edmund Leach, 1983). The internal space is unlike, say, the Basilica Ulpia (today experienced via a visit to San Paolo fuori Le Mura, which was built on the same dimensions), that is a rectilinear space with a lower ceiling and an interior segmented by columns and vaults. In contrast, in the Pantheon the sense of the body in space is very different, and perhaps unique. Everyone can be seen, just as you would have been seen in the Curia (as rebuilt by Diocletian and visited by tourists today).

A key part of the haptic experience of the Pantheon is a particular soundscape that is moved into. This can be described as experienced on a busy Saturday evening (April 2014). The piazza outside the Pantheon is full of people; they are both seen and heard, even, to a certain extent, felt, as movement of the people is organised around seeing the Pantheon, meeting, chatting, passing through and so on. To step towards the Pantheon and to enter the porch amongst the granite columns is to enter another soundscape. For the most part, people do not stop here; they are moving across the space to enter or leave the rotunda of the building. It is quiet compared to the piazza, and there is also a perception of a change in either temperature or simple shelter from the movement of air around the piazza. Stepping into the interior of the rotunda, we enter a new space and another soundscape. It is far from quiet. People happily chat, take photos, tweet and text. No voice is distinctive; instead, there is a hum of voices. This is interrupted by the amplified message (in multiple languages) that the Pantheon is a place of religious worship and silence should be observed. The reaction is a drop in voices that then resurges to the previous pitch until once again the amplified announcement over the public address system is made. With a few hundred people inside, silence does not return; these people are too happy to be
in this space and express joy. A couple embraces next to the sign advising silence. The experience of architecture in the Pantheon encapsulates Henri Lefebvre's articulation of an architecture of pleasure that depends on a consciousness of the body in space.

What is so interesting is that within the Pantheon silence cannot be maintained today. The building was said to have been used by the emperor Hadrian for public meetings to transact business, a function that continued through to the fourth century (Dio Cassius 69.7.1; Theodosian Code 14.3.10; Ziółkowski, 1999, p. 60). It is possible that the Pantheon was not a temple but an imperial iulia, in which people could meet (Ziółkowski, 1999, p. 60; see also Historia Augusta, Hadrian 19.10; contrast Dio Cassius 53.27.2–3). It would seem that the Hadrianic Pantheon was primarily a building designed for dialogue between emperor and crowds within an interior space. The success of this space as a meeting place in which an emperor might be heard would require silence, but prior to that silence the Pantheon would have been filled with the noise of a crowd talking, a sound much like that heard today. The structure of communication in any public meeting would have required the crowd to become silent, something that did not always happen (Plutarch Moralia 2071D).

The description above gives just one experience of the Pantheon. There are others that I know of, having visited the building in nearly every month of the year and at all hours of the day over the last twenty odd years. It has been a place of silence and contemplation with a sense of stillness not experienced in any other space in Rome. It has been a place of relief from the weather: cool in the heat of summer or shelter from Rome's torrential rain. Today, the separation of the Pantheon from the space of the piazza is foreshortened because the ground has risen, whereas in antiquity a flight of steps would need to be crossed prior to gaining access to the porch. There are other differences between ancient and modern experiences of this place of course. For example, on leaving the Pantheon in antiquity a view of the Mausoleum of Augustus would have been part of the realignment of the body to the exterior space of the Campus Martius. The intervisibility of monuments in the Campus Martius would have created a very different, and more interconnected, sense of urban space than is possible to attain in the modern city. This perceptual change should not be underplayed. In contrast, what is perceived inside the Pantheon is both the interior space and a sense of your own body existing within that space. This is not just a soundscape, but an architectural space in which sensory perception of the self-space interface is accentuated.

Silence in the city

The focus so far has been on noise, but there were also places in the city where there was no noise. Silence has a relationship to noise that has been described as 'the weird negative' of other spaces that make a noise, often associated with night, but also associated with particular places in the modern city (Bjørveld, 2003; Tonkiss, 2003, p. 308). This conception that silence provides a contrast to
represented in literature or sculpture, would have been associated with a different set of imagined sounds which were not experienced in the city but were fully represented in texts such as Livy. A conception of the noise of killing, of flight and pursuit were written into the Roman sensory imagination (compare Ihde, 2007, pp. 131-6). The meaning or significance of a sound depended, as it does now, on the context of its position (Corbin, 1998, pp. 95-101). Rome had a soundscape that included silence, sounds and noise that were spatially specific, or even contained within space. We can visualise ancient Rome, but virtual images need to incorporate the other physical senses; the difficulty is making these culturally specific to the context of Rome. It would seem, even with this volume, that we are still scratching at the surface of, rather than knowing, the senses of the Roman empire. It would seem, even with this volume, that we are still scratching at the surface of, rather than knowing, the senses of the Roman empire. We are some way away from being able to advise sound engineers of historical films such as Gladiator what was heard in ancient Rome, but what these films and ancient texts share is that they both use sound to draw out human emotion. Any visualisation of antiquity, whether academic or popular, needs to face up to the challenge of recreating the sounds of the city.

Note

2 The multivalency of sensory artefacts in the city of Rome

Eleanor Betts

Sensory archaeologies invite us to scrutinise what we take for granted by inviting us to focus in detail on the multisensory human body and the phenomenologies afforded by landscapes and material culture, to explore their interrelationships so that we might gain a more nuanced understanding of past societies (compare Rodaway, 1994, p. 6; Houses, 2006, p. 161; Skeates, 2010, pp. 2-3; Hamilakis, 2014, pp. 127-9). This chapter explores the extent to which phenomenology can be used to recover the sensory properties of Roman urban landscapes and material culture, and how these were experienced, with a focus on the embodied interrelationships of people, objects and places in ancient Rome. Sensory studies of Roman urban spaces and places give us a more complete understanding of lived experience, the social rhythms of the city and aspects of everyday life (compare Lefebvre, 2004, pp. 15-17, 2014, p. 10).

Blurring the boundaries
If we are to understand life in the Roman city from a fully sensory and embodied perspective, we must acknowledge some of the ways in which 'the senses blur the boundary between need and desire, biology and culture' (Stewart, 2005, p. 61), and the potential problems this creates when investigating the past. Stewart notes that '[w]e may apprehend the world by means of our senses, but the senses themselves are shaped and modified by experience and the body bears a somatic memory of its encounters with what is outside of it' (2005, p. 61). Both biological and cultural responses to sensory stimuli need to be taken into consideration if we are to use sensory archaeologies to better understand Roman urban life, and whilst both are difficult to recapture from such a temporal and cultural distance, this chapter demonstrates that it is possible to do so.

The problem of recording sensory experience and understanding its affectiveness has been grappled with by philosophers including Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Taking an essentialist standpoint for a moment, human physiology is broadly the same across the species and we therefore each have a clear point of reference through which to access past experience. The human body is a 'universal measurement' in the sense that we can expect each one to have a prescribed set of physical parts and systems, including a particular set of
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