

## ABSTRACTS

### **Bodies in motion in Greek and Roman literature**

An hybrid workshop organized by Lucia Athanassaki and Georgia Tsouni

**Tuesday 31 March 2026, 16.00-20.30**

Gallos Campus, School of Philosophy, Room 9

#### **Athena Kavoulaki**

##### **Poetry as a locomotive process & experience: a view from some early Greek sources**

This paper discusses certain emblematic epic and tragic texts that present poetic composition as a dynamic process inextricably linked to movement or co-movement. I would like to focus on Euripides' famous ode to *Heracles* (673–700), in which the chorus (or Euripides) reflects on his actions, and explore this choral perspective in relation to the epic perspective of the singer, as reflected in relevant scenes in the *Odyssey*. Considering the language and imagery associated with poetic composition and action, I will re-examine the relevant passages and reconsider how poetic activity is conceived in early Greek tradition (epic and tragic). More specifically, I will highlight aspects of movement and motion that seem to be rooted in this activity as perceived in early Greek sources (archaic and classical).

#### **Lucia Athanassaki**

##### **Pindar's art: a world in motion**

Pindar seized every opportunity to talk about his art and spared no bold metaphor to illustrate aspects of his craft. For instance, he conceptualised his songs as arrows and chariots, depicted the creative process as the Muse diving into the depths of the sea to collect coral and bind it with gold and ivory; he saw performance as travel in the company of the Graces and/or other deities. These startling metaphors all have one characteristic in common: motion. I use the term 'world' because Pindar broadens the traditional image of the poet and his Muse, enriching it with other mortals and immortals with whom he shares the magic of poetic creation. This paper focuses on

selected metaphors to highlight the panorama of an enchanted artistic world that is forever in motion

**Alyson Melzer**

**"δηλώσει ταῦτα μιμητικῶς: Mimetic Movements of *Synthesis* and Story in Dionysius of Halicarnassus"**

In his treatise *On the Composition of Words*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus outlines the many ways in which one's expressive style can generate particular impressions, especially when the order of words is arranged with careful attention to sound combinations and rhythmical patterns. He, like many ancient Greek thinkers, finds rhythm to be mimetic—capable of representing certain ideas, sensations, events, and emotions by means of movement. I argue that his descriptions of rhythm in prose and poetry reflect traditions of mimetic dance, particularly pantomime. I will focus on one passage from *On the Composition of Words* in which Dionysius presents Homer's *Odyssey* 11 description of Sisyphus as a sort of mimetic dance, with the punitive boulder rolling "portrayed mimetically" (δηλώσει... μιμητικῶς) through the rhythms of Homer's verses.

**Karin Schlapbach**

**The poet's body in Horace, *Ars poetica* 99-118 and *Carmen* 4.6**

This paper is inspired by the iconic figures of the poet dancing, walking, fighting, or acting that we find in Horace's *Odes* and *Epistles*. By drawing on current advances in cognitive studies, I propose to have a fresh look at how the poet's body appears in Horace's poetry. While enactive theories of cognition have gained some traction on the study of ancient Greek (and, to a lesser extent) Roman literature from the perspective of the reader, my paper does not address reader response, but the poet at work. Focusing first on *Ars* 99-118, a passage on diction, I will show that the poet's malleable body is a major resource for composing poetry (*poemata*, 99) and that adequate stylistic choices are informed by the poet's bodily states and attitudes (*habitūs*, cf. 109). I will discuss the prominent physical vocabulary in this passage, which concerns the poet no less than the actor, and the connection between the body (facial expressions, gestures, movement) and language that underlies it.

Even though *Ars* 99-118 deals first of all with dramatic poetry, I take it as an invitation to examine more broadly how the idea that composing poetry involves the body can be found also in the *Odes*. By turning to *c.* 4.6 as a case study, I will analyse how the Ode,

by pitting Achilles' and Horace's exploits against each other, portrays the poet as the epic hero's alter ego, with similar claims to fame.

**Georgia Tsouni**

**Bodies in Motion in Stoicism: Proprioception and Propriety**

My paper aims to discuss the emphasis placed on bodily movement in Stoic theory, as the theoretical background to frequent allusions to bodily movement in Roman poetry and, especially, in Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles*. In the first part of paper, I shall discuss the fragments from the *Elements of Ethics* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Hierocles, which constitute our most important Stoic source on *synaisthesis*, a term which has been interpreted by Anthony Long in terms of "proprioception". I shall claim that according to this text the coordination of bodily movement and its relation to the environment constitutes the most basic form of embeddedness into the world (*oikeiosis*) and the primary locus of the "self", shared by both animals and human beings.

Whereas Hierocles focuses on 'unconscious' bodily movement, other Stoic sources underline the connection between the perfected *hexis* of the sage and bodily movement; propriety (*kosmiotes*) is accordingly defined in the *Epitome of Stoic Ethics* in Stobaeus as 'knowledge of suitable motions' (*episteme kineseon prepouson*). The link of bodily movement to the 'motions of the soul' is pursued further in the discussion of *decorum* (Gr. *prepon*) in the first book of Cicero's *De Officiis*, which bears the influence of the Stoic Panaetius. I will conclude with some observations on how this Stoic theoretical background resonates with the emphasis placed in Roman poetry, and in particular in Horace, on the link between bodily movement and poetic creation.