

Dirt, disease & hygiene in Rome (Rome, 21–22 Jun 07)

Mark Bradley

CALL FOR PAPERS:

Pollution and Propriety: DIRT, DISEASE, AND HYGIENE IN ROME FROM ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY

A two-day conference at the British School at Rome, Thursday 21 and Friday 22 June 2007.

Keynote speaker: Professor Mary Douglas

This interdisciplinary conference will examine the significance of pollution and cleanliness in the art, literature, philosophy, and material culture of the city of Rome from antiquity through to the twentieth century. Dirt, disease and pollution and the ways they are represented and policed have long been recognised by historians and anthropologists to occupy a central position in the formulation of cultural identity, and Rome holds a special status in the West as a city intimately associated with issues of purity, decay, ruin and renewal. In recent years, scholarship in a variety of disciplines has begun to scrutinise the less palatable features of the archaeology, history and society of Rome. This research has drawn attention to the city's distinctive historical interest in the recognition, isolation and treatment of pollution, and the ways in which politicians, architects, writers and artists have exploited this as a vehicle for devising visions of purity and propriety.

As a departure point, then, the organisers propose the theme of 'Pollution and Propriety' and the discourses by which these two antagonistic concepts are related. How has pollution in Rome been defined, and by what means is it controlled? How does Rome's own social and cultural history affect the way states of dirt and cleanliness are formulated? Does purity always accompany political, physical or social change? Does Rome's reputation as a 'city of ruins' determine how it is represented? What makes images of decay in Rome so picturesque? It is hoped that this conference will bring together scholars from a range of disciplines who are interested in dirt, disease and hygiene in Rome in order to examine the historical continuity of these themes and to explore their development and transformation alongside major chapters in the city's history, such as early Roman urban development, the Roman Empire, early Christianity, decline and fall, the

Renaissance, the Unification of Italy, and the advent of Fascism. Papers might include, but are certainly not limited to:

Death and burial

The history of medicine in Rome

Slavery and social pollution

Gendering dirt

Sexuality and virginity

Queerness and pollution

Public and private morality

Decay, decline and fall

Architectural unity and purity

Sewers and waste disposal; water supply

Urban segregation

The management and representation of disease

Religions, purity and absolution

Bodies, purging and beautification

Ruins and renovation

Pollution as literary metaphor

* Modernity as pollution

It is hoped that this conference will be of interest to scholars working in archaeology, cultural history, literature, art history, and the history of medicine. The conference will aim to develop themes in the history of the city of Rome, as well as providing a context for examining general issues of pollution and purity. Papers should be original and should have not been previously published or delivered at a major conference. Abstracts of approximately 200 words should be submitted by November 30, 2006. Successful contributions may be considered for publication in a conference volume.

Organisers: Dr Mark Bradley (Classics, Nottingham)

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Reference:

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