



THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
of the Faculty of Letters

together with

THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, MUSIC
AND FINE ARTS

of the Faculty of Arts

of "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați

Invites you to

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

17-18 October, 2024

The Olfactory Story of Perfume
in



Literature, Psychology, and the Arts



The English Department of the Faculty of Letters is pleased to announce its International Conference *The Olfactory Story of Perfume in Literature, Psychology and the Arts*, which will be held online and onsite on 17-18 October, 2024.

“Throughout history we have sought to express ourselves in many different ways, and one of the most beloved forms of expression is the Alchemy of Scent.” (Huib Maat)

Imagine your nostrils are taken by assault. Sweet musty, whiffing fresh or sweet sour smells or even syrupy fresh smells. In some ways, the olfactory sense is the most mysterious of all senses due to the rich, intangible, and indescribable nature of smell sensations. And perhaps the most ineffable of all the senses, the olfactory sense seems to be “the mute sense” (*A Natural History of the Senses*, Diane Ackerman, 1990: 5) as it lacks the *words* and it floats free from any objects, remaining a primitive sense in our sensory manifold.

Like any other emotion, the olfactory sense has different experiences associated with it. The sparkle of a happy mood, the weariness of a deep depression, the red hot glow of a sudden flush of anger, the melancholy of regret; all of these olfactory journeys can affect conscious experience profoundly and pervade and colour all of our conscious experiences while they last.

Found in various literary and artistic genres which use descriptive language to engage readers' sense of smell and deepen their connection to the story, *olfactory journeys* in literature, psychology, and the arts imply the sensory experiences related to smell, touch, and even colour. Just like visual imagery or auditory descriptions, olfactory imagery in literature, psychology and the arts can evoke strong emotions and create vivid mental landscapes for readers.

Perfume, with its rich, diverse and *multiple personality types*, aka *scents*, *Perfume* has always played a significant role in human experiences, inspiring artists and psychologists to explore the sensory, emotional and psychological dimensions it brings to our lives.

From the first breath of air into this world, scents become an ever-present entity in our existence, taking up all the spaces that we inhabit, physically, emotionally, or mentally. The *physical loci* of perfume are marked (and driven) by *social dynamics* and *pheromones* (as it is a fact that certain scents can influence attraction and social interaction) and also by an ever-pervasive *cultural symbolism* (being associated with rituals, traditions, and rites of passage to evoke a particular era, place, or mood). Clearly, understanding olfactory stories and their psychological implications helps researchers and practitioners explore the intricate connections between the sense of smell, memory, emotion, and behavior, highlighting the potential for olfaction to be used in therapeutic interventions and the exploration of sensory experiences in various psychological contexts.

The *emotional loci* of perfume are embedded within our *brain's limbic system* responsible for memory and emotion, able to trigger off the *Proustian Phenomenon* (a specific scent evokes powerful memories and emotions) or *enhance moods* (uplifting, reducing stress or helping relaxation).

The *mental loci* of perfume are rather associated with *self-expression (signature scents)* and *specific gender identities* as the choice of a certain fragrance may reflect one's personality, style, and even mood but it may also be a form of *gender identity* and conformity to societal norms.

Through *olfactory journeys (textual, visual, auditory)*, authors aim to enhance the reader's immersion in the narrative, create atmosphere, and evoke a specific mood or response. By describing

smells, authors enable readers to experience the story-world in a multi-sensory way, making the reading experience more sensory and immersive. The olfactory journey can be both enchanting and repulsive, as different smells can evoke a range of emotions and memories.

From Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, to Patrick Süskind's *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*, to Tennessee Williams's play *The Glass Menagerie* or to Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the olfactory journey transports the protagonist in a certain moment in the past, in search of identity, creating a sense of place, or establishing a particular atmosphere.

To *poets, novelists, playwrights, and musicians* who compose works dedicated to the beauty and allure of scents, to *painters, illustrators, graphic designers, and photographers* who often explore the sensual and evocative nature of perfumes, capturing the essence of different scents through color, texture, and composition, to *psychologists* who look into the psychological and emotional impact of scents and the power of fragrance in shaping human experiences, or to *therapists* whose aim is to cure by immersing their patients in a complete olfactory experience, *to all of them*, perfume has always been *a muse* and its olfactory story in *literature, psychology, and the arts* is a testament to the power of scent in shaping human perception and emotion, an ultimate medium intended to explore *beauty, desire, memory, and identity* creating a *sensory journey* for audiences across different artistic expressions.

Indeed, the sense of smell can enhance storytelling by evoking memories and creating a rich sensory experience for the readers, becoming thus a bridge between the past and the present, allowing audiences to revisit moments long gone and experience a deep emotional connection making the work (textual/ visual) all the more impactful and memorable.

As such, we invite papers related to the conference theme and particularly encourage graduate students and other early-career scholars to apply.

We welcome proposals for 20-minute presentations as well as 60-minute workshops/ panels in the following possible, non-restrictive areas of investigation.

- British and Commonwealth Literature
- American Literature
- Universal Literatures
- British Cultural Studies
- Translation Studies
- Discourse analysis.
- Semiotics
- Stylistics
- Psychology
- Film studies and other arts

Abstract submission:

Please submit a 300-word abstract and a 100-word bio note as an attached Word document to: lidia.necula@ugal.ro

Kindly indicate if you plan to attend the conference in person or online.

Abstracts should include the following information:

- author(s) with affiliation(s)
- email address
- title and text of proposal
- five key words

- selected bibliography with 3-5 academic references

Panel/ Workshop Proposals

Panel proposals should consist of three papers that focus on the main theme of the conference. The panel organizer should invite participants and evaluate each paper in the panel, but the panel as a whole and its individual papers will also be reviewed by external evaluators. For a panel proposal, the panel organizers should submit a short overview statement of the panel theme (300-500 words), a list of participants, and the abstracts of their papers.

Important dates

Deadline for abstract submission: 15.09. 2024

Notification of acceptance: 30.09. 2024

All submissions are blind reviewed by the members of the Reading Committee.