The Semiotics of Theophany in Text and Image: Isaiah 6 and Phoenician cultic iconography.

The 2011 monograph of the classicist and art historian Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods*, dealt with the representation of epiphanic experiences in Greco-Roman literature and art. [1]In particular, Platt argued that deities manifested in their particular forms (εἴδεα) are distinguished from one another by a complex system of signs (σήματα) drawn from a received body of Greek poetry and art, including texts related to particular cults and visual motifs from sacred images and temple architecture.

This paper will investigate the usefulness of this model with respect to the system of signs the Hebrew Bible implicitly associates with theophanies and the Judahite cult. It will offer as a case study the possibility of relating the cultic *realia* contained in the vision (e.g. throne, altar, temple) and the figures of the seraphim in Isaiah 6 to iconography known from the Phoenician cultural sphere: e.g. the Ahiram Sarcophagus, the votive thrones found at Sidon, the Layard bowls in the British Museum, and the model *naiskoi* known from Phoenician/Punic sites around the Mediterranean.

In doing so, this paper will draw attention to the visuality of Biblical theophany: the socially constructed modes of viewing generated by literary and iconographic cultural production, which shapes and makes conceptual room for claims to visual experience of the deity. It will also touch on recent debates concerning the question of 'Phoenician' identity, and on methodological issues in the comparison and juxtaposition of textual and iconographic sources in Biblical studies.

[1] Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).