

**‘THE APISH ART’:
TASTE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND**

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PHD THESIS

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

ENGLISH AND RELATED LITERATURE

JULY 2013

Abstract

The recent burgeoning of sensory history has produced much valuable work. The sense of taste, however, remains neglected. Focusing on the early modern period, my thesis remedies this deficit. I propose that the eighteenth-century association of ‘taste’ with aesthetics constitutes a restriction, not an expansion, of its scope. Previously, taste’s epistemological jurisdiction was much wider: the word was frequently used to designate trial and testing, experiential knowledge, and mental judgement. Addressing sources ranging across manuscript commonplace books, drama, anatomical textbooks, devotional poetry, and ecclesiastical polemic, I interrogate the relation between taste as a mode of knowing, and contemporary experiences of the physical sense, arguing that the two are inextricable in this period. I focus in particular on four main areas of enquiry: early uses of ‘taste’ as a term for literary discernment; taste’s utility in the production of natural philosophical data and its rhetorical efficacy in the valorisation of experimental methodologies; taste’s role in the experience and articulation of religious faith; and a pervasive contemporary association between sweetness and erotic experience.

Poised between acclaim and infamy, the sacred and the profane, taste in the seventeenth century is, as a contemporary iconographical print representing ‘Gustus’ expresses it, an ‘Apish Art’. My thesis illuminates the pivotal role which this ambivalent sense played in the articulation and negotiation of early modern obsessions including the nature and value of empirical knowledge, the attainment of grace, and the moral status of erotic pleasure, attesting in the process to a very real contiguity between different ways of knowing – experimental, empirical, textual, and rational – in the period.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

In my citations of early sources, I modernize i/j, u/v, y/i, long s and double v, and silently expand contractions, but retain original punctuation and spellings. In citing other scholars' transcriptions, I defer to their methodologies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council doctoral award; I offer the AHRC my thanks. Thanks also to the Graduate Research Support Fund and to the F. R. Leavis Fund for financial support for research trips and conference attendance, and to the Humanities Research Centre for a HRC Doctoral Fellowship 2012 (all the University of York). In 2010, I participated in the SSHRC-funded project Making Publics (McGill University) as a Summer Fellow; a rich and rewarding experience for which I am very grateful.

The University of York's Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies, and the Humanities Research Centre, have provided a welcoming and stimulating atmosphere in which to conduct this research. Thanks in particular to Bill Sherman, and to Tania Demetriou. Tania read and commented helpfully on chapter 5 at very short notice. To friends in the academy, thanks for convivial and thought-provoking conversation: especially, thanks to Hannah DeGroff, Dana Galbraith, Erika Kvistad, Robin Macdonald, Lisa McNally, Emilie Murphy, and Rachel Willie.

My fascination with the sense of taste took root in Mark Jenner's MA course 'From Body Beautiful to Body Politic,' and Mark's encouraging response helped this early interest to flourish. As my thesis advisory panel member, Mark has continued to offer generous guidance. I am very thankful to have had the benefit of his infamously challenging and always perspicuous comments and questions.

My supervisor Helen Smith's unfailing ability to intuit a judicious balance between shrewd and instructive criticism and encouraging praise, as well as her erudition and enthusiasm, all make her a fantastic supervisor and an inspirational mentor. I am immensely grateful for her guidance throughout the process of writing this thesis, and for her boundless generosity with her time, particularly in the final stages.

My husband Tomas McAuley has provided personal and intellectual support – as well as the endless cups of coffee that fuelled the completion of this thesis. His kindness and sense of humour have helped keep me sane, whilst his exasperation with my more abstruse lexical extravagances and my tendency to verbose loquaciousness has made the thesis clearer and more precise than it would otherwise have been. My parents-in-law, Ian and Liz McAuley, have welcomed me into their family. I am grateful for their warmth and sense of fun – not to mention the trips to Whitby.

Gregory and Louise Swann first inculcated my passion for literature and history – and food! – through example, rather than through prescription. Their love, generosity, resilience, and unfailing pride and support have been utterly invaluable. This thesis is dedicated to them, and also to the memory of my sister, Indira Daisy Louise Swann. Indira’s vivacity and independent-mindedness, and her curiosity about the world and affection for the people and animals in it, continue to inspire me. For Mum, Dad, and Dira, with love.

DECLARATION

I declare that all material in this thesis is original and my own work, except where otherwise identified, and that no material has previously been submitted for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

INTRODUCTION

I. 'The Apish Art'

Two allegorical prints, from separate series published in England between 1625 and 1640, present the sense of taste, or 'Gustus,' as a young woman, smoking a fashionable tobacco pipe and with a full wine goblet close to hand (figures 1.1 and 1.2).¹ The accompanying verses offer a commentary. The first warns that:

Som with the Smoaking Pipe and quaffing Cupp,
Whole Lordships oft have swallow'd and blowne upp:
Their names, fames, goods, strengths, healths, & lives still
wasting
In practising the Apish Art of Tasting.

The second offers a challenge:

Match me this Girl in London, nay the world
For Feathered beaver, and her hair well curled
To none of our Viragos she'll give place
For healthing sack, and smoking with a grace.

These women represent taste in two 'senses.' Savouring their tobacco and wine, they embody the physical pleasures of gustatory taste. Exhibiting their sartorial choices and fashionable habits, however, they also stand for the tasteful consumer. Whilst these two meanings of taste are conceptually distinguishable, both prints also indicate their commensurability. The contiguity is underscored by visual equivalence: the plumes of

¹ For an overview of early modern sensory iconography, see Carl Nordenfalk, 'The Five Senses in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 48 (1985): 1-22. For more focused accounts, see Timothy Raylor, '“Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue: William Cavendish, Ben Jonson, and the Decorative Scheme of Bolsover Castle,”' *Renaissance Quarterly* 52/2 (1999): 402-409; Gino Casagrande and Christopher Kleinhenz, 'Literary and Philosophical Perspectives on the Wheel of the Five Senses in Longthorpe Tower,' *Traditio* 41 (1985): 311-27; and Sharon Assaf, 'The Ambivalence of the Sense of Touch in Early Modern Prints,' *Renaissance and Reformation* 29/1 (2005): 75-98. See also the essays collected in *Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice*, ed. Alice E. Sanger and Siv Tove Kulbrandstad Walker (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).



Figure 1.1. Anon., etching depicting taste (Gustus); part of a series of five. London: John Garrett, 1630-1640. First published by Thomas Jenner. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

smoke ejected from the women's mouths, for instance, have a parallel in the plumes of their splendid hats, implying a basic similarity between the objects of gustatory and consumer taste. The commentary offered by the verses is satirical. In the first print, Gustus' prodigious appetites both for food and drink and for material goods proves ruinous, swallowing up the reputation, possessions, and eventually lives, of 'whole Lordships.' Behind her lurks an unnervingly anthropomorphic ape, munching on a



Figure 1.2. George Glover, engraving depicting taste (Gustus); part of a series of five. London: William Peake, 1625-1635.

© The Trustees of the British Museum

piece of fruit. As a traditional symbol, in medieval and renaissance art and iconography, of mankind's degraded hungers, the ape represents the shadow side of Gustus' glittering display of discriminative consumption: rapacious appetite. The presence of the monkey also emphasises the gendered terms of the print's critique of taste: as Constance Classen has shown, the pervasive notion that the ape was a kind of degenerate human echoed the classical and renaissance idea of woman as an imperfect man: 'apes were often typed

as feminine.’² The second print is less overtly censorious, but not entirely good-humoured: the verse’s description of Gustus as a virago positions her as a brazen, impudent scold, whose participation in the rituals of health-drinking and tobacco-smoking mark her out as culpably transgressive in her masculine desires.

Gustus, then, emerges as corrupt and dangerous, sullied by her proximity to iniquitous and irrepressible appetite. This is consistent with traditional sensory hierarchies, which, from Plato onwards, have usually privileged vision and hearing over smell, touch, and (often at the very bottom of the heap) taste.³ The full story, however, is not quite so simple: in each print, the moralising message does not fully dispel the jovial atmosphere, and the images celebrate, even as they apparently condemn, the blithe, attractive figure of Gustus. Tasting is undeniably ‘Apish.’ But, crucially, it is also (as the verse accompanying the first print acknowledges) an ‘Art’: a form of creative or imaginative skill, an embodied craft, and a mode of scholarship or learning.⁴ In their interest in the intimate relation between sensory and discriminative taste, in their suggestion that Gustus’ femaleness is one source of her degradation, and finally in the tension that they establish between taste’s immoral proximity to sensual appetite, and its epistemological potential as a mode of judgement, these two prints encapsulate some of the attitudes and ambiguities that are central to this thesis’ account of taste, understood both as physical sensation and as a mode of knowledge production, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

Early modern literature and culture is saturated with the language of taste. To take just one high-profile example, the word and its cognates appears 111 times in Shakespeare’s works, and related vocabulary is also frequent: perhaps most strikingly, ‘sweet’ appears 873 times, and its cognates and compound words including sweet are also numerous.⁵ Despite this ubiquity, however, and despite a recent explosion of interest in the senses, the sense of taste has been largely ignored by scholars of the early

² Constance Classen, *The Colour of Angels: Cosmology, Gender, and the Aesthetic Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1998), 77.

³ There are numerous accounts of this traditional sensory hierarchy in scholarly literature, but see especially Louise Vinge, *The Five Senses: Studies in a Literary Tradition* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1975), especially 18 and 69; Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 11-37; Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2003), 3-4; Susan Stewart, ‘Remembering the Senses,’ in *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. David Howes (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 59-69 (especially 61-62); Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 55-71; and Alice E. Sanger and Siv Tove Kulbrandstad Walker, ‘Making Sense of the Senses’ in *Sense and the Senses*, Sanger and Walker, 3-5.

⁴ See ‘art, n.1.’ *OED Online*, accessed 24 June 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/11125.

⁵ See Marvin Spevack, *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 1253, 1328-1341.

modern period.⁶ A number of the most significant critics of twentieth-century thought – notably Lucien Febvre and Michel Foucault – described the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries as defined, in part, by the triumph of the visual, and numerous subsequent studies have explored the supposed dominance of sight in early modern culture.⁷ In particular, studies of institutional and political structures of surveillance, of theatrical spectatorship, of religious imagery and icons, of the relation between sight and subjectivity, and of the putatively visual paradigms of early natural philosophy and anatomy, abound.⁸ As Patricia Cahill has noted, however, it is no longer the case that ‘topics such as Renaissance visuality and the rhetoric of the visual... eclipses scholarship on the other senses.’ Cahill documents ‘a growing scholarly interest in early modern conceptualizations of listening and hearing, and... continuing debates about the relative dominance of the eye and the ear in early modern English culture.’⁹ Such scholarship ranges from Walter Ong’s narrative of the decline of oral, auditory culture and corresponding rise of literate, visual culture to, more recently, Arnold Hunt’s exploration of Protestant sermon culture, which traces a transformation in the opposite direction: Hunt describes the ousting of a visual Catholic culture in favour of a reformist emphasis on hearing of the word of God.¹⁰

⁶ There are a few scattered exceptions. In a recent article, Julia Reinhold Lupton asks ‘how... *judgments of taste* in the higher sense arise out of *acts of tasting* in the baser sense’ (emphasis Lupton’s own). Focusing on Hannah Woolley’s cookbook and housekeeping guide *The Queen-Like Closet* (1670), Lupton develops a notion of ‘culinary judgment... as a form of thinking that is based on experience and intuition rather than objective measures or rules,’ commenting that physical taste and judgement work in tandem: for ‘an embodied and embedded subject... thinking can be a kind of doing.’ Julia Reinhold Lupton, ‘Thinking with Things: Hannah Woolley to Hannah Arendt,’ *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 3/1 (2012): 68, 74.

⁷ Febvre argues that ‘the men of the sixteenth century... were open-air men, seeing nature but also feeling, hearing, sniffing, touching, breathing her through all their senses.’ ‘It was only,’ Febvre continues, ‘as the seventeenth century was approaching... that vision was unleashed in the world of science as it was in the world of physical sensations, and the world of beauty as well.’ Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, trans. Beatrice Gottlieb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 424–25. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault identifies a transformation in the sensory regimes associated with institutional and political authority as a constitutive aspect of modernity. Very briefly, whereas authority was previously identified with visibility, in the Enlightenment it comes to be associated with visuality: with the use of surveillance as a disciplinary tool. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

⁸ See, for example, Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Barbara Freedman, *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Eric Langley, ‘Anatomising the Early Modern Eye in Phineas Fletcher’s *The Purple Island*: A Literary Case Study,’ *Renaissance Studies* 20/3 (2006): 340–55.

⁹ Patricia A. Cahill, ‘Take Five: Renaissance Literature and the Study of the Senses,’ *Literature Compass* 6/5 (2009): 1014.

¹⁰ See Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), and Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

In the last decade or so, research into visuality and aurality has been supplemented by a growing body of work – often influenced by the ‘sensory turn’ in anthropology¹¹ – more explicitly concerned with the ‘lower’ senses.¹² Increasingly, historians and literary scholars have come to recognise that ‘early modern people were simply more inclined to frame crucial questions of ethics, aesthetics, politics and epistemology in terms of the nature and value of the senses than we are today.’¹³ Starting with Bruce Smith’s seminal *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, but also encompassing Wes Folkerth’s *Sound in Shakespeare* and Kenneth Gross’ *Shakespeare’s Noise*, studies of audition have amplified our understanding of sound and hearing, particularly in the context of early modern theatre.¹⁴ Emily Cockayne’s *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England, 1600-1770* offers a vivid and multi-sensory account of the sense-scape of the early modern city, focusing largely on sound and smell.¹⁵ Olfaction has also found other chroniclers: Holly Dugan’s *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* constitutes a wide-ranging account of the significance of aroma, whilst Jonathan Gil Harris has explored the relation between smell and what he terms the ‘polychronic’ temporalities of early modern material and theatrical

¹¹ One helpful outcome of the anthropological interest in the senses has been an increased awareness of the cultural specificity of sensation. David Howes, for instance, points out that ‘whereas westerners... traditionally associate the sun with light and sight... the smell-minded Ongee, who live in the Andaman Islands off the coast of India, assign an odor to the sun.’ As Howes continues, ‘sensorially speaking, the past *is* a foreign country,’ inhabited by men and women who potentially conceived of and experienced the senses, including taste, in radically unfamiliar ways. Howes, ‘Dry Bones: An Anthropological Approach to the History of the Senses,’ *The Journal of American History* (2008) 95/2: 447. There has also been a ‘sensory turn’ in sociology: as Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas – drawing on the work of Georg Simmel – comment: ‘sensual arrangements and discrimination become crucial for social and cultural purposes – people are excluded or included in social groups according to what and how they look, smell, taste, listen to and feel. Social and individual identities are created round tastes and preferences at once shared and individualized through dinners, concerts, visual spectacles, social chat, personal hygiene, fashion, and all the changing varieties of social and cultural interactions.’ Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas, ‘Other than the Visual: Art, History and the Senses,’ in *Art, History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present*, ed. Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 3.

¹² This interest in the ‘lower’ senses does have precedents. As Holly Dugan notes, in the 1930s Caroline Spurgeon collated Shakespeare’s use of sensory metaphors, albeit with the now out-dated intention of determining his biographical experience. Spurgeon argues, for instance, that Shakespeare’s ‘images of food’ reveal that ‘by 1599, when he was five and thirty, Shakespeare has probably experienced heartburn as a result of acidity.’ Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What it Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 117-19. See also Holly Dugan, ‘Shakespeare and the Senses,’ *Literature Compass* 6/3 (2009): 730.

¹³ Joseph Moshenska, ‘“Feeling Pleasures”: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England’ (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2011), 19 n. 34.

¹⁴ Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Kenneth Gross, *Shakespeare’s Noise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁵ Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England, 1600-1770* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

culture.¹⁶ Finally, touch has its champions; Joseph Moshenska's "Feeling Pleasures": The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England' has important precedents in Elizabeth Harvey's edited collection *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, and Laura Gowing's *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-century England*, which provide sustained and historically sensitive elaborations of the tactile and the haptic in early modern culture and literature.¹⁷

Nowhere, however, has the scope, force and complexity of taste in the early modern period been fully explored. There are a number of reasons for this omission. Most obviously, taste's low place in the traditional sensory hierarchy offers one explanation: whilst sight and hearing are privileged as sources of intellectual apprehension and aesthetic pleasure, taste is compromised by its associations with base, mute corporeality. Relatedly, we might acknowledge conventional modes of gendering the senses: whilst men have traditionally aligned themselves with the historically privileged sense of sight, women are usually associated with the lower sense of touch (closely allied in this period, as we shall see, to taste).¹⁸ Taste occupies the realm of the female, and by association, of the domestic, the ephemeral, the inconsequential. It is also worth noting that, as the anthropologist David Howes comments, 'higher education caters virtually exclusively to the senses of sight and hearing... academics work and think in an audiovisual world.'¹⁹ Typically, we attend conferences to 'see' and 'hear' papers rather than for the high standards of catering, and the 'symposium' has regrettably lost its full original function as 'a drinking-party; a convivial meeting for drinking, conversation, and intellectual entertainment.'²⁰ These observations, however, are equally applicable to smell and touch. As Holly Dugan and Lara Farina note, 'too ephemeral to persist in their original forms, the odors, flavors, textures, temperatures,

¹⁶ Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001); Jonathan Gil Harris, 'The Smell of *Macbeth*,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58/4 (2007): 465-86 and Jonathan Gil Harris, Chapter 4: 'The Smell of Gunpowder : *Macbeth* and the Palimpsests of Olfaction,' in *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). See also Colleen E. Kennedy, 'Performing and Perfuming on the Early Modern Stage: A Study of William Lower's *The Phoenix in Her Flames*,' *Early English Studies* 4 (2011), accessed 02 November 2012, www.uta.edu/english/ees/fulltext/kennedy4.html. For a fuller account of olfactory historiography, see Mark S. R. Jenner, 'Follow Your Nose? Smell, Smelling, and Their Histories,' *The American Historical Review* 116/2 (2001), 335-351.

¹⁷ Elizabeth D. Harvey, ed., *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Moshenska, 'Feeling Pleasures.'

¹⁸ For example, in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Luce Irigaray argues that 'woman take [erotic] pleasure more from touching than from looking, and her entry into a dominant scopoc economy signifies... her consignment to passivity.' Luce Irigaray, in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 26. See also Classen, *The Colour of Angels*, 61-85.

¹⁹ Howes, 'Dry Bones,' 445.

²⁰ 'Symposium, n.' *OED Online*, accessed 29 June 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/196317.

and somatic pressures of the past appear destined to linger primarily through textual description. And reading texts, for us in the present, all too often registers as entirely visual activity.²¹ A more compelling reason for the neglect of taste, I suggest, is precisely its omnipresence in early modern literature and culture. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the language of taste is so ubiquitous that it becomes unremarkable, and therefore inconspicuous; so overdetermined as to be indeterminate.

The language of sweetness is exemplary here. Take, for instance, Francis Meres' famous assessment of Shakespeare, included in the 1598 printed commonplace book *Palladis Tamia*: 'the witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous & honey-tongued Shakespeare, witness his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugared sonnets among his private friends.'²² Shakespeare is honey-tongued because his writing is 'mellifluous,' a word which – in its etymological derivation from the Latin *mel*, honey – conveys multi-sensory connotations of gustatory as well as auditory sweetness.²³ Here, the experience of sweetness is a marker of the musicality of Shakespeare's verse. Simultaneously, it invokes his rhetorical (as opposed to poetic) virtuosity: 'sweet' shares its Indo-European root word, *swad*, with 'persuade' (or 'perswade,' as it is often spelled), and early modern authors often exploited this affiliation.²⁴ As the comparison to Ovid, famous for his amatory verse, as well as Meres' specifying of Shakespeare's most notoriously licentious works suggests, however, the language of sweetness also invokes the eroticised sweetness of a beloved's cherry lips and honeyed kisses. Elsewhere in early modern literary culture, the language of sweetness is used to indicate, variously, intimacy and affection between friends and family; sycophantic, fawning flattery; salutary nourishment; nauseous surfeit; the deceptive pleasures of sin; and the experience of divine grace.²⁵

²¹ Holly Dugan and Lara Farina, 'Intimate Senses/ Sensing Intimacy,' *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 3/4 (2012): 374.

²² Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen comment that 'for his Elizabethan fans, Shakespeare was above all "sweet"... this is what every discerning reader called him.' Introduction to *Shakespeare's Poems*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen (London: Cengage, 2007), 4-7. On Shakespeare's reputation for sweetness, see also Adam Hooks, 'Wise Ventures: Shakespeare and Thomas Playfere at the Sign of the Angel,' in *Shakespeare's Stationers*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 53-54.

²³ 'Mellifluous, adj.' *OED Online*, accessed 01 February 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/116177.

²⁴ See 'sweet, adj. and adv.' *OED Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/195665, and 'persuade, v.' *OED Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/141561. Both accessed 27 September 2012. Sidney Mintz notes this affiliation in his essay 'Sweetness and Meaning,' in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. by Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 116. Jeffrey Masten shows that 'the linking of persuasion and sweetness is ubiquitous in English around 1600.' Masten, 'Toward a Queer Address: The Taste of Letters and Early Modern Male Friendship,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10/3 (2004): 374.

²⁵ Most of these valences are explored in this thesis. On sweetness and sycophancy, however, see James L. Jackson, 'Shakespeare's Dog-and-Sugar Imagery and the Friendship Tradition,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*

In this thesis, I aim to recover the connotative richness and complexity of taste in the early modern period. I demonstrate, for instance, that the formidable semantic range of sweetness makes it indispensable for authors who wish to forge associations between apparently distinct realms of experience (for example, between erotic desire and rhetorical expertise – a link explored in greater depth in chapter 5), or who wish to mark moments of unsettling incongruity or ambivalence.²⁶ Our instinct, as literary scholars, is often to strive to resolve or at least account for conflict or ambiguities in the texts we study, but the language of taste frequently insists that we suspend such exegetical efforts, holding the reconciliation of contraries in suspension in order to reach a fuller understanding of the tensions inherent in human experience.

II. ‘the savour called greene’

Mark Jenner has warned that:

most metanarratives of sensory history either build upon, or test, the idea that if one sense grows in significance, others must decline correspondingly... there is precious little evidence that the history of the human sensorium is this kind of zero sum game. Furthermore, and more significantly, this approach neglects the synaesthetic nature of human perception. Monosensual histories obscure the ways in which the senses work and worked together and occlude the reasons why one or more sense is, or was, foregrounded by particular historical actors.²⁷

It is certainly true that, in the early modern period as today, many authors stressed the multi-sensory nature of perception.²⁸ As Michel Serres puts it:

1/4 (1950): 260-263. In his allegorical poem *The Purple Island* (1633), Fletcher describes personified flattery (who goes by the name of Colax) as sweet: ‘all his words with sugar [he] spices.’ Phineas Fletcher, *The Purple Island, or, The isle of man* (Cambridge: 1633), P3r (117).

²⁶ Mary Carruthers suggests that medieval uses of the Latin vocabulary of sweetness to describe the effects of rhetorical language derives from the ‘morally ambivalent reputation’ that both held in common: ‘I wonder,’ she speculates, ‘if the choice of *suadeo* [to describe rhetoric] was intended to convey some of that ambivalence.’ Carruthers, ‘Sweetness,’ *Speculum* 81/4 (2006): 1009.

²⁷ Mark S. R. Jenner, ‘Tasting Lichfield, Touching China: John Floyer’s Senses,’ *The Historical Journal* 53/3 (2010): 669.

²⁸ See also, for example: Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas: ‘all cultural apparatus organising and enabling sensorial experience is multi-sensorial – music, for instance, is also visual, tactile and embodied.’ Di Bello and Koureas, ‘Other than the Visual,’ 7.

no body has ever smelt and smelt only the unique perfume of a rose. The intellect, perhaps, and language most certainly, carry out this performance of isolation and selection. The body smells a rose and a thousand surrounding odours at the same time as it touches wool, sees a complex landscape and quivers beneath waves of sound.²⁹

The senses cannot be shut off from each other: perception is always holistic and immersive. And whilst Serres attributes the solecistic ‘isolation and selection’ of the senses to language, much early modern vocabulary reflects the experiential imbrication of the senses. The modern sense of the word ‘handsome,’ for instance, as indicative of *visual* attractiveness, emerged in the sixteenth century, and coexisted for some time with the older sense of the word as indicating a *tactile* perception of a thing as fit for the hand, available and tempting to the touch.³⁰ In *The arte of rhetorique* (1553), Thomas Wilson squeezes a joke out of this double meaning: ‘when one hath done a robbery, some wil saye, it is pitie, he was a handsome man, to... which another made answeere you saye truthe sir, for he hathe made these shiftes by his handes, and gotte his living with light fingeringe.’³¹ As C. M. Woolgar writes of late medieval England: ‘words used in common for more than one sense imply no primary division of ideas relating to these senses in general consciousness.’³² Once again, sweetness is representative here: ‘sweet’ can describe aural, olfactory, tactile, and even visual sensations, as well as (of course) a specific flavour, and authors exploit this indeterminacy in order to capture moments of multi-sensory experience. In his 1603 translation of *Ovid’s elegies*, for example, Christopher Marlowe describes Orpheus’ ‘sweet toucht harp that to move stones was able’: here, ‘sweet’ simultaneously describes the pleasant sound of music and the delicate plucking of the instrument that produces it.³³

As Marlowe’s ‘sense’ of the simultaneous sweetness of aural and tactile experience suggests, whilst the multi-sensory or synaesthetic nature of experience might be a historical constant, the particular permutations of the senses involved are not. We are used to thinking of taste and smell as intimately linked. In the early modern period as today, words for flavours and odours frequently overlap, but further excavation can

²⁹ Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Continuum, 2008), 306.

³⁰ ‘Handsome, adj., adv., and n.’ *OED Online*, accessed 26 June 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/83926.

³¹ Thomas Wilson, *The arte of rhetorique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1553), V1r (77).

³² C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 7.

³³ Christopher Marlowe, *All Ovids elegies* (London, 1602), F2r.

reveal other correspondences. The word ‘spicy,’ for example, can be used to designate both a fragrance and a flavour. Etymologically, however, ‘spicy’ and ‘spice’ derive ultimately from the Latin *species*, meaning appearance or form.³⁴ As such, they share a root-word with the sensory ‘species’ of faculty sensory physiology, which are often represented as *visual* forms. Similarly, in a section on ‘The sence of Tasting’ included in his 1602 translation of Philippe de Mornay’s *The true knowledge of a mans owne selfe*, Anthony Munday describes ‘the savour called greene, which setts the teeth an edge, shuts up and drawes backe the tongue.’ Munday’s description establishes a metonymic connection between flavour and colour: ‘of such tast are Medlars and other greene fruites, before they are come to their maturitie.’³⁵ In the use of ‘green’ as a flavour description, taste and visual appearance cohere.

Whilst taste dovetails with sound, smell, and sight, its closest kinship in early modern England was with touch. In *De Anima*, Aristotle designated taste a particular kind of touch, and early modern authors frequently reiterate this description.³⁶ Indeed, the word taste meant ‘the sense of touch’ before it referred to gustation.³⁷ Taste and touch were not, however, entirely conflated for Aristotle. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguished between the two by suggesting that the former incorporated a crucial discriminative aspect, writing that, whilst both taste and touch ‘are concerned with the kind of pleasures that the other animals share in,’ nonetheless:

of taste they appear to make little or no use; for the business of taste is the discriminating of flavours, which is done by wine-tasters and people who season dishes; but they hardly take pleasure in making these discriminations, or at least self-indulgent people do not, but in the actual enjoyment, which in all cases comes through touch, both in the case of food and in that of drink and in that of sexual intercourse.... To delight in such things, then, and to love them above all others, is brutish.³⁸

³⁴ ‘Spicy, adj.’ *OED Online*, accessed 26 June 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/186546. The *OED* cites William Turner’s 1568 *Herbal*: ‘the shel smelleth well, and is spicie, not onely in smell, but also in taste.’

³⁵ Philippe de Mornay, *The true knowledge of a mans owne selfe*, trans. Anthony Munday (London: I.R. for William Leake, 1602), F4v (104).

³⁶ Aristotle writes, ‘the taste-object is a kind of touch-object.’ Aristotle, *De Anima (On the Soul)*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1986), 182.

³⁷ ‘Taste, n.1.’ *OED Online*, accessed 12 January 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/198052.

³⁸ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 93. This passage is also quoted in Moshenska, ‘Feeling Pleasures,’ 57.

Here, the ‘brutish’ aspects of eating, drinking, and sex reside in their stimulation of the sense of touch; the pleasures of taste, on the other hand, are ‘discriminating.’ As Joseph Moshenska puts it in his discussion of this passage, ‘here Aristotle states... that it is taste which is truly discriminatory, while touch gives rise to a merely supplementary enjoyment which should be disdained.’³⁹

Patricia Fumerton argues that ‘the senses underwent a process of segmentation and detachment’ in the renaissance; in particular, whereas ‘the senses mingled confusedly in the large dining hall’ of the middle ages, in the ‘smaller, quieter feasts’ that become more popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ‘the senses began to separate out.’⁴⁰ Fumerton, I believe, overstates the extent of this ‘detachment’: early modern descriptions of food (in the context of dietary advice, as well as aristocratic feasts) are often evocatively multi-sensory. Nonetheless, her basic claim holds water. By offering a manifesto for taste’s prominence within the literature and culture of early modern England, I do not wish to engage in the ‘zero sum game’ of devaluing historical importance of the other senses. Despite the importance of Jenner’s warning, however, I think there is some justification for the kind of ‘monosensual’ history that this thesis offers, with the proviso that such accounts must remain alert (as I hope this does) to the imbrications of the senses in history. It is undeniable that early modern authors – perhaps encouraged by the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century revival of Pyrrhonian scepticism – often engaged in comparisons of the senses.⁴¹ Sometimes such comparisons constituted neutral observation: in *Skeptick, or speculations* (1651) for instance, Walter Raleigh notes that ‘Ointment doth recreate the Smell, but it offendeth the Tast,’ taking this disjunction as evidence for the broader epistemological unreliability of the senses.⁴² Elsewhere, however, comparisons between the senses are clearly evaluative. In particular, numerous authors establish an opposition – explored at a number of points in this thesis, but especially in chapter 3 – between vision and taste; and the latter does not always, as we might expect, come off worse for the comparison.

³⁹ Moshenska, ‘Feeling Pleasures,’ 57.

⁴⁰ Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 126.

⁴¹ As Stuart Clark has shown, neo-Pyrrhonist sceptics believed that ‘it is not... the inaccuracy of sensory experiences when compared to the external world that is crucial; it is their *difference* when compared to each other’ (emphasis, Clark’s). *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 271.

⁴² Walter Raleigh, *Sir Walter Raleigh’s Skeptick, or speculations* (London: W. Bentley for W. Shears, 1651), C2r (27).

III. 'the *Gusto* of the fond *Feminine*'

In his influential *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Bourdieu asserts that 'the dual meaning of the word "taste"... remind[s] us that taste in the sense of the "faculty of immediately and intuitively judging aesthetic values" is inseparable from taste in the sense of the capacity to discern the flavours of foods which implies a preference for some of them.'⁴³ Bourdieu, of course, is interested not in early modern England but in 1960s France, and his study is ultimately less interested in the relation between taste and judgement than in the ways that different kinds of foodstuffs signify, thus placing their consumers within a particular social class. Nonetheless, his work is an important precursor for the historical reintegration of discriminative and physiological taste that this thesis undertakes.

The influence of Bourdieu's work is clear in Denise Gigante's *Taste: A Literary History*, which offers 'a literary history of taste in all its full-bodied flavor.'⁴⁴ Gigante's focus is on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature and culture, rather than the early modern period; her book opens, however, with a discussion of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667; 1674) and *Paradise Regained* (1671). For Gigante, Milton is a liminal figure, 'on the verge' of what she calls an 'eighteenth-century effort to repress, sublimate, or otherwise discipline appetite into aesthetics.'⁴⁵ Whilst Milton himself, Gigante argues, 'described an embodied mode of taste' in *Paradise Lost*, the poem 'complicates the category of physiological taste in such a way as to set the terms for the emergence of aesthetic taste theory in the early years of the eighteenth century.'⁴⁶ In particular, a 'Miltonic possibility of tasting and expressing (rather than tasting and excreting) paves the way for eighteenth-century taste theory,' understood as a '*symbolic* economy of consumption.'⁴⁷ For Gigante, the 'ambiguity between eating and tasting' that Milton establishes in the poem 'signals the tension between physiological and philosophical taste bound up in... [the] gustatory trope.'⁴⁸ Eating is the disavowed term which allows the subsuming of gustation into abstract 'philosophical taste' – a term which, for

⁴³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 99.

⁴⁴ Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 2. The influence of Bourdieu's emphasis on tracing relations between culinary, commercial, and aesthetic tastes is evident, for example, in Gigante's assertion that 'the connoisseur by the end of the eighteenth century worked for his taste, comparatively shopping for comestibles and earning his reputation as a discerning consumer.'

Gigante, *Taste*, 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 17 and 23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 29 and 46.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

Gigante, is nearly synonymous with aesthetic taste.

In the early modern period, I propose, we can discover a more complex model of the relation between physical and mental taste than that described by Gigante's narrative of repression, sublimation, and discipline, and a more inclusive notion of how taste functions as a mode of discrimination. In particular, it is my contention that the eighteenth-century association of taste with aesthetic and consumer discernment constitutes not – as is usually thought – an *expansion* of the term's meaning, but rather a *reduction* of its epistemological jurisdiction. Focusing on the period between *circa* 1558 and 1688 (between Elizabeth I's accession and the so-called Glorious Revolution), I show how the terminology of taste was used to describe the production, evaluation, and communication of knowledge in a range of spheres. Such uses of the language of taste, moreover, are not straightforwardly metaphorical, for they echo a wider cultural fascination with the epistemological possibilities of the physical sense of taste: the ways in which gustatory experiences constituted a source of knowledge in themselves. In the early modern period, taste as a term for discrimination is deeply bound up with embodied experience in ways which could be morally and epistemologically hazardous, but also profoundly pleasurable and productive.

I have already commented on the use of the term 'Virago' in the verse accompanying the second 'Gustus' print, noting how it positions Gustus as problematically masculine in her prodigious appetites. 'Virago,' however, also had another set of associations, for in the Vulgate rendering of Genesis it is the name given by Adam to prelapsarian Eve.⁴⁹ Gustus, then, is a woman on the brink; it is only a matter of time before she succumbs to temptation. The verse thus chimes both with what chapter 3 of this thesis argues is a pervasive early modern propensity to accord taste the dubious honour of being the sense which initiated the Fall, and with a wider cultural tendency to associate gustatory appetites with what Joseph Glanvill, clergyman and propagandist for the new experimental philosophy, calls 'the fond *Feminine*.' Writing in his 1661 *The vanity of dogmatizing*, Glanvill complains that:

The *Woman* in us, still prosecutes a deceit, like that begun in the *Garden*: and our *Understandings* are wedded to an *Eve*, as fatal as the *Mother* of our *miseries*. And while all things are judg'd according to their suitableness, or disagreement to the

⁴⁹ As George Gascoigne notes, 'Before Eva sinned, she was called *Virago*, and after she sinned she deserved to be called *Eva*.' Gascoigne, *Droomme of Doomes Day* (London: T. East for Gabriell Cawood, 1576), A3r.

Gusto of the fond *Feminine*, we shall be as far from the *Tree of Knowledge*, as from that, which is guarded by the *Cherubin*... intellectual representations are received by us, with as unequal a Fate upon a bare *Temperamental* Relish or Disgust.⁵⁰

For Glanvill, the postlapsarian corruption of intellect by affect is a consequence of mankind's subjection to hungers that are gendered as distinctly female. '*Gusto*' and Eve are conflated: simultaneously '*Mother*' and 'wedded' bride, taste yokes the rational (and implicitly masculine) intellect to the idiosyncratic and capricious preferences and aversions of the appetite.

In his 1665 *Scepsis scientifica*, however, Glanvill carves out a more positive role for the sense of taste within the epistemological projects that he endorses. Glanvill responds to the question of 'whether 'twas likely that *Aristotle* was so farr beyond other *Philosophers* in his *Intellectuals*, as these latter Ages have presumed,' by stating his belief that in 'a near connection between *Truth* and *Goodness*... there's a taste in the *soul* whereby it relisheth *Truth*, as the *Palate Meats*; which *sence* and *gusto vice depraves* and *vitiates*.'⁵¹ Given, Glanvill goes on, that a variety of classical and patristic sources charge Aristotle with vices including sodomy, drunkenness, and avarice, the great philosopher must forfeit his right to the acclaim he had so far enjoyed.⁵² Glanvill's demolition of Aristotle's reputation for moral probity and consequently intellectual superiority – part of his wider project of overturning the scholastic and humanist authorities in favour of experimental learning – is articulated using the language of gustation. Whereas in *The vanity of dogmatizing* Glanvill conflated '*Gusto*' with taste, here he strives to separate them out, in the process attributing a high level of epistemological competence to the latter: the physical sense of '*gusto*' compromises the soul's ability to 'taste... *Truth*.' In his use of taste to further the cause of experimental philosophy, and in his suggestion that taste maintains some epistemological value despite its postlapsarian degradation, Glanvill is – as I argue in chapter 4 – characteristic of his fellows within the early Royal Society.

A brief consultation of the *Oxford English Dictionary* reveals some of the

⁵⁰ Joseph Glanvill, *The vanity of dogmatizing* (London: E.C. for Henry Eversden, 1661), K3v (118) and K5v (122). For an account – focusing on the physician Franciscus dele Boe, Sylvius – of how 'the new philosophers' shored up the epistemological utility of the senses by regulating the passions, see Pamela Smith, 'Science and Taste: Painting, Passions, and the New Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century Leiden,' *Isis* 90/3 (1999): 445-49. See also Steven Shapin, 'The Philosopher and the Chicken: On the Dietics of Disembodied Knowledge,' in Christopher Lawrence and Shapin, eds., *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 21-50.

⁵¹ Joseph Glanvill, *Scepsis scientifica* (London: E. C. for Henry Eversden, 1665), N1v (90).

⁵² *Ibid.*, N1v (90).

epistemological range of the word ‘taste’ in the early modern period.⁵³ Contemporaneously, definitions of the noun ‘taste’ include ‘a trying, testing; a trial, a test, an examination,’ whilst definitions of the verb to ‘taste’ encompass ‘to put to the proof; to try, to test.’ To take just one example, Edmund uses the word in this way in *King Lear* (c.1603; 1608): ‘I hope, for my brother’s justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue.’⁵⁴ More broadly, to taste can mean ‘to have experience or knowledge of,’ as when, in *Pericles* (c.1607; 1609), Cleon implores ‘O, let those cities that of plenty’s cup / And her prosperities so largely taste... heed these tears!’⁵⁵ Here, ‘taste’ is a synonym for experience or knowledge. Relatedly, ‘a taste’ can indicate – as it does today – a small sample or slight experience of something, as in *As You Like It* (c.1599; 1623) when Touchstone offers Rosalind ‘a taste’ of his ability to compose bad love poetry.⁵⁶ Finally, taste could indicate ‘mental perception of quality; judgement, discriminative faculty.’ It is this kind of ‘taste’ that Nathaniel claims in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (c.1595; 1598), when he proclaims himself a man ‘of taste’ (a moment I explore in greater detail in chapter 1).⁵⁷ Frequently, such uses of taste to indicate processes of knowing are given force and focus by their deployment in proximity to more explicitly gustatory language. When Cleon makes envious reference to cities that ‘taste’ prosperity, for example, his use of the word is not entirely abstracted from embodied experience: the reference to ‘plenty’s cup’ keeps physical sensations of sipping and drinking firmly in mind. His words, furthermore, come shortly after his lament that his citizen’s ‘palates,’ which, only two summers previously, ‘must have inventions to delight the taste / Would now be glad of bread, and beg for it...’ (1.4.39-41) Prosperity is experienced in literally gustatory terms, as an abundance of culinary delights.

Both the term ‘taste,’ and the experience of taste, enfold a fascinating and productive tension. On the one hand, as part of the activity of eating, the sense of taste plays a *preliminary* role, evaluating or testing the suitability of a consumable for digestion. Correspondingly, as an epistemological term, to taste something is to try, test, or examine it. In such cases, the forms of enquiry indicated by the language of taste are

⁵³ ‘Taste, n.1’ *OED Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/198050, and ‘taste, v.’ *OED Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/198052. Both accessed 18 June 2009.

⁵⁴ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Thomson, 2005), 1.2.45.

⁵⁵ William Shakespeare, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Suzanne Gossett (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 1.4.52-54. Further in-text references are to this edition.

⁵⁶ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Thomson, 2006), 3.2.97.

⁵⁷ William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Thomson, 1998), 4.2.28.

tentative, preliminary, and probative or exploratory. On the other hand, conceived of in its relation to the other senses, taste represents the *culmination* of our experience of our environment: taste's status as a proximity sense – a sense that is stimulated only by direct contact with the object of sense – gives rise to its associations with forms of knowledge that are immediate, experiential, immersive, and apparently definitive.

'Knowledge' is, of course, an extraordinarily capacious term, able to designate a wide variety of states, objects, and processes ranging from dim intuition to confident certainty, and from familiarity with theoretical concepts to embodied practical skills. It is often conflated with, but also importantly separate from, wisdom; a distinction schematised by Augustine in the opposition between *scientia* (humane and historical knowledge) and *sapientia* (divine and theological knowledge).⁵⁸ Objects of knowledge range from the brute facts of the material world to the nebulous realm of moral truth; and the routes to it are manifold, embracing everything from syllogistic logic to rhetorical *inventio* to sensory observation, from scholastic deduction to empirical induction.⁵⁹ In this thesis, I use the term 'knowledge' in a number of its senses; in each case, the particular mode I refer to should be clear from the context. In particular, however, my epistemological focus is determined by the associative scope of taste as a term for knowledge production, and by taste's associations with specific realms of experience. Thus, the (often interlocking) types and spheres of knowledge that I explore encompass processes of textual discrimination and judgement in the literary realm; empiricism (inductive knowledge garnered through experience and experiment) and erudition (second-hand knowledge) in the early modern anatomy theatre and in the early Royal Society; *sapientia*, or divine knowledge, in the context of post-Reformation religion; and social or intersubjective knowledge (associated variously with intuition, discrimination, and rhetorical *inventio*) in the realm of erotic love poetry and drama.

⁵⁸ On the distinction between *sapientia* and *scientia* in the Renaissance, see Margaret Spire's discussion in 'The True Face of Philosophy as Magical Object: The Limits of Wisdom and the Constitution of the Supernatural in Montaigne's *Essays* 1.26 and 1.27,' in *Wonders, Marvels, and Monsters in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Peter G. Platt (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1999), 206-207.

⁵⁹ The distinction between knowledge, understanding and wisdom (and, in some cases, data and information) is schematized in recent research in knowledge management. See Russell Ackoff, 'From Data to Wisdom,' *Journal of Applied Systems Analysis* 16 (1989): 3-9, for an exposition of the differences between these categories.

IV. 'de Gustibus'

Ever since Stephen Greenblatt's enduringly influential *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* made its mark on the landscape of early modern studies, accounts of subjectivity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have placed a heavy emphasis on the formative role of language in the constitution of a sense of self. For Greenblatt, the acts of self-fashioning whereby 'middle class' and aristocratic individuals shaped their attitudes and behaviours in response to culturally and politically prescribed norms were 'always, though not exclusively, in language.'⁶⁰ In recent years, however, both Greenblatt's Foucauldian emphasis on the institutional structures which produce the illusion of individual agency precisely through the regulation of agency, and his insistence that language forms the principal medium through which subjectivity is generated, have been contested.

Notably, a number of scholars have documented the intimate links between humoral complexion, the passions, and subjective identity. Gail Kern Paster, for instance, identifies 'psychological materialism – what I call psychophysiology' as a definitive difference between early modern and modern men and women.⁶¹ 'Substance,' Paster affirms, 'embodied significance, because there was no way conceptually or discursively to separate the psychological from the physiological.'⁶² Most pertinently here, in his 1999 *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, Michael Schoenfeldt departs both from Greenblatt's disempowerment of the early modern individual, and with his suggestion that language forms the primary fabric of the human self.⁶³ In a humoral economy, Schoenfeldt argues, individuality is constituted through the self's capacity to

⁶⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 9.

⁶¹ Gail Kern Paster, *Humouring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 12. Gail Kern Paster's, Katherine Rowe's, and Mary Floyd-Wilson's edited collection *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) has also been influential in this regard, as has Mary Floyd-Wilson's and Garrett A. Sullivan's edited collection *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Brian Cummings' and Freya Sierhuis' forthcoming collection *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, forthcoming) promises to further enrich our understanding of the relations between humoralism, the passions, and subjectivity.

⁶² Gail Kern Paster, *Humouring the Body*, 12.

⁶³ For 'the empowerment' which his account, in contrast to the standard new historicist narrative, accords to the early modern individual, see Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11-12. Schoenfeldt also offers an important modification to the association by Gail Kern Paster of humoral psychology with a carnivalesque, Bakhtinian body, emphasising instead the Renaissance prioritization of self-control and containment: 'the Renaissance seems to have imagined selves as differentiated not by their desires, which all more or less share, but by their capacity to control these desires.' Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves*, 15-17.

regulate his or her corporeal processes: ‘in early modern England, the consuming subject was pressured by Galenic physiology... to conceive all acts of ingestion and excretion as very literal acts of self-fashioning.’⁶⁴

Much work in the realm of humoral subjectivity is alert to the ways in which texts represent physical sensations: Schoenfeldt’s insistence that accounts of humoral theory ‘describe not so much the actual workings of the body as the experience of the body,’ for example, offers a compelling way to think about medical concepts in early modern England.⁶⁵ Subsequently, the recent turn towards sensory scholarship has often located itself within this genealogy. In their introduction to *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England*, for example, Katharine Craik and Tanya Pollard assert that their volume ‘is informed by recent interdisciplinary conversations about emotion,’ particularly those that are predicated on an ‘attention to embodiment.’⁶⁶ Sensory studies are thus absorbed into an established model according to which humoralism, the passions, and subjectivity form an uninterrupted and mutually constitutive continuum. I want to propose that the critical concentration on this trinity – rich and revealing as it continues to be – has somewhat obscured the ways in which early modern subjectivity was constituted, in part, by sensory knowledge. In the early modern period an individual’s humoral constitution does not only affect what he or she *feels* (the passions), it is also a formative condition of what he or she *knows* (the intellect). Undeniably, the senses and the passions worked in tandem to make subjectivities; but so did the senses and the mind. Recognising this allows us to appreciate the epistemological as well as the affective underpinnings of early modern selves. In effect, I propose that in early modern culture there is a degree of slippage between subjectivity as an epistemological concept, denoting contingent, and variable knowledge, and subjectivity as selfhood or individual identity.

In particular, this thesis will suggest at various points that early modern selfhood is produced, to a significant extent, through gustatory experiences. Because of the extreme subjectivity of taste sensations – a commonplace in the early modern period – taste is uniquely revelatory of humoral (and hence ‘psychophysiological’) constitution:

⁶⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3. Similarly, Robert Appelbaum argues that the ‘discourse’ of humoralism ‘reached into the sensation of consumption and digestion, and indeed became part of that sensation.’ Or, as Appelbaum puts it elsewhere, ‘the sensational science of nutrition intervened in the structure of sensory experience and both supplemented and determined it.’ Robert Appelbaum, *Aguecheek’s Beef, Belch’s Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture, and Food among the Early Moderns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 36 and 53.

⁶⁶ Katharine Craik and Tanya Pollard, introduction to *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

gustatory sensation can become a kind of performance of preference or aversion which actualizes, even as it articulates, individuality. *De gustibus non est disputandum*, as the Latin proverb goes: there is no disputing about taste.⁶⁷ Whilst today this motto, or a variant translation of it, is usually deployed in response to a clash of *aesthetic* tastes, in the early modern period it just as often referred to *gustatory* tastes.⁶⁸ In a chapter on ‘how to judge of the Maturity and Goodness of *Fruits*’ included in Jean de La Quintinie’s *The compleat gard’ner* (1693), translated by John Evelyn, for example, Quintinie suggests sight, touch, and smell can judge the outward appearance of fruits, but argues that ultimately ‘the Tast is the only and real Judge to whom it belongs to Judge Solidly... of the Goodness’ of a fruit.⁶⁹ The subjectivity of taste, however, causes him some discomfort: ‘a thing which may please one Man’s Pallat, may displease another’s: But this discussion is out of my Province; the Ancient Maxim (*de Gustibus*) forbids my meddling with it, and thus I can only speak of my own in particular...’⁷⁰ Here, the conventionality of the ‘*de Gustibus*’ maxim is signalled by its casual truncation: the reader, it is presumed, will be able to fill in the rest.

‘The truth of being, and the truth of knowing,’ Francis Bacon states in his 1605 *Advancement of learning*, ‘are one, differing no more than the direct beame and the beame reflected.’⁷¹ Bacon’s point is of course an ethical one: as with Glanvill (who drew heavily on Bacon’s works) the validity of knowledge depends on the moral rectitude of its producer. In the contexts of humoral psychology and Aristotelian physiology, however, it accrues a more immediately corporeal significance, as a brief consideration of Walter Raleigh’s *Sceptike* suggests. Raleigh argues that sensory perception is affected by the specific constitution of an individual’s sense organs. ‘To a rough and drie tongue,’ for instance,

that very thing seemeth bitter... which to the moister tongue seemeth not to be so. Divers creatures then having tongues drier, or moister according to their several temperatures, when they tast the same thing, must needs conceit it to be

⁶⁷ Steven Shapin notes that ‘no one seems to know where [this] phrase originated, though some think it must be scholastic.’ Steven Shapin, ‘The Sciences of Subjectivity,’ *Social Studies of Science* 42/4 (2012): 172.

⁶⁸ Shapin, for instance, illustrates the maxim with the example: ‘you like Wagner and I like Verdi, and there is nothing we can say to each other that would alter our aesthetic responses or our expressed opinions.’ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁶⁹ Jean de La Quintinie, *The compleat gard’ner*, trans. John Evelyn (London: for M. Gillyflower, 1693), sig M3v.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, sig M4r.

⁷¹ Francis Bacon, *The twoo bookes of Francis Bacon. Of the proficience and advancement of learning* (London: Thomas Purfoot and Thomas Creede for Henrie Tomes, 1605), F2r (21).

according as the instrument of their tast is affected, either bitter, or sweet, &c... one and the same outward object is diversly judged of, and conceited, according to the severall and divers qualities of the instrument of Sence, which conveyeth it to the imagination.⁷²

Raleigh's account of the senses, which draws heavily on Michel de Montaigne's discussion in his *An Apology of Raymond Sebond*, is concerned with variations across species, and the weakness of man's claims to sensory and intellectual superiority over the animals, but it also applies to inter-species differences in perception. Humoral 'temperature' or constitution affects sensory perception, and subsequently affects the knowledge derived from those perceptions: objects are 'judged of, and conceited,' or known, 'according to.... the instrument of Sence.'

The conviction that the body of sensor is a formative condition of what he or she perceives, and therefore what he or she knows, is articulated by Raleigh in terms of Galenic humoralism. It is also, however, traceable to Aristotelian and faculty sensory physiology. In particular, it derives from the Thomist dictum *unumquodque recipitur per modum recipientis*, which – in his translation of the Dominican prior Giacomo Affinati's *The dumbe divine speaker* (1605) – Anthony Munday renders as 'every thing is received, according to the nature of the bodye that receives it, and not according to the nature of the thing it selfe received.'⁷³ Again, because knowledge derives ultimately from sensation, this principle also extends to the intellect: 'wee may example the same by our intelligence or understanding,' claims Affinati, because the 'understanding' itself is dependent on the constitution or complexion of the body which receives it: 'our understanding sits as mid-way seated, betweene the thing apprehended or entertained, and the body which receives the same.'⁷⁴

Human perception, then – including the sense of taste – is a process of transformation, according to which the alterity of the world is absorbed by, and at least in part remade in the image of, the sensor. Perception can also, however, be a metamorphosis in the other direction: the transformation of the vulnerable self by the world. The Aristotelian notion that sensation occurs via a literal imprinting of the form or image of the object of perception on the perceptual organs of the sensing subject is

⁷² Raleigh, *Scepticke*, sig B4v-B5v (8-10).

⁷³ Giacomo Affinati, *The dumbe divine speaker, or: Dumbe speaker of Divinity*, trans. Anthony Munday (London: R. Bradock for William Leake, 1605), K5v (138).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, K6r (139).

key here. As Edward Reynolds puts it in his 1677 *Meditations on the fall and rising of St Peter*:

All knowledg consists in mixture and union, whereby the understanding receiveth into it the image and similitude of the thing which it knows; which made the Philosopher [Aristotle] say, That the Soul in understanding a thing is made the very thing which it understands; namely, in that sense as we call the Image of the Face in a Glass, the Face it self; or the Impression in Wax, the Seal it self.⁷⁵

Corporeal experience and the knowledge derived therein is thus a process of transformation: a sensation reforms the body and soul of the sensor in the image of its object. Knowledge deriving from sensation is not something which the subject possesses, but is coterminous with the emergence of the knowing subject. *Contra* the new historicist conflation of knowledge and power, the acquisition of sense-based knowledge for early modern men and women involved a degree of subjection, of abjection almost – a risky and potentially transformative opening up of the self to the world.

Strikingly, Reynolds' emphasis on the ways in which the self emerges in tandem with sensory knowledge is consistent with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's assertion, in his 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception*, that:

The subject of sensation is neither a thinker who takes note of a quality, nor an inert setting which is affected or changed by it, it is a power which is born into, and simultaneously with, a certain existential environment, or synchronized with it.⁷⁶

The subject is not prior to the world he or she perceives – a distinct observer – but emerges *as* a subject precisely in the act of sensing. Similarly, the peripatetic claim that understanding is situated between the thing apprehended and the receptive body resonates with Bruce Smith's insistence that 'colour is not an object out there in space,

⁷⁵ Edward Reynolds, *Meditations on the fall and rising of St Peter* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1677), E4v-E5r (56-57).

⁷⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 245-48.

waiting to be named; it is a phenomenon, an event that happens between an object and a subject.’⁷⁷ For both Affinati and Smith, a perception is something which occurs ‘between[e]’ the world and the self.

In noticing these parallels, I signal my allegiance to a mode of scholarship that, following Smith’s seminal work, has in the past few years become current in early modern studies: historical phenomenology. Smith outlines the fundamental insight that is the motor of this approach with admirable concision: ‘you cannot know anything apart from the way in which you come to know it.’⁷⁸ Or, in the words of Merleau-Ponty, ‘all my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view.’⁷⁹ More specifically, Merleau-Ponty explores the ways in which the body itself serves as a formative condition of engagement with the world, and thus of the knowledge derived from that engagement. Sense perceptions are shaped by, and cannot be understood apart from, the contexts in which they take place. As Julian Thomas puts it, ‘perception is not simply a cognitive activity, for the subject who engages in experience is always embodied... [Sensations] can be understood only in the wider context of a person’s immersion in the world.’ As such, ‘perception is inherently meaningful... The body’s relationship with the world it inhabits is charged with meaning.’⁸⁰ Sensation, then, emerges as historically specific, but resistant to historical objectification.⁸¹

Historical phenomenology offers an indispensable methodological tool, enabling us to interrogate a range of common critical presumptions and approaches. In particular, in the last decade or so early modern studies has undergone what has been called ‘a material turn,’ as scholars have increasingly attended to the physical things of early modern literature and culture.⁸² Whilst this ‘turn’ has proved fertile in myriad respects, Jonathan Gil Harris has argued for the need for a more sophisticated approach to material culture. Too frequently, Harris argues, the scholar treats the object of his or

⁷⁷ Bruce Smith, *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 15.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, ix.

⁸⁰ Julian Thomas, ‘Phenomenology and Material Culture,’ in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley *et al* (London: SAGE, 2006), 47-48.

⁸¹ See also Kevin Curran and James Kearney, introduction to ‘Shakespeare and Phenomenology,’ ed. Curran and Kearney, special issue, *Criticism* 54/3 (2010): 353-64, especially 354.

⁸² See especially Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass, eds., *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt, eds., *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda, eds., *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

her interest as a kind of magic key with the capacity to unlock the past, identifying his or her experience of it directly with that of its earlier owners and users.⁸³ In contrast, sensory scholarship argues for the historical specificity of the lived experience of the material world. ‘Historical phenomenology,’ as Kevin Curran and James Kearney put it, ‘emphasizes how meaning accrues from the way sensing bodies experienced and perceived objects.’⁸⁴

The reasons that phenomenology works so well as a kind of conceptual toolbox for understanding early modern thought have not, however, been fully considered. Whereas Smith, for example, sees certain early modern writers as prefiguring the later insights of phenomenologists, I wish to emphasise how twentieth-century phenomenologists overtly drew on and developed much earlier conceptions of selfhood and knowledge. Smith comments, for instance, of Edward’s Herbert’s 1633 *De Veritate* that ‘here, several centuries too early, are the grounds for... the phenomenological writings of Edmund Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty.’⁸⁵ Such statements imply a teleological mindset according to which a few authors managed to achieve insights worthy of a later, more advanced historical period, and ignores the fact that twentieth-century phenomenology was shaped to a significant degree by its foremost practitioners’ self-conscious engagement (part of a wider project of challenging the assumptions of Enlightenment philosophy) with pre-Cartesian conceptions of selfhood and knowledge, and particularly with the works of Aristotle and his medieval commentators. Intentionality is a case in point. Formulated by Franz Brentano in the 1870s, and later elaborated by his student Husserl, phenomenological ‘intentionality’ designates the contention, put simply, that all mental phenomena (thoughts, consciousness, cognition) must be directed towards an object (whether real or imaginary). Brentano’s work on intentionality drew on scholastic philosophy, particularly the peripatetic school and commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima*.⁸⁶ From this perspective, affinities between early modern ideas about perception and twentieth-century phenomenology, derive not from the historical precocity of figures such as Edward Herbert, but from their shared heritage of Aristotelian and peripatetic philosophy. Recognition of this fact encourages

⁸³ Jonathan Gil Harris, ‘Shakespeare’s Hair: Staging the Object of Material Culture,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52/4 (2001): 479-491, especially 482.

⁸⁴ Curran and Kearney, introduction to ‘Shakespeare and Phenomenology,’ 354.

⁸⁵ Smith, *Key of Green*, 108.

⁸⁶ For phenomenology’s debt to the peripatetics, see Nader El-Bizri, ‘Avicenna’s *De Anima*, Between Aristotle and Husserl,’ in *The Passions of the Soul in the Metamorphosis of Becoming*, ed. A-T. Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 67-90, and Marina Paola Banchetti-Robino, ‘Ibn Sīnā and Husserl on Intention and Intentionality,’ *Philosophy East and West* 54 (2004): 71-82.

critical humility, but also allows us to develop a more nuanced appreciation of the intricate and diverse, but in many respects continuous, fabric of ideas about the human sensorium, prompting acknowledgment of the extent to which apparently fresh hermeneutic strategies are entangled in the histories and texts that they propose to unravel.

This thesis offers an exploration of early modern taste which strives to balance awareness of the historical specificity of sensation with consideration of perception's epistemological weight. I begin with an interrogation of literary taste, often understood as a variety of aesthetic 'taste.' The emergence of taste as a literary and aesthetic term is usually seen as a process of metaphorical abstraction beginning in the late seventeenth century and reaching its culmination in the eighteenth. In contrast, in chapter 1, I argue that the language of literary good taste is nascent much earlier, in the anti-theatrical controversy and in commonplace culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Focusing on the pervasive humanist trope of the reader as a bee, using his or her sense of taste to discriminate between and subsequently digest the honey-laden flowers of rhetoric, I make an excursion into early modern metaphor theory in order to argue that the language of literary tasting in this period should be understood not as purely figurative but as rooted in readerly practices.

In a range of paratexts, 'taste' serves as a mediating term, helping the reader to negotiate the transition between lived and readerly experience. Turning to anti-theatrical tracts and responses to them, I demonstrate that the debate surrounding the moral value of theatre and of other forms of vernacular literature is consistently articulated in terms of taste. Whilst opponents of vernacular drama such as Stephen Gosson use the language of taste to associate theatre-going with a sinful and insalubrious sweetness, their adversaries, including Philip Sidney, frame the Puritan 'distaste' for poesie as pathological. Focusing on Anne Southwell's commonplace book, I argue that, within a humoral economy, the language of literary taste and distaste refers to actual corporeal experience. In the final part of the chapter, I explore the implications of this for how we understand the politics of taste and the formation of publics, arguing that the language of taste democratizes judgement.

Taste is a mode of knowing, but – for anatomists – it was also an object of knowledge, a function of the body that might be studied and understood. Chapter 2 turns to the evidence of medical practice and writing in order to probe the relationship between literary taste, and taste as a faculty and topic of empirical investigation.

Focusing on Helkiah Crooke's 1615 *Mikrokosmographia*, I show how, in anatomical textbooks, 'taste' slides referentially between gustation and discrimination, including readerly discrimination, and investigate what this semantic duality has to tell us about the experience of early modern anatomy. The conventional scholarly presumption is that the history of anatomy in the west follows a trajectory away from the authority of classical texts towards the empirical certainties of sensory experience, with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries emerging as a key period of transition. Focusing on the language of touch, scholars including Elizabeth Harvey have suggested that sensory metaphors for producing and communicating knowledge in early modern anatomical texts register this putative rise of empiricism.

In contrast, I argue that Crooke exploits the semantic flexibility of taste, which can refer both to sense experience and to readerly discrimination, in order to establish the reciprocity of bodily sensation and mental judgement as routes to anatomical knowledge. Turning to *Mikrokosmographia's* discussion of the senses, and particularly taste, as an object of knowledge, I demonstrate that, for Crooke, sensation involves not merely the passive reception, but an active grasping, of meaning. The mind, Crooke argues, must be present in sensory experience; as such, sensation is a process of, not simply prior to, judgement and discrimination. Conversely, Crooke describes acts of reading and judging texts as physiological, involving tactile and gustatory sensitivity. Crooke's use of sensory metaphor, then, attests not the victory of proto-scientific empiricism over classical erudition, but rather the fundamental affinity of sense-based and textual knowledge.

Taste's epistemological utility in the early modern period was compromised by its disreputable moral status. Retellings of, and commentaries on, Genesis in the early modern period overwhelmingly describe the Fall in gustatory terms; ranging across early modern devotional literature, chapter 3 investigates the significance of this tendency. The lapsarian myth, I argue, haunted quotidian culinary experience: tableware decorated with images of the fall ensured that diners saw mealtimes in typological terms. Nonetheless, a pervasive sense of taste's culpability for mankind's sin and subsequent misery is complicated by an equally pervasive interest in taste's redemptive potential: in particular, its centrality within Eucharistic ritual. I ask what kind of epistemological value gustation might have when the desired object of knowledge is God, arguing that Protestant writings frequently employ the terms of taste to avow the superiority of scriptural engagement, and sometimes of a purely experiential faith, over ecclesiastical

authority. The distinction between fallen and salvific tasting corresponds broadly to the distinction between physical and spiritual tasting. It does not, as we might expect, entirely compromise the former, which retains some devotional value as an aid to morally instructive, self-reflective meditation.

Tracing taste's role in the negotiation of confessional identities in post-Reformation England, I focus in particular on the language of sweetness, which is used both to indicate a commendable intimacy with the divine, and as a weapon in the anti-papist polemical arsenal. The final section of the chapter establishes the frequency with which – following Eve's initiatory part in the Fall – the sense of taste was gendered as female. Focusing on Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, I show how Lanyer appropriated and reconfigured the traditional association between her sex and Eve, emphasising instead the role of Eve's typological antitype, Mary, as bearer of the 'sweet foode' of Christ.

Chapter 4 makes a case for the importance of taste to the development of experimental science; in particular, to members of the early Royal Society. Chemists, botanists, and physicians, I show, used their sense of taste to generate data about the material world. Gustation was particularly important to physicians such as Nehemiah Grew, who attempted to taxonomize the flavours of plants in the hope that doing so would reveal new medical uses for them. Influenced by Parascelian medical theory, by taste's prior epistemological associations, and by Protestant rhetoric, Society propagandists implied that such acts of natural historical tasting could serve as a redemptive reversal of Adam and Eve's tasting of the fruit of knowledge, returning the body to an Edenic state of health and vigor.

This celebratory story, however, was compromised by microscopic investigations into taste as a physiological process. Such investigations led to a more complicated sense of taste experiences as shaped by a range of factors, including the specific form of an individual's taste organs. In the mechanistic, tactile theories of gustation adopted by Grew, but also by contemporaries including Robert Boyle and Thomas Willis, taste – and thus the information it produces – is deeply subjective and unstable. Grew's work in particular testifies to an unresolved conflict between its author's desire to categorically determine correlations between the flavours of plants and their medicinal virtues, and his understanding of tastes as circumstantial and contingent, produced jointly by tasting subject and tasted object.

My fifth and final chapter asks how the correlation between taste and knowledge that my thesis charts relates to a cultural obsession with what is frequently figured the sweetness of courtship, kissing, and coition. This heavy emphasis on sweetness, I argue, is a distinguishing aspect of early modern eroticism, and prompts us to think about the ways in which the history of sexual desire and pleasure might be best understood as a matter neither of sex, nor of sexuality, but rather of sensuality. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century uses of the language of taste to describe erotic experience both reflect a range of cultural practices, and participate in wider debates surrounding the epistemological and moral status of gustation. Focusing on Shakespeare's *Othello*, but also engaging once again with the bee trope, I suggest that whilst sexual tastes are often presented as animalistic and irrational, a number of authors exploit taste's prior connotations of discrimination and experiential knowledge in order to imply that desire is a mode of judgement, and that sensuality offers a route to intersubjective certainty. Use of the language of taste, then, underwrites a (limited and localized) recuperation of sensual passion in seventeenth-century England.

Consideration of taste, furthermore, encourages recognition of authors' use of the realm of erotic love as a kind of testing ground to comparatively assess definitions of and routes to knowledge. In particular, works employing the banquet of the senses theme – notably George Chapman's 1595 *Ovids banquet of sense* – present the conflict between Ovidian eroticism and neo-Platonic chastity as a battle between two types of knowledge: rhetorical knowledge, which is rooted in sensation, and philosophical knowledge, which is rooted in remembering a priori 'ideas.' Crucially, the contest is articulated using the language of taste: whereas neo-Platonic chastity is associated with a pathological corruption of appetites, sensual pleasure is presented as a corollary of sweetly persuasive and epistemologically substantial rhetoric.

Poised between acclaim and infamy, the sacred and the profane, taste in the seventeenth century is an 'Apish Art.' My thesis illuminates the pivotal role which this ambivalent sense played in the articulation and negotiation of early modern obsessions including the nature and value of empirical knowledge, the attainment of grace, and the moral status of erotic pleasure, attesting in the process to a very real contiguity between different ways of knowing – experimental, empirical, textual, rational – in the period.

CHAPTER 1

‘To dream to eat Books’: Of Bibliophagy, Bees, and Literary Taste

I. ‘A Banquet of Wit’

In her 1664 *Sociable Letters*, Margaret Cavendish responds to a correspondent’s request ‘to send you word how the Poets were Feasted,’ with the following description, worth quoting at length:

Nature sent the Muses to Invite all the Poets to a Banquet of Wit, and Invited also me a Poetess, or rather Poetastress; I went, and entred into a Large Room of Imagination... then was every one Placed round about the Table... the Table we were set to, was a strange Table, for never was seen the like, it was made of all the Famous Old Poets Sculs, and the Table-cloth or Covering was made of their Brains, which Brains were Spun by the Muses... into Cobweb Threads, as Soft and Thin as Air, and then Woven into a Piece, or Web... the Napkins for the Hands was Pure Fine White Paper, all over-wrought with Black Letters, and the Edges round about were Gilded; also there were upon the Table, Plates, Salt-sellers, Knives and Forks, the Plates were made of the Films or Drums of Sensible Ears, and the Knives that were to cut the Meat laid thereon, were Orators Tongues, the Trencher Salt-sellers, which were set by every Plate, were made of the Chrystalline part of Observing Eyes, and the Salt that was put therein, was made of Sea-water, or Salt-tears, which usually Flow from a Tragick Vein, the Forks that were to bear up the Meat to the Tast of the Understanding, were Writing pens; The Table being thus Covered and Ordered, and the Guests set round, ready for the Feast, in came the Muses with Basons of Water, fetch’d from the Well, or Spring of *Helicon*, for the Poets to Wash before they did Eat, and after they had Wash’d, the Muses carried those Basons forth, and then brought in many several Dishes of Poetical Meats, Placing them on the Table; the first was a Great dish of Poems, Excellently well Dress’d, and Curious Sawce made of Metaphors, Similitudes, and Fancies, and round the Sides or Verges of the Dish, were laid Numbers and Rimes, like as we use on Corporeal Dishes and Meats, to lay Dates, or Flowers, or Slices of Limmons, or the like; then

was there a Dish of Songs, brought by the Lyricks, it was very Delicious Meat, and had a most Sweet Relish, it was Dress'd with a Compounded Sawce of many several Airs, Notes, and Strains; then were there two Dishes of Epigrams, I think one of them was *Martial's*, for they were Powdered, or Brined Highly with Satirical Salt, the other Dish was so Luscious with Flattery, as I could not Feed much thereon; then there was a Dish of Epithalamiums, but that Meat was Dress'd so Strong and Rank, as it was Nauseous to me; then there was a Hash of Anagrams, Letters, and Names, Hashed, or Minced together, but I did not like it; then there was a Dish of Funeral Elegies well Drest, but it was so Sad and Heavy Meat, as I durst not Feed much thereon; then there was a Dish of Comedies, Excellently well Drest, with Scenes, the Sawce was Compounded, but very Savoury, being Compounded of divers Humors, and the Dish Graced or Garnished with Smiles and Laughter; the next dish to that were Tragedies, but those were Drest as we Dress Corporeal Shoulders of Mutton, or Venison, in the Blood, Stuff'd with Sighs, as the other with Herbs, and Salted with Tears. Then came an Olio, or Bisk of Characters, and after that was a Dish of Morals, which is a Meat more Wholsome than Pleasant, the Chief Sawce was Temperance, but it was mix'd with other several Virtues and Passions... then there was a Grand Sallet of Rhetorick, with Oil of Eloquence... then there was a Quelquechose of Rallery, but whatsoever the Meat was, the Sawce was Naught, for it was made of Ingredients, as bad as Poor People Dress their Corporeal Meat with, as Lamp-oil, Dead Vinegar, Rotten Pepper, and Stinking Garlick, as Foolish Jests, Dull, Spiteful Replies, Rude Familiarity, often Repetitions, and Reproaches, so as there was Sweet, Bitter, Sour, and altogether Mixd, of this Dish I Tasted not, I was Sick at the Presence of it; as for the Desert, it was Musick of all sorts, Sweet, and Harmonious....¹

This is Cavendish in full imaginative flow, blending the grotesque and the gorgeous, the bizarre and the banal, with characteristic exuberance. The passage, however, is more than a fantastical curiosity piece: like the muses spinning table-coverings from poets' brains, Cavendish's multi-stranded description of the 'Banquet of Wit' intertwines physicality and phantasy, sensation and intellection, and the culinary and the literary, in ways which are pertinent to the concerns of this chapter. What the muses make of the brain matter they work with is not only a fabric but a form of skin: the 'Cobweb

¹ Margaret Cavendish, *CCXI sociable letters* (London: William Wilson, 1664), Gggr1-r3 (417-421).

Threads’ they weave into a ‘web’ recalls the iconographic association between spiders and the sense of touch, a connotation which is strengthened by Cavendish’s delicately haptic description of the threads ‘as Soft and Thin as Air.’² Reversing the usual physiological trajectory – according to which disparate sensations are organized, aggregated, and transformed into knowledge in the mind³ – Cavendish’s muses spin the poets’ brains out into a kind of tactile tablecloth, an object which furnishes the simultaneously mental and material space of the ‘Large Room of Imagination.’

This, then, is a feast where the sense organs serve not (or at least not only) as conduits of pleasure, but as part of the material culture of dining. The suggestion that perception does not belong exclusively to the banqueters, but is distributed across plates, knives, and salt cellars constituted respectively of ear-drums, orator’s tongues, and eye-whites, is compounded by Cavendish’s insistence on the sensitivity of the organs she evokes: the drums come from ‘Sensible Ears,’ the cellars derive from ‘Observing eyes.’⁴ Not all the tableware, however, has an anatomical origin: the napkins are written-on paper, and ‘the Forks that were to bear up the Meat to the Tast of the Understanding, were Writing pens.’⁵ Here, there is an implied functional equivalence between sense-organs, dining equipment, and writing tools: all are equally instrumental, enabling the poet-guests to apprehend, engage with, and negotiate the literary banquet set before them. The multiplicity of these ambiguous implements corresponds to the duality of the sense they serve: ‘the Taste of the Understanding,’ which – as the faculty of both gustation and intellectual comprehension – is capable of appreciating a feast where the sauces are ‘Similitudes,’ and the dishes are garnished with ‘rimes’ rather than dates and lemons. At this point, it becomes possible to hear the pun in Cavendish’s designation of herself as a ‘Poetastress’ (my emphasis). Cavendish is not simply making a

² Touch is represented by a spider in John Davies’ poem *Nosce teipsum this oracle expounded* (London: Richard Field, for John Standish, 1599), G3r (45), and in Thomas Middleton’s pageant *The triumph of truth* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613), B4v. For the spider as an iconographical image of touch, see Casagrande and Kleinhenz, ‘Literary and Philosophical Perspectives,’ 311-27; Assaf, ‘The Ambivalence of the Sense of Touch,’ 85 and 88; Carla Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance: Language Trouble in an Age of Eloquence* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 194-95; Moshenska, ‘Feeling Pleasures,’ 3-4; and Helen Smith, *Grossly Material Things: Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 11.

³ I explore this model further in chapter 2.

⁴ As such, Cavendish’s feast adds weight to John Sutton’s and Evelyn Tribble’s insistence that ‘mental activities spread or smear across the boundaries of skull and skin to include parts of the social and material world... Many cognitive states and processes are hybrids, unevenly distributed across the physical, social, and cultural environments as well as bodies and brains.’ John Sutton and Evelyn Tribble, ‘Cognitive Ecology as a Framework for Shakespearean Studies,’ *Shakespeare Studies* 39 (2011): 95.

⁵ Cavendish’s rhetoric reflects historical practice here. As Wendy Wall has shown, writing implements were often used as culinary tools in the early modern period: ‘the kitchen was filled with the materials of writing.’ Wendy Wall, ‘Literacy and the Domestic Arts,’ *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73/3 (2010): 401.

joke about the unskillfulness of female poets (as a poetess, she is also a poetaster, an inferior versifier). Rather, she is asserting the conceptual and, indeed, syllabic centrality of taste, understood as both a sensory and a discriminative faculty, to her literary identity.⁶

Whilst Cavendish's subsequent enumeration of the 'many several Dishes of Poetical Meats' she and her fellow diners are served is unusual in the thoroughness of its commitment to the guiding association between language and food, the association itself is conventional, as is Cavendish's pairing of different flavours and culinary styles with specific genres. Her description of the 'most Sweet Relish' of the 'Dish of Songs,' for instance, derives ultimately from Horace, who, in his 'Ars Poetica,' influentially expressed poetry's capacity to both delight and instruct via the formula 'dulce et utile': sweetness and usefulness.⁷ Correspondingly, Cavendish's assertion that Martial's epigrams are 'Brined Highly with Satirical Salt,' reflects an ancient and enduring characterisation of comedic satire as salty.⁸ More directly aggressive satire, on the other hand, was associated with bitterness: thus, invoking the conventional connection between iambic trimeter and satirical attacks, Philip Sidney suggests in his 1595 *An Apologie for Poetrie* that the least popular kind of poetry might be 'the bitter but wholesome Iambic, who rubs the galled mind, in making shame the trumpet of villainy.'⁹

'To eat,' argues Robert Appelbaum, 'is not only to consume; it is also to communicate... Food is... a kind of language, a system of communication.'¹⁰ The converse, it seems, is also true: language is a kind of food. In this chapter, I interrogate early modern instances of bibliophagic and alimentary metaphors – metaphors which figure texts as consumables, and reading as a form of eating – in order to propose that renaissance authors appropriated conventional pairings of literary modes and particular

⁶ Cavendish's playfulness here echoes that of the female devotional writers, notably Amelia Lanyer, who I discuss in chapter 3 of this thesis. Cavendish's 'Poetastress' joke hints at the conventional misogynistic association between the sense of taste and women's epistemological and sensual appetites. Like Lanyer, however, she ultimately rejects this association in favour of a more positive, acclamatory model of taste as a mode of selection and discrimination.

⁷ 'Who can blend usefulness and sweetness wins every / Vote, at once delighting and teaching the reader.' Horace, 'Ars Poetica,' trans. A. S. Kline, *Poetry in Translation*, accessed 26 March 2013, www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/HoraceArsPoetica.htm.

⁸ Eric Byville similarly comments that, historically, 'satire is neither sprinkled with sugar nor smeared with honey, but rather doused in salt, vinegar, and gall. (The satire closer to comedy tastes of sal, whereas that closer to tragedy tastes of fel.)' Byville also notes that 'the gustatory trope is pervasive in Renaissance literary theory, which used the terms sweet and bitter to classify works according to their effect on readers.' Eric Byville, 'Aesthetic Uncommon Sense: Early Modern Taste and the Satirical Sublime,' *Criticism* 54/4 (2012): 592.

⁹ Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: James Roberts for Henry Olney, 1595), F3r.

¹⁰ Appelbaum, *Aguecheek's Beef*, 10.

flavours, and developed them into a substantial and subtle poetics of taste.¹¹ I will focus largely, although not exclusively, on late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century commonplace books and related forms including anthologies and miscellanies. Such works frequently and self-referentially describe the processes of readerly and editorial discrimination, extraction, collation, and composition which undergird them by making use of the widespread humanist trope of the reader as a bee, using his or her sense of taste to distinguish between and recombine the flowers of rhetoric. This trope, I will argue, is an important precursor of what we usually think of as the abstracted, eighteenth-century definition of ‘taste’ as aesthetic discernment. Early seventeenth-century uses of ‘taste’ in this context, however, are not disconnected from, but to the contrary repeatedly invoke, the phenomenal reality of gustatory sensation. For many early modern readers and authors, the bee trope possessed a literal dimension: literary discrimination is experienced as gustatory preference and aversion. Bibliophagy is not merely a metaphor: it is grounded both in a historically specific conception of the human body, and in a range of material practices.

II. ‘the dainties that are bred in a booke’

In his commonplace book, posthumously published in 1641 as *Timber; or, discoveries made on men and matter*, Ben Jonson lists the skills which a poet must possess. Amongst them, he numbers ‘*Imitation*,’ which he defines as the poet’s ability:

to convert the substance, or Riches of an other *Poet*, to his owne use... Not, as a Creature, that swallowes, what it takes in, crude, raw, or indigested; but, that feedes with an Appetite, and hath a Stomacke to concoct, devide, and turne all into nourishment. Not, to imitate servilely, as *Horace* saith... but, to draw forth out the best, and choisest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey, worke it into one relish, and savour: make our *Imitation* sweet...¹²

¹¹ For an account of the history of ‘alimentary metaphors,’ see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Task (New York: Pantheon, 1953), 134-37. For ‘metaphors of bibliophagy’ in the renaissance, see Michel Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance*, trans. Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), especially 130-31. For a discussion of ‘the figurative physiology of reading as eating’ in relation to women’s reading in the early modern period, see Helen Smith, “‘More swete vnto the eare / than holsome for ye mynde’: Embodying Early Modern Women’s Reading,’ *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73/3 (2010): 423-26.

¹² Ben Jonson, *Timber; or, Discoveries; Made upon Men and Matter in The workes of Benjamin Jonson*, vol. 3 (London: James Dawson for Thomas Walkley, 1640), R2r (127). See William P. Williams, ‘Chetwin,

Jonson describes a form of active, selective reading that scholars agree was central to early modern literate English culture, and which was facilitated by the widespread practice – recommended by influential humanists and pedagogues including Erasmus, Vives and Melanchthon – of keeping a commonplace book.¹³ Strictly a collection of classical and patristic quotations, culled from its owner’s reading and transcribed, or ‘digested,’ under a series of thematic heads, the commonplace book was a repository of material intended for future deployment in contexts ranging from political oratory to personal conversation, or – as Jonson suggests – in literary composition. By the seventeenth century, however, the doxographical emphasis had begun to diminish, and commonplace books had begun to incorporate vernacular and ephemeral material such as original poems, recipes, witticisms, and inventories. A new market of printed commonplace books also emerged.¹⁴

If the mode of discriminative reading and appropriative composition that Jonson recommends is conventional, so too is the metaphor he uses to describe this mode. Jonson compares the reader-poet to a bee, selecting between the ‘choicest flowers’ of rhetoric and subsequently converting them into the ‘Honey’ of a new composition.¹⁵ What I will call the bee trope was itself something of a commonplace,

Crooke, and the Jonson Folios,’ *Studies in Bibliography* 30 (1997): 75-95 for an account of the convoluted publication history of this volume.

¹³ Scholarship addressing early modern reading as a dynamic, goal-oriented process is now extensive. Key works include Lisa Jardine’s and A. T. Grafton’s seminal “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey read his Livy,” *Past and Present* 129 (1990): 30-78; Peter Beale, ‘Notes in Garrison: The Seventeenth Century Commonplace Book’ in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985-1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993), 131-47; Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Anne Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Books and Readers in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, eds., *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Adam Smyth, *‘Profit and Delight’: Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640-1682* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004); Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor, eds., *The Practice and Representation of Reading in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); William Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass, ‘The First Literary *Hamlet* and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59/4 (2008): 371-420. For a response to this body of work which emphasises that ‘some manuscript commonplace books do in fact reflect a careful reading of whole literary texts and reveal a respect for the intentions of the author,’ see Jennifer Richards and Fred Schurink, ‘The Textuality and Materiality of Reading in Early Modern England,’ *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73/3 (2010): 352.

¹⁴ See Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (Vermont: Stinehour Press, 2001), especially 13-33, for the comprehensive overview to which my brief summary here is indebted.

¹⁵ The phrase ‘the flowers of rhetoric’ references the medieval genre of the *florilegium*, collections of the ‘flowers’ of (usually biblical and patristic) literature. The modern equivalent is the ‘anthology’ (from the

frequently reproduced, in various forms, in the very commonplace books and anthologies that were products of the kind of selective reading that it describes. The 1598 printed commonplace book *Palladis tamia*, for instance, quotes an example of the bee trope attributed to Seneca the younger:

Bees out of divers flowers draw divers juices, but they temper and digest them by their owne vertue, otherwise they would make no honny: so... what thou reatest is to bee transposed to thine owne use. Seneca.¹⁶

Other classical sources reinforced the association between bees, readerly discrimination, and rhetorical facility: as Felicity Hughes notes, ‘the legend that Pindar was fed honey by bees in his infancy as an augury of supreme eloquence’ circulated widely in this period.¹⁷ Plato, too, described poets as bees: as the figure of Socrates reports in Plato’s *Ion*, lyric poets:

tell us that they bring songs from honeyed fountains, culling them out of the gardens and dells of the Muses; they, like the bees, winging their way from flower to flower. And this is true. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing...¹⁸

Pindar and Plato associate apian activity with divine inspiration, rather than readerly diligence, but the outcome – poetic skill – is the same.

Scholarly analyses of the bee trope have focused on different aspects of its symbolic utility. Anne Moss, for instance, comments on its value for writers negotiating

Greek *ἄνθος* flower, and *λογία* collection). ‘Florilegium, n.’ and ‘anthology, n.’ *OED Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/71895 and www.oed.com/view/Entry/8369, both accessed 01 April 2013. It is perhaps worth noting that whilst we don’t habitually eat flowers today, the consumption of blooms was widespread in the first half of the seventeenth century. On their culinary popularity, see Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London: Continuum, 2007), 81 and 105. The word ‘miscellany’ is also contains a bibliophagic metaphor in its etymology: it derives from the classical Latin *miscellānea* a hotchpotch, mixture (of food). ‘Miscellanea, n.’ *OED Online*, accessed 01 April 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/119270.

¹⁶ Francis Meres (compiled by), *Palladis tamia*, ed. Nicholas Ling (London: P. Short for Cuthbert Burbie, 1598), Mm4v (268). For the original of this quote, see Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, trans. R. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library series 76, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), II, 278.

¹⁷ Felicity Hughes, ‘Milton, Shakespeare, Pindar and the Bees,’ *Review of English Studies* New Series 44 (1993): 220.

¹⁸ Plato, *Ion* (380 BCE), trans. Benjamin Jowett, accessed 25 March 2013, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/ion.html>.

the relation between rhetorical *imitatio* and authorial originality.¹⁹ Similarly, Richard Peterson comments on Jonson's use of 'digestive and apian metaphors' as a strategy for discriminating between properly transformative and slavishly derivative models of *imitatio*.²⁰ Michael Schoenfeldt focuses instead on the digestive trope's frequent deployment as a means of describing readerly discrimination,²¹ and Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Franklin Mowery, and Heather Wolfe – citing Philip Melanchthon – note its significance as an analogy for the workings of memory.²² All these scholars, however, concentrate on one specific stage in the alimentary process: digestion. In contrast, in this chapter I emphasize the extent to which late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century authors focus on a slightly earlier moment. In my opening quotation Jonson invokes not only the physiological process of digestion, but also gustatory sensation.²³ The poet turns his multifarious materials into a single, distinct 'savour,' or flavour; the success of his 'imitation' is attested by its sweetness. Before a person can digest a meal, he or she must taste it, and the same goes for literary feasts. Take Francis Bacon's famous exhortation in *Of Studies*. 'Some bookes,' writes Bacon:

are to bee tasted, others to bee swallowed, and some few to bee chewed and digested: That is, some bookes are to be read only in partes; others to be read, but cursorily, and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention.²⁴

Bacon understands the moment of discrimination to take place in the mouth, not in the stomach: digestion is a form of incorporation equivalent to reading thoroughly, which follows on from an initial, probative tasting.

The possession of taste in this literary sense, moreover, can serve as a constituent of personal identity – as it does, for instance, for the pompous Nathaniel in Shakespeare's 1598 *Love's Labour's Lost*. Nathaniel compares himself and Holofernes to the aptly-named Constable Dull. 'Sir,' he says to Holofernes:

¹⁹ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 105.

²⁰ Richard Peterson, *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 16-17.

²¹ Michael Schoenfeldt, 'Reading Bodies,' in Sharpe and Zwicker, *Reading, Society and Politics*, especially 219.

²² Peter Stallybrass *et al.*, 'Hamlet's Tables and Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55/4 (2004): 379-419.

²³ Chris Meads notes the use of the language of taste to describe literary discrimination in early seventeenth century theatrical prologues. See Meads, 'Narrative and Dramatic Sauces,' in Joan Fitzpatrick, ed., *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 145-66.

²⁴ Francis Bacon, 'Of Studies,' in *Essayes, Religious meditations* (London: John Windet for Humfrey Hooper, 1597), B1v (1).

...[Dull] hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a booke.

He hath not eate paper as it were

He hath not drunke inke.

His intellect is not replenished, hee is onely an animall, only sensible in the duller parts: and such barren plants are set before us, that we thankfull should be: which we [of] taste and feeling, are for those parts that doe fructifie in us more then he.²⁵

For Nathaniel, to proclaim oneself a person ‘of taste’ is to assert oneself as learned and witty. This self-identification derives from a bibliophagic consumption of the materials of reading and writing: in comparison to Dull, who ‘hath not eat paper... [or] drunk ink,’ Nathaniel implies that he and Holofernes are made intellectually fertile by their consumption of ‘the dainties that are bred in a book.’ On the one hand, Nathaniel’s posturing here is meant to be funny: we are laughing at, not with him. Because the audience is already well-acquainted with Nathaniel’s pedantry and self-importance, his words are bathetic: in calling himself a man of ‘taste and feeling [i.e. touch],’ Nathaniel inadvertently reveals his own immersion in the lower senses he claims to disdain. Like the target of his derision, he too is ‘an animal, only sensible in the duller parts.’²⁶ His use of bibliophagic images is an aspect of this involuntary self-revelation: Nathaniel conceives of the exclusively human, reasonable act of reading in terms of the animal, irrational activity of eating. Problematic as they may be, however, Nathaniel’s words nonetheless attest to a wider cultural sense – already evident in Margaret Cavendish’s reference to ‘the Taste of the Understanding’ – that ‘taste’ is a marker of aesthetic judgement and literary erudition, and as such something to aspire to.

Nathaniel’s words stand in stark contrast to the widespread scholarly presumption that the association between ‘taste’ and a capacity to appreciate beauty and excellence first emerged in the late seventeenth century, and achieved prominence only

²⁵ William Shakespeare, *Loves Labour’s Lost* in *William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London: Isaac Jaggard and Edward Bount, 1623), L6r (131). I follow the Arden edition in adding ‘[of].’ Nathaniel’s words have a parallel in Richard Carew’s *A herrings tayle*, published in the same year, in which the snail Lymazon describes ‘Wan schollers eating paper, drinking inck, which they / Like Bees disgested up, in others bosome lay.’ Carew, *A herrings tayle* (London: Felix Kingston for Matthew Lownes, 1598), D2v.

²⁶ This suggestion is confirmed by Nathaniel’s tendency to represent learning in terms which draw on the language of sexual reproduction and sensual pleasure: dainties are ‘bred’ in books; and his ‘parts... frucify’ where Dull’s are ‘barren.’

in the eighteenth century.²⁷ This presumption is buttressed by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which identifies Milton's 1671 *Paradise Regained* as containing the first instance of 'taste' in what we today think of the aesthetic sense, defined as 'the sense of what is appropriate, harmonious, or beautiful... the faculty of perceiving and enjoying what is excellent in art, literature, and the like.'²⁸ The *OED* quotes Book IV, in which Christ argues with Satan about the correct route to and use of knowledge. Christ acclaims the Hebraic tradition, describing 'Sion's songs,' as 'to all true tastes excelling, / Where God is prais'd aright.'²⁹ In contrast, Greek and Roman literature celebrates 'the vices of their deities... Their gods ridiculous' (IV.340-342). Significantly, however, Milton has Christ define the superiority – the tastefulness – of Hebraic literature not only in terms of its more dignified and devout subject matter, but also against the specific modes of reading encouraged by the Greco-Roman tradition. Whoever 'reads / Incessantly, and to his reading brings not... spirit and judgement,' proclaims Christ, is:

Deep verst in books and shallow in himself,
 Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
 And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge;
 As Children gathering pbbles on the shore. (IV.319-327)

The image is of a dilettantish commonplacer: in contrast to the readers of 'Sion's songs,' who possess 'true tastes,' this reader merely accumulates 'trifles' which, being 'crude' or bilious, he or she is unable to properly digest. This is significant because in defining literary taste precisely against the classical preferences of the incompetent commonplacer, Milton implicitly attests to a long association between literary 'tastes' (whether good or bad) and the bee-like selective reader. Extracted from its wider context within *Paradise Regained*, the quotation 'Sion's songs / To all true tastes excelling'

²⁷ In the introduction to their *Gender, Taste and Material Culture*, for example, John Styles and Amanda Vickery assert that 'systematic use of the word "taste" – *goût* – to signify aesthetic discernment emerged in later seventeenth-century France.' Styles and Vickery, introduction to *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 15. See also Stephen Bayley, *Taste: The Secret Meaning of Things* (London: Faber, 1991), 25. *Contra* to this conflation of discriminative taste and modernity is Raymond Williams' observation that "'Good taast" in the sense of good understanding is recorded from 1425.' Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 264. Dabney Townsend comments that the artist and polymath Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72) was 'amongst the first to use the metaphor of taste in connection with judgment.' Townsend, 'Taste: Early History,' in Michael Kelly, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 356.

²⁸ 'Taste, n.1.' *OED Online*, accessed 18 August 2012, www.oed.com/view/Entry/198050.

²⁹ John Milton, *Paradise regain'd a poem in IV books* (London: J.M. for John Starkey, 1671), G8v (96), l.344-45. Further in-text references to *Paradise regain'd* are also to this edition.

might be seen to describe, as the *OED* intends it to, an originary moment in a semantic shift from gustatory to aesthetic taste. Read in the context of Book IV as a whole, however, the words point backwards, to the long – and long-neglected – history of taste as literary discrimination in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commonplace culture.

Two scholars who *have* discussed taste in early modern literature and culture are Allison Deutermann, and Robert Matz. In an article on taste and hearing in *Hamlet*, Deutermann asserts that:

[Whilst] the concept of “taste” as aesthetic discernment has been assumed to be anachronistic to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England... this abstracted sense of taste was already forming at the start of the seventeenth century.³⁰

The association between taste and aesthetic discernment has a much longer ancestry than even Deutermann suggests: it is evident, as Mary Carruthers has recently shown, in the medieval monastic tradition of *lectio divina*, and – as I will go on to show – is densely present both in anti-theatrical polemic, and in defences of poetry, in the second half of the sixteenth century.³¹ More immediately interesting, however, is Deutermann’s description of aesthetic taste as the ‘abstracted sense of taste.’ This is characteristic of a scholarly narrative – also exemplified by Matz – according to which aesthetic taste emerges when the metaphorical comparison that underlies it (namely, that the physical process of distinguishing between foods *is like* the mental process of distinguishing between aesthetic artefacts) is forgotten or discarded, and aesthetic taste loses its association with gustation.³² In *Defending Literature in Early Modern England*, Matz links the emergence of ‘taste’ as a term to describe readerly discrimination to a contest between medieval, feudal modes of social capital, rooted in aristocratic displays of wealth, leisure, and military prowess, and newer, humanist modes of social capital, rooted in self-discipline, industriousness, and rhetorical prowess. Focusing on Thomas Elyot’s 1537 *The booke named The Governour*, Matz argues that Elyot’s association of ‘taste’ with the faculty of literary judgement is a humanist appropriation of the cultural capital already

³⁰ Allison K. Deutermann, “‘Caviare to the general’?: Taste, Hearing, and Genre in *Hamlet*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62/2 (2011): 236-37.

³¹ See Carruthers, ‘Sweetness.’

³² This narrative has proponents across disciplines. The sociologist Jukka Gronow, for example, writes that, historically, ‘the physiological sense of taste acted as the model for judgement power,’ implying that physiological taste is a kind of prototype for aesthetic taste: both a precondition of it, and precisely what aesthetic taste must discard or disavow. Jukka Gronow, *The Sociology of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1997), 86.

attached to the gustatory pleasures of aristocratic feasting in the older, feudal system.³³ Like Deutermann, Matz describes the emergence of taste as a term for readerly discrimination as a process of abstraction, yoking this process to the civilizing process narrative propounded by Norbert Elias:

The transfer of pleasure from the physical “taste” for sumptuous and delicate fare to what Elyot calls elsewhere the “dilectation” of reading... requires a change in the nature of “taste” itself... Elyot’s humanist project defines a trajectory which ultimately metaphorizes taste, divests it from its physical referent, implies the gradual effacement of the body from public sight – honor in the community is dissociated from bodily function – described by Elias....³⁴

Both Deutermann and Matz, then, challenge the conventional dating of aesthetic taste, but preserve the abstraction narrative. In each case, the birth of aesthetic ‘taste’ is understood to originate in the death of a metaphor. Etymology, however, implies an alternative relation: the earliest uses of taste as a term for gustation do not precede but are concurrent with the earliest uses of taste as a term for discrimination; ‘taste’ as indicative of mental judgement does not emerge *from*, but rather *alongside*, ‘taste’ as indicative of sensory experience.³⁵ For early moderns, furthermore, metaphor’s reification of the relation between bodily experiences and mental processes reverses the trajectory (from physical sensation to mental discrimination) that the abstraction narrative describes. This is how Thomas Wilson describes metaphor in *The arte of rhetorique*:

Firste we alter a worde from that which is in the minde, to that which is in the bodye. As when we perceive one that hath begiled us, we use to saye: Ah sirrha,

³³ Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 39-46.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 40. Matz does acknowledge that, whilst Elyot and his fellow humanists ostensibly rejected the pleasures of the table, humanist pedagogy often endorsed making use of a child’s physical desires in order to stimulate a love of learning. He comments in particular on Elyot’s recommendation that a wet-nurse ‘should speak Latin, or at least perfect English’: the child, Elyot believes, will come to associate the pleasure of learning language with the alimentary pleasure of nursing. Nonetheless, in Matz’s reading, ‘the object of this pedagogy is to shift affect from the senses to letters, to move little by little from the material to the intellectual.’ Matz, *Defending Literature*, 44.

³⁵ Both uses emerge in the first half of the 14th century, deriving ultimately from the Common Romanic or late popular Latin *tastare*, frequentative of *taxare* to touch, feel, handle, via the Italian *tastare* to feel, handle, touch, grope for, try, and Middle English *tasten*. See ‘taste, v.’ and ‘taste n.1,’ *OED Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/198052 and www.oed.com/view/Entry/198050, both accessed 01 April 2013.

I am gladde I have smelled you oute. Beinge greved with a matter, we saye
communelye we can not digest it....³⁶

For Wilson, metaphors cannot be ‘abstracted’ from their physical origin, because the route they follow is not from bodily experience to mental process, but rather from mental process to bodily experience. As such, metaphors retain their connection to physical sensation. This is also the case where the language of flavour, specifically, is concerned. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, interest in the ‘Adamic’ or ‘natural’ language spoken by Adam and Eve in Eden was widespread. This language, it was believed, signified the things that it named according to their inherent qualities: Adam’s naming of the animals in Genesis, for example, ‘expressed in some way their essential natures, so that naming was equivalent to knowing.’³⁷ Many philologists, antiquaries, and authors were interested in determining the extent to which the English language preserved traces of this natural language, amongst them the poet and classicist Thomas Stanley. Pondering the origins of words in his monumental 1656 *The history of philosophy*, Stanley asserts that ‘names were given by nature: the first pronounced voices, imitating the things themselves.’³⁸ In the derivation of etymologies, Stanley goes on:

this beginning is to be sought, untill we arrive so far, as that the thing agree in some similitude with the sound of the word, as when we say, tinkling of brasse, the *neighing* of horses, the *bleating* of sheep, the *gingling* of chains: These words by their sound, expresse the things which are signified by them.³⁹

Whilst this example focuses on aural phenomena, Stanley goes on to extend the natural language theory to words which describe other kinds of sensations:

But, for as much as there are things which sound not, in these the similitude of touching hath the same power: As, they touch the sense smoothly or harshly, the smoothnesse or harshnesse of letters in like manner touch the hearing, and

³⁶ Wilson, *The arte of rhetorique*, Z4r (92).

³⁷ David Katz, ‘The Language of Adam in 17th-Century England,’ in *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl, and Blair Worden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 133. On the search for the Adamic language, see also Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially 126-142, and Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), especially 7-24.

³⁸ Thomas Stanley, *The history of philosophy* (London: Humphrey Moseley and Thomas Dring, 1656), Dddd4v (30).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

thereby occasioneth their names. As when we say *smooth*, it sounds smoothly: so, who will not judge *harshnesse* to be harsh by the very word?... *Honey*, as sweetly as the thing it selfe affects our tast, so sweetly doth the name touch our hearing: *Soure*, as harsh in both... These are conceived to be the infancy, as it were, of words, when the sense of the thing concords with the sense of the sound.⁴⁰

‘Honey’ and ‘sour’ are included amongst those words which Stanley singles out as retaining their immediate, sensory connection to the phenomena they signify: both words affect the ‘tast’ as they are heard. As I go on, in the next section, to further consider the bee trope as a privileged locus for the emergence of notions of literary taste in the early modern period, Stanley’s assertion that ‘[the word] *Honey*, as sweetly as the thing it selfe affects our tast,’ is worth keeping in mind – or rather, in mouth.

III. ‘curious tasters’

The importance of the sense of taste to the kinds of literary activity described by the bee trope in the early modern period can be brought into focus by consideration of agricultural and pastoral works, which often emphasised the acuity of the apian senses, including – and sometimes emphasising – gustation. Amongst the ancients, Virgil had emphasised that bees use their sense of taste to distinguish between flowers: ‘they sip and taste the purple flowers,’ he writes in the *Georgics*.⁴¹ In the seventeenth century, the acuteness of the bee’s sense of taste was highlighted by authorities including Charles Butler, who wrote in the 1623 edition of his influential *The feminine monarchie: or the historie of bees* that ‘[bees] have the Senses... both outward and inward: which their subtile and active spirits do excite and quicken... of their fift sense [i.e. taste] I make no question, sithens they are used to things of so different tastes.’⁴² Similarly, John Levitt writes in his 1634 *The ordering of bees* that ‘[bees] have all the five senses which man hath, and in a liberall proportion... they have the sense of tasting, being able to judge which Flower is sweete and will affoord plenty of Honey, and which is gummy or slimie,’⁴³ whilst in his 1657 *A theatre of politicall flying-insects*, Samuel Purchas emphasises the excellence of the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Cited in Samuel Purchas, *A theatre of politicall flying-insects* (London: R. I. for Thomas Parkhurst, 1657), K2v (68).

⁴² Charles Butler, *The feminine monarchie: or the historie of bees* (London: John Haviland for Roger Jackson, 1623), C3r-v.

⁴³ John Levett, *The ordering of bees* (London: Thomas Harper for John Harison, 1634), H2v (60).

bee's senses before concluding that 'their taste... is evidently as active as their other senses; thereby they make choice of waters, and all other gatherings for their use and purpose.'⁴⁴ Perhaps most compellingly, in his 1632 *A good companion for a Christian*, John Norden writes that 'many beasts excell man in the perfection of many of the senses... as the *Eagle*, in seeing; the *Hart*, in *bearing*; the *Spaniell* and *Hound*, in *smelling*; the *Spider*, in *touching*; and the *Bee*, in *Tasting*.'⁴⁵ What Alexander Pope calls 'the nice bee' is also used as representative of the 'subtly true' sense of taste in Pope's *Essay on Man* (1732-34), displacing the more traditional iconographical ape.⁴⁶

Significantly, paratextual materials attached to precisely those works which insist on the keenness of bee's sense of taste often also employ the language of literary taste, both to describe the author's methods of collating information, and to negotiate the reader's response to their books. John Bidle's epistle to his 1634 *Virgil's Bucolicks Engished* [sic], for example, cautions his readers:

Marvell not, Readers, that I set before you but this Pittance: I was loth to cloy your Appetites at the first, knowing (on the one side) that mens queasy and squemish stomacks relish better the poinant suckets of a Love-Sonnet, or the Julips of a frothy Epigram, than a Homely (though holesom) dish of Satiricall stuffe: And fearing withall (on t'other side) lest having cooked a great deale of this hard and sower-Meat ill, I might have so distasted a truely judicious Palat...⁴⁷

In explaining the brevity of his translation, Bidle articulates the distinction between frivolous and 'judicious' readers as a matter of 'relish' and 'Palat.' The series of obsequious poems prefacing Purchas' *A theatre of politicall flying-insects* engage with the bee trope more specifically (indeed, with a somewhat wearying doggedness). The book itself is repeatedly depicted as a hive ('each page a comb'), and its contents are punningly described as 'mellifluous' honey.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Purchas' 'diligence' both in 'reading' previous works about his topic, and in 'long experience' of bee-keeping, equals or surpasses that of the insects themselves: 'much labour hath procured this... gathered

⁴⁴ Purchas, *Politically flying-insects*, D4r (23).

⁴⁵ John Norden, *A good companion for a Christian* (London: G. Purslowe for Richard Collins, 1632), H5v (170).

⁴⁶ Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man* (London: Cassell and Company, 1891), 240. Louise Vinge asserts that 'the bee is not common in early texts or images as a representative of taste, but may have been taken up [in the eighteenth century] to replace the monkey.' Vinge, *The Five Senses*, 146.

⁴⁷ John Bidle, *Virgil's Bucolicks Engished* [sic] (London: John Legat, 1634), C4v.

⁴⁸ Joseph Angier, 'Upon the Authors Elaborate Treatise of Bees,' in Purchas, *Politically flying-insects*, B2r.

hony sweet suck'd from each flower.⁴⁹ Reciprocally, his readers 'long to taste thy hony from the press,' as Joseph Angier proclaims.⁵⁰ In each case, the insistence of the texts themselves on the intense sensitivity of the bee's taste, and the role of that sense in selecting between flowers to make sweet honey, is paralleled by the paratextual use of imagery which associates the efforts of diligent readers and writers with bee-like activities. In this context, the trope of the reader-poet as bee is curiously literalized: incorporated into texts intended to collate and communicate apian expertise, it seems to be no more or less than another nugget of agrarian information about the astonishing competencies of these insects.

Uses of the bee trope to describe tasteful readerly judgements are also ubiquitous in paratextual materials appended to commonplace books and anthologies. A prefatory poem annexed to the 1598 printed commonplace book *Politeuphuia* advises 'the curious eye that over-rashly looks, / And gives no tast nor feeling to the mind' that it 'robs it own selfe' of the 'comfort' that can be found in books.⁵¹ 'Tast,' here, is used primarily in the now largely obsolete sense of experiential knowledge in general: the author censures the eye which swiftly 'looks' at the book, rather than slowly reading it, for depriving the mind of knowledge of its content. That the sensory meaning of 'tast' is also present, however – making the image weirdly synaesthetic – becomes evident as the poem continues:

But when that sence doth play the busie Bee,
 And for the honny, not the poison reeds,
 Then for the labour it receaves the fee,
 When as the minde on heavenly sweetnes feeds...⁵²

When the eye works like the industrious bee, it receives its reward in the form of 'hony': the reader's appreciation of the book is indicated by his or her capacity to taste its 'sweetnes.' Here, the language of taste is used to describe two alternative reading practices (hasty looking versus bee-like tasting) and to endorse the second as more likely

⁴⁹ T.P., 'Upon the Authors Learned and Elaborate Treatise of *Bees*,' and Joseph Fisher, 'To the Learned Author of this *Bee-like* laborious Treatise,' both in Purchas, *Politically flying-insects*, B3v and B5v.

⁵⁰ Angier, 'Upon the Authors Elaborate Treatise,' in Purchas, *Politically flying-insects*, B2r.

⁵¹ M. D., untitled prefatory poem in *Politeuphuia*, ed. Nicholas Ling (London: J. Roberts for Nicholas Ling, 1598), A4r.

⁵² *Ibid.*

to inculcate appreciation of the book's virtues. Properly, reading is a matter of tasting, not seeing.

A prefatory poem to William Basse's 1619 *A helpe to discourse, Or, A miscelany of merriment*, similarly makes use of the language of taste to discourage inattentive, rushed forms of reading: although here it is taste, rather than sight, which is 'curious.' The poem laments:

Were all the depth and goodnesse can be impose,
Or is in all bookes in one booke inclosde,
Some curious tasters might I thinke come nigh it,
That would not though they reade, vouchsafe to buye it.⁵³

'Curious,' here, is an example of what Christopher Ricks, in relation to Milton, has called an anti-pun.⁵⁴ The modern meaning, 'desirous of seeing or knowing; eager to learn; inquisitive' is present, whilst the older meaning of 'careful; studious, attentive' is simultaneously suggested, and pointedly excluded: a person who reads without buying, on the bookseller's premises, is decidedly not a conscientious scholar of the text.⁵⁵ A 'curious taster' – like the 'curious eye' of *Politeuphuia* – is someone whose hasty reading prevents them from appreciating the book's virtues.

In contrast to Basse's anxiety that his miscellany will receive no more than a desultory (and financially unrewarding) perusal, a dedicatory letter to 'Joseph, Lord Bishop of Exceter' which prefaces Richard Younger's 1638 *The drunkard's character... which may serve also for a common-place-booke of the most usuall sinnes* anticipates a more appreciative response. In a dedicatory letter addressed to the bishop and devotional writer Joseph Hall, Younger predicts that his book will 'answer' its dedicatee's 'sent and tast' because:

Many of these [extracts] are Flowers from your Garden... as the Bee gathers
from one Flower, Wax; from another, Honey; from a third, Bee-Glew, and

⁵³ Anon., 'To the Reader,' in William Basse, *A helpe to discourse* (London: Bernard Alsop for Leonard Becket, 1619), A4r. The lines are also attentive to the materiality of the book and the printing processes which underlie its production. 'Impose' means, generally, put in place, but it also has a specific meaning related to printing, namely 'to lay pages of type or stereotype plates on the imposing-stone or the bed of a press, and secure them in a chase, in such order that the printed pages shall follow each other in proper order when the sheet is folded.' 'Impose, v.' *OED Online*, accessed 12 August 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/92591.

⁵⁴ See Christopher Ricks, *The Force of Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 266.

⁵⁵ 'Curious, adj.' *OED Online*, accessed 06 September 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/46040.

bringeth to her Hive that which is profitable from all: so have I... filch't from your Lordships worthy Workes, and other Authors... what soever elegant Phrases, pithy Sentences, curious Metaphors, witty Apothegmes, sweet Similitudes, or Rhetoricall expressions I could meet withal, pertinent, whole some, and delectable...⁵⁶

Younge's confidence that his miscellany will prove congenial to the bishop's literary taste derives from the fact that, following the example of the industrious bee, he has drawn heavily on Hall's own 'sweet' and 'delectable' works.

Younge's use of the vocabulary of taste – which manages to combine sycophancy with self-congratulation – can be usefully juxtaposed with Gabriel Harvey's vitriolic *Pierce's Supererogation* (1593), the third sally in his feud with Thomas Nashe. Harvey repeatedly attributes what he presents as the bad taste of Nashe's literary output with his bad practice as a commonplacings reader. Whereas he describes his beloved Homer as 'the hoony-bee of the daintiest flowers of Witt, and Arte,' Nashe is not 'A Bee' but 'a drone, a dorre, a dor-bettle, a dormouse...'⁵⁷ Nashe, Harvey fulminates, has no taste for the classical authorities that Harvey himself reveres: 'neither curious Hermogenes, nor trim Isocrates... are for his tooth.'⁵⁸ Instead, what Harvey ironically calls Nashe's 'Imperiall tast' inclines towards vernacular levity: Nashe supposedly fills 'the Common-places of his paperbooke' with 'the pickpocket of foolery... and knaveries in Print.'⁵⁹ And it is Nashe's lack of good taste in his selection of reading matter that leads to the tastelessness of his own literary output: 'I have seldome,' Harvey alleges of Nashe's literary efforts, 'tasted a more unsavory slaumpaump of wordes, and sentences in any sluttish Pamfletter.'⁶⁰

We can see, then, that the prominence of taste as a faculty of readerly discrimination in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth- century emerges within and from the humanist culture of commonplacings, and is frequently articulated via the trope of the commonplacings reader as a discriminative bee. Taste is allied with an appreciative, but also a carefully selective, painstaking, and probative mode of reading. In the next section, I will suggest that attending to the language of taste reveals how processes of literary discrimination in this period are linked to a specific conception of what

⁵⁶ Richard Younge, *The drunkard's character* (London: R. Badger for George Latham, 1638), A2v-A3r.

⁵⁷ Gabriel Harvey, *Pierces supererogation* (London: John Wolfe, 1593), G4r (53) and Z2r (177).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Z4r (181)

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Z2r-Z3r (177-79).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Z4r (181).

knowledge, more broadly, *is*, and how it is best attained. Just as physiological taste operates at the border between the body and its environment, literary taste walks a tightrope between textual and sensory experience. This liminality, which parallels the liminality of the paratext, means that taste serves as a point of transition between processes of reading, and wider processes of apprehending and understanding the world.

IV. 'hony and gall'

In the dedicatory epistle addressed to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, which prefaces John Florio's miscellany *Florio his firste fruites* (1578), Florio amplifies the titular metaphor which presents the work as his first fruits, asking Dudley to:

weigh the gift given by the givers hart, though too base a gifte to come to your Honours hand, too rude a worke for you to reade, and too too unripe, sower, and unsaverie fruites for your Honour to take a tast of, yet notwithstanding such as they be I give them to you... the which though so they be, are not altogether to be rejected, & utterly refused. For the basenes and sownesse of these, will serve to set out the pleasaunt and delectable taste of other mens fruites, for as by the bad is the good knowen, so by the sower is the sweete the better discerned.⁶¹

Florio's modesty is, of course, deeply conventional, and does not necessarily reflect his actual evaluation of his own work. More interesting than his use of the language of taste in the service of self-deprecation, however, is the assumption which underlies this passage. Specifically, Florio assumes that processes of literary judgement are innately comparative. It is the experience of taste that expresses this 'sense' that it is only possible to assess literary works in relation to other literary works. In the introduction to *Renaissance Paratexts*, Helen Smith and Louise Wilson argue that paratexts 'operate in multiple directions, structuring the reader's approach not only to the text in question, but to the experience of reading, and of interpreting the world beyond the book.'⁶² Florio's paratextual declaration that 'as by the bad is the good knowen, so by the sower

⁶¹ John Florio, *Florio his firste fruites* (London: Thomas Dawson, for Thomas Woodcocke, 1578), *i4r.

⁶² Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, introduction to *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. Smith and Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6-7.

is the sweete the better discerned' is clearly designed to inform the reader's apprehension of the text itself, encouraging an appreciation of the rationale behind its 'unripe' or immature contents. At the same time, however, Florio's insistence that the route to literary knowledge is a process of comparing and contrasting, of judging and discriminating, extends outwards into other areas of life. The body of the text of *Firste fruites* itself includes a dialogue on the value of reading, in which one interlocutor asserts that:

by reading, we learn to knowe the good from the bad, vertue from vice, & as the bee takes from one hearb, gum, from another waxe, & from an other hony, so by reading divers books, divers things are learned... we learn to know the good from the bad.⁶³

The form of relational knowing that Florio identifies as central to literary judgement is also seen to structure wider processes of distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad': methods of judging texts constitute a kind of training in judging between other phenomena. In this context, the sensorially immediate language of taste forms a kind of hinge or gateway between everyday life and the activity of reading: images of tasting at once refer the reader outwards to his or her quotidian (culinary) experience, and inwards, to the processes of literary judgement. The liminality of taste, then, reflects the liminality of the paratext: both form a kind of bridge between everyday, lived experience, and readerly activity. From this perspective, the high density of the language of taste in paratextual materials becomes intelligible as a way to negotiate the transition between life and literature – and back again.

Taste certainly functions this way in Stephen Gosson's 1579 *The schoole of abuse*, which opens with the image of a lavish banquet:

The *Syracusans* used such varietie of dishes in their banquets, that when they were sette, and their boordes furnished, they were many times in doubt, which they shoulde touch first, or taste last. And in my opinion the worlde giveth every writer so large a field to walke in, that before he set penne to the booke,

⁶³ Florio, *Firste fruites*, N4v (52).

he shall find him selfe feasted at *Syracusa*, uncertaine where to begin, or when to end.⁶⁴

Here, the whole world offers a varied banquet of possibilities for the would-be writer, and the image of the perplexingly plenteous Syracusan feast is used to describe the difficulty of negotiating the transition to productive absorption in textual endeavours. The would-be writer must use his sense of taste to make the pre-requisite distinctions between the plethora of lived experiences that will enable him to finally ‘set penne to the booke.’ Gosson goes on to lament that most authors, befuddled by the world’s bounteousness, make bad choices. In particular, ‘amarous Poets, dwelleth longest in those pointes, that profite least’; like ‘the *Scarabe*,’ the amorous poet ‘flies ever many a sweete flower, & lightes in a cowshard.’⁶⁵

Earle Havens has pointed out that commonplace culture ‘contributed significantly to the invention and consolidation of a “national” vernacular literature during the Renaissance.’⁶⁶ In particular, early poetic anthologies – which imitated commonplace books in both form and content – helped produce a sense of a distinctive corpus of English poetry. Efforts to valorize vernacular literature, however, also have their roots in defences of poetry, written in response to the anti-theatrical diatribes of puritans and satirists including Gosson. Both anti-theatricalists and defenders of poetry often frame the debate about the intellectual and moral status of drama specifically, and vernacular literature more generally in bibliophagic, alimentary, and culinary metaphors. Debates about the status of literature are thus also debates about the status of taste, and vice versa.

In the quotation from Gosson above, the issue is that amorous poets betray their corrupt tastes in their choice of subject matter; not that taste *qua* taste is morally wicked. Indeed, sweetness is a marker of the virtuous ‘flower[s]’ that the amorous poet rejects. Elsewhere in *The schoole of abuse*, however, sweetness itself is revealed as deceptive:

I must confesse that Poets are the whetstones of wit, notwithstanding that wit is dearly bought: where hony and gall are mixed, it will be hard to sever the one

⁶⁴ Stephen Gosson, *The schoole of abuse* (London: for Thomas Woodcocke, 1579), A1r (1).

⁶⁵ Gosson, *The schoole of abuse*, A2r (2).

⁶⁶ Havens, *Commonplace Books*, 34.

from the other. The deceitfull Phisition giveth sweete Sirropes to make his
poison goe downe the smoother...⁶⁷

Whereas Gosson previously suggested that poets deserve blame because their own tastes are corrupt, here they are seen to consciously attempt to deceive the tastes of others. The sweetness of poetic ‘wit’ masks the poisonous ‘gall’ of iniquity. Gosson’s analogy is, however, interestingly ambivalent, for it begs the question of why he chooses to compare poets to physicians, rather than to poisoners. Whilst the trope of sweet syrups masking bitter poison was conventional in the early modern period, so too was the use of syrups to mask the flavour of admittedly unpleasant, but ultimately salutary, physic. Analogies between this therapeutic use of sweetness, and the poetic use of sweet wit to mask disagreeable but morally-improving didactic satire, can be found in the works of both classical and early modern apologists for poetry: notably Philip Sidney, in *The Defense of Poesy*, argues that the poet ‘doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue; even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things, by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste.’⁶⁸ Although Gosson’s epithet ‘deceitfull’ attributes malicious motives to the physician’s prescription, then, his metaphor nonetheless gestures towards an alternative model of poetic sweetness as an aspect of a curative, beneficial literary regime.

Gosson himself acknowledges – and ultimately denies – just such a model. There are, he notes, some partisans of drama who claim that, whilst older theatrical styles were indeed immoral, ‘the Comedies that are exercised in oure dayes’ have reformed their abuses; whereas ‘the first smelte of *Plautus*, these tast of *Menander*... The sweetnesse of musicke, and pleasure of sportes, temper the bitternesse of rebukes, and mittigate the tartenesse of every taunt.’⁶⁹ Gosson’s response is conciliatory:

For my parte I am neither so fonde a Phisition, nor so bad a Cooke, but I can
allowe my patient a cup of wine to meales, although it be hotte; and pleasaunt

⁶⁷ Gosson, *The schoole of abuse*, A2r (2).

⁶⁸ The impetus for *An Apologie* is, of course, often thought to have been Gosson’s dedication of *The schoole of abuse* to Sidney. See also Thomas Lodge, who in his *A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse* argues that poets, ‘like good Phisi[tions]: should so frame their potions, that they might be appliable to the quesie stomaks of their werish patients.’ Thomas Lodge, *A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse* (1579/1580), Renaissance Editions, transcribed by Risa S. Bear, accessed 28 March 2013, www.luminarium.org/renaissance-editions/lodge.html. The analogy derives ultimately from Tasso. See Torquato Tasso, *Godfrey of Bulloigne*, trans. Edward Fairfax (London: Ar. Hatfield for J. Jaggard and M. Lownes, 1600), B1r.

⁶⁹ Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse*, B5r (13).

saucers to drive downe his meate, if his stomake bee queasie. Notwithstanding, if people will bee instructed, (God be thanked) wee have Divines enough to discharge that...⁷⁰

Gosson accepts the principle that bitter but morally salutary satire should be tempered with sweet music and theatrical ‘sportes,’ but relocates the authority to prescribe such physic from the playwright to the divine. Despite this, Gosson’s litotes (‘I am neither so fond a Physician...’) circuitously claims the role of rhetorical physician for himself: a man with no clerical credentials, and – as he freely acknowledges – a (reformed) playwright and performer.⁷¹ The ironies here are subtle and unstable, and it is not my intention to determine the extent to which they are intentional. Rather, I would like to suggest that even as they condemn the compelling sweetness of poetic wit, anti-theatricalists such as Gosson promote a notion of drama and poetry as sensorially rich and intense which eventually facilitates a re-evaluation of the intellectual and ethical utility of the senses in general, and taste in particular. More specifically, in denouncing poetic wit as dangerously sensuous, they prepare the ground for their respondents to celebrate sensuous experience, especially gustatory experience, as valuably ‘witty’: a source of intellectual understanding and discrimination. This chiasmic reversal of terms (from ‘wit is sweet’ to ‘sweetness is witty’) is apparent in Sidney’s *The Defense of Poesy*. Sidney responds to the accusation that poetry ‘is the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires, with a siren’s sweetness drawing the mind to the serpent’s tail of sinful fancies’ by countering, conventionally enough, that all powerful forms and technologies are subject to abuse, and this is no reason to discard them altogether. He goes on to discuss Plato’s prohibition of poetry in his *Republic*:

a man might maliciously object that Plato, being a philosopher, was a natural enemy of poets. For, indeed, after the philosophers had picked out of the sweet mysteries of poetry the right discerning true points of knowledge, they forthwith... like ungrateful prentices were not content to set up shops for themselves, but sought by all means to discredit their masters...⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid., B5v (13).

⁷¹ In his final address ‘To the Gentlewomen Citizens of London,’ Gosson appropriates the physician’s status more definitively. ‘These are harde lessons which I teach you,’ he concedes: ‘neverthesse, drinke uppe the potion, though it like not your tast, and you shall be eased.’ Ibid., F4v.

⁷² Sidney, *An Apologie*, H4r-v.

Here, the sweetness of poetry is quietly, but emphatically, reinterpreted: no longer a siren-call to sinful fancy, it becomes a marker of the ‘true points of knowledge.’ Similarly, Sidney asserts of that those who ‘mislike’ poets who ‘deal with matters philosophical’ that ‘the fault is in their judgement quite out of taste, and not in the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge.’⁷³ Sidney’s conflation of ‘judgement’ with ‘taste’ culminates in his suggestion that sweetness is characteristic not only, as Gosson would have it, of the poetic ‘wit’ which conceals moral poison, but also with the nourishing food of ‘knowledge’ itself.

In commonplace culture, in anti-theatrical polemic, and in defences of poetry, then, taste emerges as instrumental in three major projects or tasks. Firstly, taste has a central role in authorial attempts to shape readers’ responses to their works by prescribing reading practices likely to inculcate appreciation of those works’ virtues; secondly, the language of taste is used both to describe and to negotiate the difficult paratextual transition between world and book, lived and textual experience; and thirdly, taste is prominent in attempts to denigrate, but also to valorize, vernacular ‘poesy.’ In many instances, references to familiar flavour sensations, and uses of bibliophagic imagery, keep literary taste, and the processes of judgement and discrimination which underlie it, bonded to the physical sense of taste. In the next section of this chapter, I will turn to a rare example of a (mainly) female-authored and compiled manuscript commonplace book in order to explore the extent to which this persistent linking of alimentary and literary taste might be grounded in experiential and material reality.

V. ‘sweete humiddities’

Folger Ms.VB.198, commonly referred to as the Southwell-Sibthorpe commonplace book, was compiled between the years 1626 and 1636, largely by the noblewoman and poet Lady Anne Southwell.⁷⁴ Her poetry forms the majority of its contents, although it also includes correspondence, aphorisms, and inventories, *inter alia*. In a transcription of a letter to her friend Cicely MacWilliams, Lady Ridgway, included in the book,

⁷³ Ibid., C3r.

⁷⁴ See Jean Klene, introduction to *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book: Folger Ms. V.b. 198*, ed. Klene (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), xxxiii-xxxiv, for a discussion of the extent of Southwell’s involvement in the book’s compilation.

Southwell responds to Ridgway's self-description as a 'sworne enemye to Poetrie.'⁷⁵ Drawing heavily, but not slavishly, on Sidney's *Defense*, Southwell takes the opportunity to offer a spirited justification of the poet's art. Lady Ridgway's aversion to verse, she asserts, is a perversion of her sense of taste: 'I will take vpon me to knowe,' she determines, 'what hath soe distasted your palate against this banquet of soules, devine Poesye.'⁷⁶ This figuration of Ridgway's dislike as distaste is influenced, of course, by the kinds of alimentary imagery which suffuses the anti-theatrical polemic and defences of poetry previously discussed. By looking more closely at the contents of Southwell's commonplace book, however, I show that Southwell's use of the language of taste is not merely derivative, but descriptive of what was, for Southwell, an experiential reality grounded in humoral psychology. Whatever the precise cause of Lady Ridgway's 'distast' for poetry, Southwell continues in her letter, it must have its foundation in an illness caused by humoral imbalance.⁷⁷ Southwell depicts God's creation of the world and of man as an act of literary composition, the materials of which were:

poetically confined to 4. generall geenusses, Earth, Ayre, water & fire. The effectes wch giue life vnto his verse, were, Hott, Cold, Moist & Drye, wch produce Choller, melancholye, Bloud & flegme.⁷⁸

The human body is portrayed a kind of verse, vivified by the humoral flows of blood and phlegm. How then, Southwell enquires, 'being thus poetically composed... can you bee at vnitye wth your self, & at oddes wth your owne composition...?'⁷⁹

Southwell's suggestion that literary 'distast' can be attributed to a physiological disruption is reiterated in an original creation poem also collected in her commonplace book. In this poem, Southwell invokes the image of the reader-as-bee in order to anticipate his or her response to her work:

Let your cleare Iudgment, and well tempored soule
 Condemne, amend, or ratiffye this scrole...
 If you haue lost your fflowinge sweete humiddities

⁷⁵ Anne Southwell, 'To my worthy Muse, the Ladye Ridgeway,' in Klene, *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*, fol. 3r-v. All references to the manuscript in this chapter cite the original folio numbers, which are included in Klene's edition.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

and in a dust disdain these quantities
Pass it to our beloved Doctor Featley
his tongue drops honnye, and can do it neatly...⁸⁰

In the early modern period, one way in which the humors were distinguished was by their flavours: following Galen, melancholy was ordinarily considered sour, choler (sometimes called gall) bitter, phlegm unsavory, and blood sweet.⁸¹ Southwell's suggestion that a 'cleare Iudgment' of her poem must derive from the possession of 'fflowing sweete humiddities,' then, is predicated on her conviction that readerly discrimination, or taste, is reliant on physical complexion. In particular, she asks her reader to approach the poem in what we might call a sanguine mood – bearing in mind, of course, the derivation of 'sanguine' from the Latin *sanguis*, blood: the humor generally thought of as sweet.⁸² If you have misplaced your 'sweete' humors, Southwell advises, then pass on the poem to Daniel Featley (rector of Southwell's parish).⁸³ In Southwell's somewhat grotesque image, Featley-as-ideal-reader is figured, implicitly, as a bee, not insofar as he extracts the nectar of the classics but insofar as the plenteous 'honnye' of his own humors floods his tongue, enabling him to amend the lack in her poem. Literary judgement, according to Southwell, is not determined only by the quality of what is read, but by the flavour, or taste, of the reader's own humors.

The notion that literary 'taste' is a physical, as well as a mental response – a sensation, as well as an act of cognition – is buttressed by Southwell's attentiveness to the materials of reading and writing. If the human body is, for Southwell, 'poetically composed,' then conversely the constituents of poetic composition are corporeal: because a poem is made, in its textual instantiation, not just of words and ideas but also of paper and ink, it possesses material qualities identical with or at least analogous to the humors. Her poem on 'The ffirst Commandement,' for instance, condemns recourse to the words of secular authorities in religious verse in precisely these terms: poets who

⁸⁰ Southwell, untitled poem, *Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*, fol. 26r., l.15-22.

⁸¹ The sixteenth-century French surgeon Ambrose Paré, whose works were influential in seventeenth-century England, is representative in this respect: 'as *Galen* notes in his booke *De Natura humana*, Melancholy is acide or soure, choler bitter, Blood sweet, Phlegme unsavory.' A corresponding table lists these characteristics under the heading 'Taste,' confirming their status as flavour descriptors. Ambrose Paré, *The workes of that famous chirurgion*, trans. Thomas Johnson (London: Thomas Cotes and R. Young, 1634), B6v-C1r (12-13).

⁸² 'Sanguine, adj. and n.' *OED Online*, accessed 28 September 2012, www.oed.com/view/Entry/170657.

⁸³ Featley was notorious as an ecclesiastical licenser, as well as (apparently) popular as a clergyman. Those whose works he suppressed or corrected in the former capacity found him a less generous reader. See Arnold Hunt, 'Featley, Daniel (1582–1645),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 01 August 2012, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9242. I explore some of Featley's own work in chapter 4.

‘forsake[s] gods worde’ in favour of ‘vaine fables’ cause ‘a sicknes to, to much infecting paper’ and ‘mixe heauens milke with aconite of hell.’⁸⁴ Like human bodies, the materials of literary composition are subject to ‘sicknes’ and infection: the heavenly milk of the white page is poisoned by the aconite of ink. For Southwell, there is an essential accord between the composition and materials of the body, and the composition and materials of poetry: both are humoral entities.

Ink, in particular, is presented by Southwell as a vital site of humoral transactions between reader, poem and author. This is clear in a poetic ‘Epitaph’ for Lady Ridgway, in which Southwell expresses her regret at having written a faux-elegiac poem that teased Lady Ridgway for being a lax correspondent by jokingly hypothesising that her death had prevented her from replying to Southwell’s last letter. Lady Ridgway, it turned out, had indeed shuffled off the mortal coil. Southwell describes her sense of guilt by cursing the pen with which she wrote the faux-elegy: ‘Now let my pen be choakt wth gall / since I haue writt Prophetically.’⁸⁵ The ‘gall’ that she wishes on her pen refers to one of the primary components of the most commonly-used manuscript ink in the early modern period. As Anthony Petti explains, the active ingredients in this ink were ‘galls (the round excrescences produced by the gall-fly on branches of oak trees) and iron sulphate (usually known as copperas or Roman vitriol), the reaction of the tannic acid in the galls with the iron salt causing a blackish compound to form.’⁸⁶ The fate that Southwell wishes upon her pen, however, is clearly also a representation of her own grief: ‘gall’ refers not only to an ingredient in ink, but figuratively to bitterness of spirit.⁸⁷ Furthermore, this bitterness of spirit is associated, in the humoral economy, with the choleric humor that produces it, which is also known as gall.⁸⁸ By exploiting the belief that gall is a substance common both to the human body, and to ink, then, Southwell’s elegy insists on the material reality of the apparently metaphorical contiguity between physiological and poetical composition described in the letter to Lady Ridgway.

Southwell’s suggestion that ink has humoral properties coterminous with those of the human body, and that physiological and poetical composition are consequently also contiguous, is attested in early modern commonplace culture more generally. In his

⁸⁴ Southwell, ‘The ffirst Commandement,’ *Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*, fol. 28r, l.25-26.

⁸⁵ Southwell, ‘An: Epitaph vppon Cassandra MackWilliams wife to Sr Thomas Ridgway Earle of London Derry,’ *Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*, fol. 21r.

⁸⁶ Anthony Petti, *English Literary Hands from Chaucer to Dryden* (London: E. Arnold, 1977), 7.

⁸⁷ ‘Gall, n.1.’ *OED Online*, accessed 03 September 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/76229.

⁸⁸ In Thomas Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, Vindice claims that even looking at ink for too long will make a man ‘melancholy.’ Middleton, *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.2.49-50.

1646 *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Thomas Browne notes that ink is constituted of a mixture of vitriol with an ‘astringent humidity’ such as gall, before going on to assert that just ‘such a condition’ can be found ‘naturally in some living creatures.’⁸⁹ These ‘creatures’ are full of a black humor, which Brown calls ‘atramentous,’ a neologism deriving from the Latin *atrāmentum*: blacking, ink.⁹⁰ Ink is made of the humor of gall; conversely, human bodies can be atramentous, or inky. The idea that bodily fluids and ink are in some respects fungible is also present in the work of the Tudor sonneteers, extracts from which largely constituted the first poetic miscellanies and anthologies. In particular, poets frequently describe the mingling of a lover’s tears with the ink with which he writes. The Petrarchan narrator of an anonymous poem included in *Tottel’s Miscellany* (1557), for instance, describes how, frustrated in love, ‘I wrote with ink, and bitter teares,’ whilst Francis Davison’s 1611 anthology *A poetical rapsodie* contains an anonymous poem in which the writer’s ‘drisling teares.... falling in my Paper sinke, / Or dropping in my Pen encrease my inke.’⁹¹ In Thomas Lodge’s 1592 *Rosalynde*, Rosalynde (disguised as Ganymede) teases the infatuated Rosander for carving love poems into trees, in the process making satirical use of this kind of rhetoric: Ovidian poets, she says mockingly, ‘have their humors in their inckpot.’⁹²

Jonson, too, frequently conflates ink with the humoral fluids, especially with gall: in ‘To my book,’ the second poem introducing his 1616 *Epigrams*, Jonson anticipates that many readers, seeing the work’s title and author, will expect the book to be ‘full of gall.’⁹³ Similarly, in Thomas Nashe’s address ‘To all Christian Readers’ which prefaces his 1596 *Have with you to Saffron-walden* – his coruscating reply to Harvey’s *Pierce’s Supererogation* – Nashe defends himself against Harvey’s accusation that ‘I... used in all this space nothing but gall to make inke with,’ and complains that ‘these bitter-sauced Invectives’ return little in the way of pecuniary remuneration.⁹⁴ In both cases, the joke hinges on gall’s double status as metonymic both of bitter ink, and of bitter bile. And

⁸⁹ ‘The second way whereby bodies become blacke, is an Atramentous condition or mixture, that is a vitriolate or copperose quality conjoyning with a terrestrious and astringent humidity, for so is... writing Inke commonly made, by copperose cast upon a decoction of infusion of galls.’ Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia epidemica* (London: T.H. for E. Dod, 1646), Tt4v-Vv1r (336-37).

⁹⁰ ‘Atramentous, adj.’ *OED Online*, accessed 28 September 2012, www.oed.com/view/Entry/12637. Browne, *Pseudodoxia epidemica*, Vv1r (337).

⁹¹ Anon, ‘The lover here telleth of his divers joyes and adversities in love,’ in Henry Howard *et al.*, *Songes and sonettes [Tottel’s Miscellany]* (London: Richard Tottel, 1557), 60; Anon, ‘Elegie II. Of Letters in Verse,’ in *A poetical rapsodie*, ed. Francis Davison (London: William Stansby for Roger Kackson), E2V-E3r (78-79).

⁹² Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde* (London: Abel Jeffes for T. Gubbin and John Busbie, 1592), H4r.

⁹³ Ben Jonson, ‘To My Book,’ in *The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (London: Penguin, 1988), 35. That he refers to the book’s material status, as well as its satirical bent, is made clear in the subsequent assertion that such readers will expect it to ‘hurl ink, and wit.’

⁹⁴ Thomas Nashe, *Saffron-walden* (London: John Danter, 1596), C4r-v.

both Nashe and Jonson associate ink with urine. In the mock biography of Harvey appended to *Saffron-walden*, Nashe invents a rumour that Harvey ‘pist incke as soone as ever hee was borne,’⁹⁵ whilst in the ‘Apologetical Dialogue’ which follows Jonson’s *The Poetaster* (1601), the author claims (with a sharp glance at John Marston) that his detractors will not take his refusal to answer their ‘Libels’ as ‘stupidity,’ for ‘they know I dare / To... squirt their eyes / With ink or urine,’ with the conjunctive ‘or’ implying an equivalence between the two.⁹⁶ Just as the association between ink and gall gains force from the facts of manuscript ink production, moreover, so too does the association between ink and urine have its roots in the material realities of print culture. As Bruce Boehrer has noted, ‘the signature odor of the Renaissance printing-house... was the pervasive stench of urine.... Ink balls... permeated with the printers’ urine, must have introduced some minute chemical residue of the digestive tract into the ink absorbed by the paper of Jonson’s books.’⁹⁷ Not only manuscript ink, but also print ink, then, was both notionally and literally imbricated with human body fluids.

We can see an awareness of the humoral – and thus the gustatory – qualities of ink informing the language of taste as literary discrimination in its early stages. This is also suggested by Hugh Plat’s much-cited introductory poem to his 1602 *Delightes for Ladies*:

... my pen and paper are perfum’d
I scorne to write with Copres or with galle...
Rosewater is the inke I write withall:
Of Sweetes the Sweetest I will now commend...⁹⁸

Plat makes use of the fiction of manuscript circulation in order to assert that he writes, not with oak-gall or copper sulphate ink, but with rosewater. In so doing, he evinces an awareness of the sensory – particularly the olfactory and gustatory – qualities of the former: his assertion that they are unsuitable as writing materials because they are insufficiently sweet attests to his sensitivity to the bitterness of their flavour. In fact, recipes for manuscript ink included in commonplace books do frequently incorporate the same ingredients, implements and processes as the culinary and medical recipes

⁹⁵ Ibid., sig.K2r.

⁹⁶ Ben Jonson, *The Poetaster*, ed. Tom Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 269.

⁹⁷ Bruce Boehrer, *The Fury of Men’s Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 4.

⁹⁸ Hugh Plat, *Delightes for ladies* (London: Peter Short, 1602), A2v.

amongst which they are nestled.⁹⁹ Directions for making ink commonly call for the inclusion of consumables such as vinegar, beer, and sugar, whilst Plat's assertion that he writes with rosewater seems less securely metaphorical when we notice that, in a recipe for candied flowers included in his 1654 *The Garden of Eden*, Plat instructs the reader to 'make gum water as strong as for Inke, but make it with Rose-water.'¹⁰⁰ Such examples suggest a degree of contiguity – in space, matter and conception – between the composition and production of early modern writing materials and the composition and production of consumables, and add further weight to Wendy Wall's research into intersections of culinary and literary skill-sets in the early modern home.¹⁰¹

An awareness of the ways in which 'taste' as discrimination is literally responsive to the sensory qualities of its objects is also evident if we shift our attention from literary artefacts to the visual arts. In his *The Arte of Limning* (c.1600), Nicholas Hilliard's recommendation that 'a good painter hath tender senses, quiet and apt,' is ratified by his remarkable sensitivity to the olfactory and gustatory, as well as the visual, qualities of his materials.¹⁰² Thus, emphasizing the importance of fastidious cleanliness, he suggests using 'water distilled from the water of some clear spring,' as a base for making paints; or even better, 'from black cherries, which is the cleanest that ever I could find, and keepeth longest sweet and clear.'¹⁰³ Hilliard uses 'sweet' to indicate water which does not go immediately stale, but given that this water is extracted from cherries, the word surely retains some of its gustatory connotations. More explicitly, Hilliard prohibits 'all ill-smelling colours, all ill-tasting, as orpiment, verdigris, verditer, pink, sap-green,

⁹⁹ The 1596 *A Booke of Secrets* gathers together ink formulas which incorporate 'vineger,' 'beere' and 'the shels of hazell nuts.' William Phillip, *A Booke of Secrets* (London: Adam Islip for Edward White, 1596). In his 1641 *Mercury, or the swift and secret Messenger*, John Wilkins describes a number of recipes for invisible ink constituted of liquids including milk, onion juice, lemon juice, raw eggs, urine and fat. John Wilkins, *Mercury, or the swift and secret Messenger* (London: J. Norton for John Maynard and Timothy Wilkins, 1641), D5r (42). The commonplace book of John Locke (father of the famous philosopher) includes recipes 'To make writing Inke,' and 'To make good Inke' which specify ingredients including 'pomegranate oil' and 'sugar,' and include weighing, mixing, distilling and drying in the stages of preparation; adjacent recipes include 'To make Sypprup of Garlick,' and a drink 'For the Consumption,' and similarly call for flower and nut 'oils' and 'sugar.' William Sherman, ed., *Renaissance Commonplace Books from the British Library* [microfilm] (Marlborough: Adam Matthew, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Hugh Plat, *The Garden of Eden* (London: William Leake, 1654), B5v (43).

¹⁰¹ 'Writing recipes and undertaking particular types of manual work trained women in alphabetic literacy and the conventions of book use, but handicrafts in the home also signified in their own right as forms of "writing" within a functional theory of making. Carving food or a quill, shaping edible tarts, and making marks on paper were household labors that enabled women to be socially and creatively expressive.' Wall, 'Literacy and the Domestic Arts,' 387. Wall's discussion of the popularity of 'recipes for creating tasty edible letters,' and of Puttenham's famous description of posies 'printed or put upon... banketting dishes of suger plate, or of march paines, and such other dainty meates' further highlights imbrications of the domestic and literary arts. Wall, 'Literacy and the Domestic Arts,' 409-410.

¹⁰² Nicholas Hilliard, *The Arte of Limning*, ed. R.K.R. Thornton and T.G.S. Cain (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1992), 45.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 53.

litmus, or any unsweet colours'; these, he warns 'are naught for limning; use none of them if you may choose.'¹⁰⁴ His concern registers an awareness of portrait miniatures as entities intended to stimulate the senses in unexpected ways; at the very least, they must not be 'ill-smelling' or 'ill-tasting' (my emphasis). And elsewhere in *The Arte*, Hilliard recommends the use of salt and sugar 'candie' in limning colours.¹⁰⁵ In his directions for paint-making, then, Hilliard reifies the language of aesthetic sweetness; *The Arte* offers a material grounding for the pervasive early modern association between saccharinity and pleasure in the literary and visual arts.

From this perspective, we can see how – *pave* the abstraction narrative discussed earlier in this chapter – the language of literary and aesthetic taste in this period resonates with material, sensory experiences of reading, writing, and printing.¹⁰⁶ In the final section of this chapter, I focus on Ben Jonson's paratexts in order to explore briefly some of the implications of this for how we understand the politics of taste and the formation of publics.¹⁰⁷

VI. 'Men of better Pallat'

Thus far, I have discussed 'taste' largely as a faculty associated with a courtly and noble elite, or at least with those who aspired to such a status: with men like Florio, Sidney, and Hilliard, and women like Cavendish and Southwell. For such figures, I have argued, 'distaste' for vernacular literature in general, or their own works in particular, is attributable to a distemper: a humoral imbalance experienced as a physical pathology. Patrician loftiness resounds in Cavendish's disgust, in the opening quotation to this chapter, at the 'Quellechouse of Rallery... made of Ingredients, as bad as Poor People

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 79. Patricia Fumerton notes that 'the intimacy of portrait miniatures was "sweet" (a term in which we taste the sugar candy added to limning colours), meaning that it was a false intimacy idealizing the sitter.' Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, 80.

¹⁰⁶ The association between ink and consumables finds support in Tanya Pollard's description of a number of early modern 'word-medicines' that necessitated 'not merely physical contact with words, but direct ingestion of them' in the form of written spells, with figures including John Aubrey and John Floyer recommending recipes in which gurgitation of a fragment of text is supposed to cure the effects of the bite of a mad dog. Tanya Pollard, 'Spelling the Body,' in Floyd-Wilson and Sullivan, *Environment and Embodiment*, 173-74.

¹⁰⁷ Jonson's extensive use of alimentary language is addressed by in Boehrer, *The Fury of Men's Gullets*. In 'Consumption of the World: Reading, Eating and Imitation in *Every Man Out of His Humour*,' Terrance Dunford argues that the play 'is an imitation within which characters imitate the language and actions of the books they read'; this 'transformation of the self into a literary type... is dramatized by Jonson in terms of consumptions: reading and eating, both acts of internalizing the external.' Terrance Dunford, 'Consumption of the World: Reading, Eating and Imitation in *Every Man Out of His Humour*,' *ELR* 14 (1984): 134, 140.

Dress their Corporeal Meat with?; in his 1591 *Second frutes*, Florio abandons the humility which ostensibly characterised his dedication to Dudley in the *First frutes*, writing in the dedicatory epistle to Nicholas Saunder of Ewel:

I dare vaunte without sparke of vaine-glory that [here] I have given you a taste of the best Italian fruites... but if the pallate of some ale or beere mouthes be out of taste that they cannot taste that, let them sporte but not spue...¹⁰⁸

Similarly, in his address to the reader, Florio proclaims that, ‘if thy sight and taste be so altred, that neither colour or taste of my fruites will please thee, I greatly force not, for I never minded to be thy fruterer.’¹⁰⁹ Florio’s disdain for the tasteless palates of the ‘ale or beere mouthes’ of some of his readers, however, serves as a reminder that it was precisely the aspirational, but by no means aristocratic, middling sort that his work appealed to. David Summers has pointed out ‘the extreme democratic implications to be drawn from the commonness of sensation,’ when sensation is taken as the basis of aesthetic discrimination.¹¹⁰ Because the capacity to sense – unlike, say, classical learning – is almost universally shared, everyone has an equal claim to make judgements on its basis. In the case of taste, the democratic quality of judgements of sense collides with the inherent subjectivity of gustation: everyone has their own tastes, and everyone’s tastes are different. As Richard Brathwaite puts it in his 1620 *Essaies upon the five senses*, ‘of all others, this *Sence* produceth the diverst qualities... [taste] shows this pleasing and acceptable to one, which is noisome and different to an other.’¹¹¹ Because an objective standard of taste is impossible to determine, individuals at all social and economic levels can claim authority for their opinions.

Jonson and his literary inheritors – the ‘sons of Ben’ – are deeply interested in the role which taste plays both in enfranchising, and in managing and regulating, the faculty of literary and aesthetic judgement. Like the more securely courtly and aristocratic figures mentioned in this chapter, Jonson certainly does exploit the idea that appropriate literary judgements are reliant on a healthy humoral constitution. As he writes in the Prologue to his 1629 *The New Inn*:

¹⁰⁸ John Florio, *Florios second frutes* (London: by T. Orwin for Thomas Woodcock, 1591), A3r.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, A5v.

¹¹⁰ David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 326.

¹¹¹ Richard Brathwaite, *Essaies upon the five senses* (London: E. Griffin for Richard Whittaker, 1620), D4r (47).

If anything be set to a wrong taste,
'Tis not the meat there, but the mouth's displac'd,
Remove but that sick palat, all is well.¹¹²

Attempting to pre-empt and guide his audience's responses to his play, Jonson attributes any criticism of it to a pathological palate. Earlier in his theatrical career, however, Jonson had articulated a more compliant attitude to his audiences' varied tastes.¹¹³ The prologue to his 1609 *Epicene* bemoans that:

...in this age a sect of writers are,
That only for particular likings care
And will taste nothing that is popular.
With such we mingle neither brains nor breasts;
Our wishes, like to those make public feasts,
Are not to please the cook's tastes, but the guests'.
Yet if those cunning palates hither come,
They shall find guests' entreaty and good room...
The Poet prays you, then, with better thought
To sit, and when his cates are all in brought,
Though there be some far-fet, there will dear-bought
Be fit for ladies; some for lords, knights, squires,
Some for your waiting-wench and city-wires,
Some for your men and daughters of Whitefriars.¹¹⁴

In Jonson's account, *Epicene* caters for both 'popular' and 'cunning' palates: he claims that he has prepared his play not to suit his own 'tastes,' but rather to please the tastes of his audience, which encompasses members from serving girls, to the middling

¹¹² Ben Jonson, *The New Inn*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). All further in-text references are to this edition.

¹¹³ Hillary M. Nunn argues that in the Renaissance theatre, 'eating, both onstage and among playgoers, provided a vital part of the play going experience, and audiences... enjoyed ample opportunity to purchase food during performances.' Nunn, 'Playing with Appetite in Early Modern Comedy,' in Craik and Pollard, *Shakespearean Sensations*, 101. From this perspective, Jonson's alimentary rhetoric seems less metaphorical than we might presume.

¹¹⁴ Ben Jonson, *Epicene, or the Silent Woman*, ed. Richard Dutton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), Prologue, l.4-24. In a prefatory poem to Fletcher's *The Purple Island*, William Benlowes paraphrases Jonson: 'O judge not Thou, let Readers judge thy book: / Such Cates should rather please the Guest, then Cook.' William Benlowes, 'To the Learned Author,' ¶¶1v.

denizens of commercial Whitefriars, and grand lords and ladies. Jonson's preface is remarked by the Cavalier poet Thomas Carew in a prefatory poem defending William Davenant's 1636 play *The wits A Comedie*. Carew hints that the *Epicene* preface was an influential factor in an increasing tendency for early modern audiences to claim authority in theatrical judgement:

It hath beene said of old, that Playes are Feasts,
Poets the Cookes, and the Spectators Guests,
The Actors Waitors: From this Similie,
Some have deriv'd an unsafe libertie
To use their Judgements as their Tastes, which chuse
Without controule, this Dish, and that refuse:
But Wit allowes not this large Priviledge...¹¹⁵

In contrast to Jonson's avowed cooperation with popular tastes, Carew condemns those readers or spectators who take their own preference or aversion as a sufficient foundation upon which to assess a play. Carew strives to retain a level of objectivity for critical taste: 'though sweets with yours, sharps best with my taste meet,' he points out, 'Both must agree this meat's or sharpe or sweet.'¹¹⁶ Carew goes on to directly address those who would claim that Davenant's play is tasteless:

...if, as in this Play, where with delight
I feast my Epicurean appetite
With rellishes so curious, as dispence
The utmost pleasure to the ravisht sense,
You should professe that you can nothing meet
That hits your taste, either with sharpe or sweet,
But cry out, 'tis insipid; your bold Tongue
May doe it's Master, not the Author wrong;
For Men of better Pallat will by it
Take the just elevation of your Wit.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Thomas Carew, 'To the Reader of Master *William Davenant's* Play,' in William Davenant, *The wits A Comedie* (London: Richard Meighen, 1636), A3v.

¹¹⁶ Carew, 'To the Reader,' A3v.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Despite his censure of those who ‘use their Judgements as their Tastes,’ Carew follows Jonson in locating critical authority in the ‘Pallat’; he only objects to the presumption that this analogy entails a critical free-for-all, where one man’s opinion is as valid as the next. Anyone who declares Davenant’s play ‘insipid,’ Carew explains, divulges more about his own poor critical faculties than about the work he evaluates. As with Nathaniel in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, judgements of taste function as a form of self-revelation, according to which others can gauge the opinionated critic’s place in an intellectual hierarchy: one’s palate is intimately tied to one’s public identity, and – by extension – to one’s social position.

Pierre Bourdieu argues that judgements of taste are both determined by social class, and reciprocally determinative of an individual’s place within the class hierarchy. ‘Taste,’ writes Bourdieu, both ‘classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects... distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make.’¹¹⁸ Bourdieu reaches this conclusion via sociological fieldwork undertaken in 1960s France, but his observations are also applicable to Carew and Jonson: for both, judgements of taste are central to the formation of social bonds, distinguishing an ‘Epicurean’ elite. Jonson’s interest in identifying men with ‘cunning palates’ in his prefaces, moreover, resonates with what we know of his own social values. Jonson’s *Leges Convivialis*, or ‘Laws of Feasting,’ which hung over the mantelpiece in the Apollo room of the Devil and St Dunstan tavern where he and his acolytes often met, included injunctions to ‘Let the tasteless, gloomy, base man be absent,’ and ‘Let no tasteless poems be read.’¹¹⁹ These precepts evoke simultaneously the bonds of fellowship forged by the gustatory pleasures of convivial eating and drinking, and the faculty of literary taste as a determinant of poetic worth: taste is the decisive standard for inclusion in Jonson’s circle. This is important because it has implications for our ideas about the early modern public sphere. In ‘*Hamlet* and the Social Thing,’ Paul Yachnin writes that ‘in part... the audience becomes a public merely by imagining itself as one.’¹²⁰ Whilst Yachnin’s focus is on Shakespeare, Jonson’s theatrical prologues and epilogues frequently and forcefully encourage his audiences to

¹¹⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 5.

¹¹⁹ Percy Simpson, ‘Ben Jonson and the Devil Tavern,’ *The Modern Language Review* 43/3 (1939): 367-73.

¹²⁰ Paul Yachnin, ‘*Hamlet* and the Social Thing,’ in Paul Yachnin and Bronwen Wilson, eds., *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2011), 87.

imagine themselves as publics.¹²¹ Because they articulate this encouragement by utilizing the language of taste, however, they challenge conventional notions about public formation. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jurgen Habermas argued that the commercialisation of literary and artistic cultures was a necessary precondition for the emergence of a bourgeois public. By providing what he calls a ‘training ground’ on which a new class of people could exercise their subjective discriminative faculties, and engage in reasoned debate about the conclusions they reached, certain types of cultural commodity habituated the nation to such activities. Subsequently, the ‘critical debate ignited by works of literature and art was.... extended to include economic and political disputes,’ and the bourgeois public was born.¹²²

Habermas’ emphasis on the kinds of abstract, critical reasoning involved in the consumption and consequent appraisal of ‘works of literature and art’ has been highly influential, but it has also been contested. Two objections are particularly relevant here. The first, a matter of chronology, is easy enough to establish. A number of scholars have shown that the public sphere located by Habermas firmly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was present, in various forms, much earlier, and certainly by the early modern period.¹²³ The second concerns the weight that Habermas gives to rational debate. Notably, in an essay on what he calls ‘wild publics,’ Michael Gardiner contends that Habermas’ emphasis on the rationality of the public sphere means that he neglects the corporeality of publics.¹²⁴ In contrast, Gardiner argues for what he calls an ‘incarnate... moral subject,’ berating Habermas for ‘retaining a sharp distinction between impartial reason on the one hand and the embodied and ‘non-rational’ features of human existence on the other.’¹²⁵ Nonetheless, Gardiner’s own essay ends up replicating this distinction, asserting that ‘public spheres (or counterpublics) are as much sites of

¹²¹ The induction to Jonson’s 1614 *Bartholomew Fair* is exemplary in its evocation of its audience as a public. See Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

¹²² Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 29 and 33.

¹²³ See Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker, ‘Discovering the Renaissance Reader,’ in *Reading, Society and Politics*, 8. See also Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England,’ in Lake and Pincus, eds., *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 1-30.

¹²⁴ In Gardiner’s own words, ‘Habermas’ thoughts on rational dialogue and the public sphere do not in a substantive way concern themselves with, much less address, the embodied experiences and activities of actual people in the context of their everyday lives.’ Michael E. Gardiner, ‘Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums: Habermas and Bakhtin on Dialogue, Everyday Life and the Public Sphere,’ *The Sociological Review* 52/s1 (2004): 30-31.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

impassioned and embodied contestation as arenas of impartial, reasoned debate.’¹²⁶ Whilst Gardiner argues that public spheres are embodied, his association of embodiment with (implicitly instinctual) passion and contestation, and his subsequent opposition of these qualities to ‘impartial, reasoned debate’ ultimately denies the reciprocity of the somatic and the cerebral.

As we have seen, however, Jonson’s plays encourage their audiences to imagine themselves as publics by referencing and encouraging their capacity neither for impartial reason nor for ‘impassioned contestation’ but for a form of cultural consumption imagined as indivisible from the consumption of food, and regulated, crucially, by taste: the faculty which bridges the divide between intellectual and physical responses. Jonson’s alimentary and gustatory imagery speaks for an age in which the kinds of judgement which underlie critical responses to theatrical culture, and which thus also undergird the formation of publics, are understood not as opposed to somatic experience, nor as running parallel to somatic experience, but as identical with it. The kinds of public which form around Jonson’s plays are constituted of ‘characters’ written in gall ink, simultaneously humoral and literary, sensory and discriminative.

VII. ‘to dream to eat Books’

Perusing a section titled ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’ included in the anonymous 1698 miscellany *Wits cabinet*, the reader is advised that ‘to dream to eat Books, is good to Schoolmasters, and all that make profit by them, and which are studious for Eloquence; to others it is sudden death.’¹²⁷ In this uncompromising prediction, bibliophagy emerges as an apparently conventional dream phenomenon in the seventeenth century; its radically divergent consequences form a boundary line between the ‘studious’ and the unschooled. In this, the dream of book-eating emblemizes some of the concerns of this chapter, which has argued that early modern literary taste is fundamentally rooted, if not in the *actual* alimentary consumption of codices, at least in an acute, distinctly wakeful alertness to the gustatory qualities of the materials of reading and writing. Against the conventional scholarly presumption that the birth of aesthetic taste originates, towards the end of the seventeenth century, in the death of a metaphor, as the term lost its notional association with gustation, I argue that the language of literary good taste is nascent in the commonplace culture of the first half of the seventeenth

¹²⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹²⁷ Anon., *Wits cabinet* (London: H. Rhodes, 1698), A9r (11).

century, emerging in part from the trope of the reader as a bee who uses his or her sense of taste to select, and subsequently digest, the flowers of rhetoric. In commonplace books and anthologies, in paratexts and poems, taste emerges as a crucial aspect of the management of readerly expectations and responses; as a point of transfer between texts and the material, lived realities they describe, scrutinize, and intervene in; and as a key component of efforts to determine the status and value of vernacular literature, for better or worse. I have shown, furthermore, that this trope was understood as grounded in the material, humoral reality of bodies and books. In its earliest incarnations, taste defined as literary discrimination was understood not simply as a figurative application of a term that had previously been used only to describe a physical sensation, but as rooted in the phenomenal reality of reading and writing as it engaged the senses. Within a humoral economy, the bibliophagic trope of the reader as bee takes on a literal, as well as a literary, dimension, as the similarity (even the fungibility) of the fluids that constituted both the human body and a writer's corpus made an alimentary exchange between the two a real possibility. From this perspective, taste's democratic and public-making capacities can be re-thought as a matter not of abstract reasoning, but one of processes of discrimination which are deeply, and intensely, embodied.

In my next chapter, I turn to early modern anatomical textbooks in order to explore the relationship between taste in the 'literary' sense explored in this chapter, and taste as an object and faculty of empirical investigation. In Helkiah Crooke's popular 1615 *Mikrokosmographia*, 'taste' slides, referentially, between readerly discrimination, and gustation. Gustation itself, furthermore, manifests in Crooke's text both as an object of investigation, and as a route to anatomical and medical knowledge. What might this semantic flexibility tell us about the relation between humanist erudition and proto-scientific empiricism in the early modern anatomy theatre? And what might it reveal more generally, about how early modern men and women conceived of the relation between sensation and knowledge?

CHAPTER 2

Touching Taste in Helkiah Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*

*Before we can understand how the brain knows, we need to figure out how the tongue knows.*¹

I. 'instead of a preamble'

At the beginning of 'Quest[ion] I: *What Sense is*' of Book Eight of his 1615 *Mikrokosmographia: A description of the body of man*, Helkiah Crooke describes how he intends to approach the subject of the senses:²

before we assay their particular handling, we will take a Taste of them in general, which may make way to the particulars, and may serve instead of a preamble, for the better understanding of the Reader. First of all therefore, it is to be considered what *Sense* is.³

In this quotation, as in the corpus of early seventeenth-century anatomy books, taste appears both as a means of enquiry and as an object of knowledge. Most obviously, 'a Taste' is employed as an epistemological term to describe the 'general,' preliminary account of 'what *Sense* is' that Crooke will proceed to offer the reader. Simultaneously, physiological taste, one of the particular faculties addressed here under the broad rubric of '*Sense*,' is also evoked as a subject of Crooke's enquiries. Finally, the anatomist's own sense of taste is implicitly invoked: medical practitioners had been encouraged to taste bodily secretions in order to discover humoral imbalances since the classical era, and Mark Jenner has shown that this tendency to taste the body for medical purposes carried over into post-mortem investigations well into the seventeenth century.⁴ I would

¹ Charles Zuker, Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics and Neuroscience. Quoted in Michael Eisenstein, 'Taste: More than meets the mouth,' *Nature* (23 December 2010): S18-S19.

² The structure of *Mikrokosmographia* is complex. Briefly, the book comprises thirteen books, each of which is divided into chapters and concluded by a series of 'questions' related to its topic. For a discussion of the significance of Crooke's organisation of his material, see Matthew Scott Landers, 'The Anatomy of *Anatomia*: Dissection and the Organization of Knowledge in British Literature, 1500-1800,' (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2009), 57-58 and 61.

³ Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (London: William Jaggard, 1615), Kkk2v (646).

⁴ Crooke himself writes that 'chirurgions... by the savor or smell of a wound are able to judge whether it be... of and ill an untoward disposition or no' [sic]. *Ibid.*, Kkk1v (650). Jenner notes that 'Reinier De Graaf's investigations of the pancreas relied upon the tasting of its fluids,' whilst 'the anatomist and physician, Clopton Havers, commented on the flavour of the medullary fluids which he discovered in

like to begin this chapter by offering an exploratory ‘Taste’ of some of its major themes, introduced through a discussion of my opening quotation. What is the relationship, I ask, between the three types of taste Crooke so succinctly invokes? This move is not empty wordplay: in circumventing the teleological momentum implied by an introduction or ‘preamble’ in favour of the kind of tentative, probatory exploration suggested by a ‘Taste,’ I hope to license my taking a less direct route to my conclusions than is usual.

Considering its success and influence throughout the seventeenth century, *Mikrokosmographia* is, as Matthew Scott Landers has commented, a relatively understudied book.⁵ Exceptions to this rule of scholarly neglect include Elizabeth Harvey, who associates Crooke’s pervasive use of the language of touch with what she describes as ‘a post-Vesalian anatomy in which the anatomist dissects and handles the corpse in order to partition it and demonstrate its structures.’⁶ Expressions such as ‘the hand of speech,’ Harvey writes, register the increased status accorded to first-‘hand’ experience in the production of anatomical knowledge, evident on a practical level in the merging of the historically distinct roles of the *sector*, *demonstrator* and *ostensor*.⁷ More recently, Alan Salter has argued for a strand in vernacular literature which portrays ‘the flamboyant victories of the senses over language.’ Sensory metaphors, Salter argues, ‘introduce an empiricism that is vital and energetic’ into early seventeenth-century anatomical works, notably those of William Harvey.⁸

Both Elizabeth Harvey and Salter interpret language referring to the senses (in Harvey’s case, to touch specifically) in terms which assimilate that language into a conventional, and implicitly Whiggish, narrative of the history of anatomical dissection as a battle between the traditional authority of inaccurate canonical (particularly

human joints,’ and as late as 1726 the physician John Floyer ‘urged ‘Anatomists’ to ‘taste the Lympha in the ... Spleen.’ Jenner, ‘Tasting Lichfield,’ 656, 667.

⁵ Landers, ‘The Anatomy of *Anatomia*,’ 59. The *ESTC* lists five editions of *Mikrokosmographia* between its first publication and 1651. For those without without the resources to access – or perhaps the time to read – the whole of Crooke’s magisterial tome, two set of woodcuts and descriptions were available under the name *Somatographia anthropine* (London: William Jaggard, 1616; London: Thomas Cotes for Michael Sparke, 1634). It also appeared, in abbreviated form, as *The manuell of the anatomy or dissection of the body of man*, a summary attributed to the surgeon Alexander Read, which went through six editions between 1634 and 1638.

⁶ Elizabeth D. Harvey, ‘The Touching Organ: Allegory, Anatomy, and the Renaissance Skin Envelope,’ in Harvey, *Sensible Flesh*, 81.

⁷ Traditionally, as Harvey writes, ‘a dissection was performed by the *sector*, typically a barber or a surgeon, while the *ostensor* or the *demonstrator* pointed [to the body parts] and the *lector* read [from an authoritative text].’ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁸ Alan Salter, ‘Early Modern Empiricism and the Discourse of the Senses,’ in C.T. Wolfe and O. Gal, eds., *The Body as Object and Instrument of Knowledge: Embodied Empiricism in Early Modern Science* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 71.

classical) texts, and the increasingly victorious (and implicitly more objectively accurate) evidence of the anatomist's senses, with the work of Andreas Vesalius established as central to the eventual triumph of empiricism.⁹ In England, this battle can be seen to play out in conflicts between the two organizations licensed to perform dissections: the Royal College of Physicians, and the Worshipful Company of Barber-Surgeons. The first consisted of high-status, university-trained physicians, who were conversant with the classics and advocated a therapeutic approach to maintaining health, the second of low-status, largely uneducated barber-surgeons, who intervened only in moments of crisis to perform the basic manual work of bleeding, pulling rotten teeth and setting (if need be, sawing off) damaged limbs.¹⁰ In the words of Crooke, whilst physicians 'apply them[selves] unto the more abstruse part of the Art [of physic] separated from the sense and consisting in contemplation and collection; the Chyrurgeon worketh by his eye and with his hand.'¹¹ The influence of Vesalius has been observed both in the increased status of barber-surgeons in the seventeenth century, and in a weakening of the distinction between the two positions, as physicians increasingly undertook the practical work traditionally associated with barber-surgeons, and barber-surgeons increasingly gained access to authoritative texts.¹²

As a vernacular translation and adaptation of a number of classical, medieval and contemporary authors, written by a physician for an audience of barber-surgeons, *Mikrokosmographia* played an important role in this second process, as its paratextual material anxiously acknowledges. Crooke gives an account of the composition of the text in 'The Præface to the Chururgeons':

⁹ Andrew Cunningham gives a useful summary of this approach in his *The Anatomical Renaissance: The Resurrection of the Anatomical Projects of the Ancients* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1997), 3. There have been modifications of the model, often chronological. Katharine Park, for instance, explores alternative contexts of dissection, such as post-mortem caesareans, in order to argue that there were ample opportunities to view the inside of the body first-hand before Vesalius. See *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2007). Cunningham himself challenges the association of dissection and scientific progress, arguing that, 'unlike science today,' early modern anatomy was '*religiously formed and constituted*' (202, emphasis in original). Others, including Andrew Wear, have pointed out that many classical texts, including those of Galen, emphasised the importance of direct observation. Wear, 'Medicine in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700,' in Lawrence Conrad *et al.*, *The Western Medical Tradition 800 BC to 1800 AD* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 272. Even Andreas Carlino, whose *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) is in many respects exemplary of the traditional model of anatomical progress, recognizes that Vesalius did not immediately instigate a revolution in practice: although there was an 'epistemological renewal,' registered in iconographical changes, 'there was no corresponding revision of the academic ceremony... for several more decades.' Carlino, *Books of the Body*, 68.

¹⁰ For a more detailed explanation of differences in training, social status and practices, see Hillary Nunn, *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 8, 32.

¹¹ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, ¶6r (unpaginated).

¹² Nunn, *Staging Anatomies*, 11.

My present worke is for the most part out of *Baubine*... The Controversies are mostwhatout of *Laurentius*, with some additions, substractions and alterations as I thought fit... I also added Praefaces to every booke... & in the subsequent discourse many passages partly out of my owne observations, partly as I met with them in approved authors. The streame and current of *Baubines* discourse because it is very hard, intricate, and full of long continued sentences, I have broken off and parted as it might best be understood.¹³

As this passage makes clear, *Mikrokosmographia* is a hybrid. Whilst Crooke draws heavily on ‘approved authors,’ he does not hesitate to revise, truncate, and elaborate on their words, and he also includes ‘passages partly out of my owne observations.’ *Mikrokosmographia*, then, occupies a middle ground between approbation of past authorities, and a new belief in the utility of first-hand, empirical experience.

How, in this context, are we to interpret Crooke’s use of the language of taste and touch to introduce his discussion of the senses? It is tempting to follow the same trajectory as Harvey and Salter, and argue that Crooke’s use of ‘taste’ as an epistemological term was influenced by surgeons’ and anatomists’ use of their sense of taste as a means of understanding bodies in the period. Crooke’s use of the term ‘Taste’ to describe a ‘general,’ preparatory investigation of ‘what *Sense* is’ would thus reflect the increased authority of taste, along with the other senses, over canonical textual accounts of bodily processes. According to this logic, however, Crooke misrepresents the content of the ‘Question’ he introduces, which is largely concerned with Aristotle’s description, in *De Anima*, of a sense as ‘*that which can receive sensible Formes without any matter*.’¹⁴ Crooke discusses this seminal definition in terms informed by a close attention to the text, drawing on commentaries by John Grammaticus, Alexander Aphrodisaeus and Simplicius, as well as other passages in *De Anima* itself. Despite an introductory emphasis on taste and touch, then, ‘Ques[tion] I’ consists of a discussion of ‘what *Sense* is’ characterised not by the inclusion of empirical, sense-based information, but by an attempt to define ‘sense’ which is dependent on the textual subtleties of Aristotle and on philological scholarship.

In this chapter, I argue that the association between metaphors of contactual perception and empiricism traced by both Harvey and Salter is a fundamental misapprehension of Crooke’s presentation of his own anatomical experience and

¹³ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, ¶6v (unpaginated).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Kkk2v (464).

expertise, and that this misapprehension is rooted in a specific, and particularly modern, way of understanding the processes through which sensory perceptions are reified as knowledge. By addressing the slippage between representations of taste as an object of knowledge in *Mikrokosmographia*, and its utility as an epistemological concept, as well as its empirical application, I hope to draw a picture of early seventeenth century conceptions of anatomy which ultimately resists the dichotomies – between sensory knowledge and textual knowledge, empiricism and erudition – that my opening discussion establishes as categories of analysis. Essentially, I argue that attending to the senses as the subject, as well as the means, of anatomical investigation, compels us to recalibrate their role in early dissection.

For Harvey and Salter, anatomists' increased use of their senses in the early seventeenth century is registered in language which makes metaphors of those senses. In other words, the anatomist's own sensuous experiences provide the resources for him to conceptualize and communicate 'the body' as an object of knowledge in the realm of culture. This paradigm correlates closely to what Tim Ingold identifies as the dominant, although erroneous, model of the processes of sensory perception in contemporary Western thought in general, and ethnography in particular. 'According to this model,' Ingold writes:

the mind picks up sensory signals from the world around it and passes them to the mind, which processes them to form images or representations. Through a logical manipulation of those representations, the mind formulates plans of action, which are then passed as instructions for the body to execute in the world.¹⁵

Perception, then, 'is a two-stage phenomenon: the first involves the receipt, by the individual human organism, of ephemeral and meaningless sense data; the second consists in the organisation of these data into collectively held and enduring representations.'¹⁶ This theory, Ingold points out, 'rests on a fundamental distinction between physical and cultural dimensions of perception.'¹⁷ Salter's contention that in the early modern period 'authors took the physiology of the senses as a foundation on

¹⁵ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 282-3.

which to construct imaginative treatments of epistemology which in turn shaped the new philosophy of empiricism' locates the body as the physical substrate which is made meaningful through the intellectual processing of sense data.¹⁸ For Salter, sensation itself, represented in language, is metamorphosed into an epistemic category: empiricism. In both cases, sensation becomes useful as a source of knowledge only when it has been reformulated in the realm of culture: in the first case, the mind; in the second, language.

Ingold associates the representationalist theory of perception with a post-Cartesian conception 'of the mind as a distinct organ that is capable of operating on the bodily data of sense,' and the dualistic approach it reflects informs contemporary western science as well as anthropology.¹⁹ Evolutionary biology in particular, Ingold believes, is riven by a fundamental inconsistency. Its practitioners necessarily conceive of themselves both as material organisms locked into the matrix of nature, and as thinking minds able to step outside of that matrix and consider it as such.²⁰ To resolve this paradox, Ingold engages with a number of scholarly approaches, from ecological psychology to phenomenology, which he sees as commensurable with beliefs about perception and the relation between being and knowing held by indigenous North American peoples such as the Cree and Ojibwa. Where Ingold uses his anthropological experience to counter the orthodoxies of contemporary western science, this chapter steps not sideways but backwards in order to ask how, in an age when 'biology' was an unknown term and 'science' still encompassed the general sweep of human cognizance, the proponents of anatomical dissection understood a self which is both sensate material stuff and, simultaneously, the self that conceptualises itself *as* sensate stuff. I begin by examining Crooke's conception of the functioning of the senses in general, and taste in particular, as objects of knowledge.

II. 'of the mind present in sensation'

Peter Dear writes that 'in the sixteenth century, with frequent bows to the example set by the ancient Greco-Roman physician Galen, anatomists conceived of their enterprise as being above all one of disciplined *seeing*.'²¹ Elizabeth Harvey's emphasis on the

¹⁸ Salter, 'Empiricism,' 60.

¹⁹ Ingold, *Perception*, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

²¹ Peter Dear, 'The Meanings of Experience,' in Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston, eds., *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 111.

tactility of early anatomy offers an obvious rejoinder to this emphasis on the ocular. Indeed, in early modern texts the surgeon is sometimes invoked as a paradigm of haptic delicacy: discussing how to determine the ripeness of a fruit in his 1693 *The compleat gard'ner*, for example, Jean de La Quintinie warns against ‘the violent impression of their Unskillful Thumb’ but allows that, ‘in case it be a Fig... it is allowable to touch it gently with the end of the Finger, almost in the same manner as a Chyrurgeon feels for the Vein in order to Bleed.’²² Here, however, I want to emphasise not the prominence of one sense over another, but the synaesthetic nature of anatomical experience; in particular, imbrications of touch and taste.

In his 1611 Italian-English dictionary, *Queen Anna's new world of words*, John Florio translates the Italian noun ‘Tásta’ thus: ‘*a Chirurgions probe or searching needle... also a taste, a touch, or feeling. Also a triall, or assay.*’ Correspondingly, the verb ‘Tastáre’ is defined as ‘*to taste, to assay, to feele, to touch, to grope for, to trye... Also to search a sore...*’²³ Like the English equivalent, taste, the Italian words ‘tásta’ and ‘tastáre’ evoke both gustatory and tactile sensation; simultaneously, they have epistemological associations with acts of trial and testing. The words, however, have an additional set of meanings: ‘tásta’ can indicate ‘*a Chirurgions probe,*’ and ‘tastáre’ describes the searching or probing of a sore. Today, the *Oxford English Dictionary* preserves these surgical associations: citing Florio, its etymological account of the noun ‘taste’ invites the philologist to ‘compare... Old French *taste*, Italian *tasta*, a surgical probe.’²⁴ This unexpected connection between touching, tasting, and surgical probing surfaces obliquely in John Donne’s ‘The Comparison,’ in which Donne likens the ‘filthy’ embraces that his addressee offers to his mistress to ‘a worme sucking an envenomd sore.’ In contrast, when Donne and his own mistress kiss, they do so with all the tentative delicacy of ‘the Surgeon’ engaged in ‘searching wounds.’²⁵ From this definitional nexus taste emerges not only as a form of knowledge that the body *possesses*, but also a form of knowledge *about* the body, a tactile tool used to ‘probe’ its flesh.

In *Mikrokosmographia*, Crooke frequently notes affiliations between various senses. In particular, following Aristotle, Crooke describes touch as ‘the ground and

²² Quintinie, *The compleat gard'ner*, sig M3v.

²³ John Florio, *Queen Anna's new world of words* (London: Melchior Bradwood and William Stansby for Edward Blount and William Barret, 1611), Aaa1v (554).

²⁴ *OED Online*, accessed 28 June 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/198050.

²⁵ John Donne, ‘Elegy 2: The Comparison,’ in Gary A. Stringer, ed., *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 51-52.

foundation’ of all of the senses.²⁶ ‘Touching,’ he writes, ‘is diffused through the whole body’: it thus informs and conjoins different sensory experiences.²⁷ For Crooke, however – as for many of his contemporaries – taste in particular ‘hath great affinity with the Sense of Touching, in so much that some have made no distinction betweene them.’²⁸ The sense of taste, Crooke asserts, assimilates haptic as well as gustatory sensation, ‘for the Tongue is apprehensive of all the *Tactile* qualities,’ as well as ‘*Sapours*.’²⁹ In fact, the tongue is more sensitive as an organ of touch than even the conventionally acute fingertips, for ‘Jewellers and Lapidaries doe more accurately discern the differences of roughnesse and smoothnes, and such touchable qualities by the toung then by the hand.’³⁰ This intertwining of the senses in experience and discourse means that it is frequently easier and more accurate to discuss their functioning as a whole, and *Mikrokosmographia* includes a long and complex, though in many respects deeply conventional, description of the the physiological process of sensing in general terms. Crooke’s fundamentally Aristotelian understanding of this process is informed at every turn by a tradition of writings on the organic soul.³¹ I will give a brief account of the mechanics of sensation in *Mikrokosmographia* before proceeding to explore their significance in a phenomenological context.

Crooke follows the vast majority of previous commentators in identifying two parts to the faculty of sensation, ‘one Externall... the other Internall.’ The external faculty consists of the ‘outward senses’ of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, whilst the ‘Internall Facultie,’ which ‘Philosophers call the Primary or *Common sense*,’ is associated at various points with both the brain and the soul.³² Crooke understands the relationship between the two as circular. ‘Vessels or passages [i.e. nerves]’ transport the ‘Faculty’ of sensing from the brain to the specific organs of sense.³³

the Nerves receive from the braine as from a principle... the Animal vertue and sensative soule which do reside in his substance and do distribute the faculties

²⁶ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, B6v (12). In the last few decades, Michel Serres has similarly avocated a synaesthetic conception of the senses as rooted in and by the skin, which he calls the ‘common sense’ and describes as a kind of cloth in which the ‘senses are entwined and attached.’ Serres, *The Five Senses*, 52, 58-59.

²⁷ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Iii6v (531).

²⁸ Ibid., Ppp4r (715).

²⁹ Ibid., Hhh2v (628).

³⁰ Ibid., H6v (84).

³¹ On this tradition, see Katharine Park, ‘The Organic Soul,’ in Charles B. Schmitt *et al.*, eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 464-84.

³² Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Vv5v (502).

³³ Ibid., Oo6v (432).

of sense and motion into the Organs or Instruments of sense & motion as it were through Channels.³⁴

This journey of the ‘faculties of sense and motion’ from the brain to the sense organs is, as Crooke makes clear elsewhere, effected via ‘spirits... engendred of blood and vapour.’³⁵ Thus infused with the faculty of sense, the organs of sense are able to receive ‘the Images of things.’ By ‘images,’ Crooke means what Aristotle’s medieval commentators, including Thomas Aquinas, called the sensory species: immaterial forms emanated by the object of sense, which literally print the sense organ with its image.³⁶ Subsequently, according to Crooke, ‘all these individuall formes received by the senses, are by them resigned up in token of fealty to the common sense or privy-chamber of the soule from whence they received their faculties.’³⁷ Traditionally, the function of this extra, internal ‘common sense’ was supposed to be twofold: firstly, to perceive that one is sensing, and secondly to aggregate and reflect on the data received from the various sense organs, synthesising it into a coherent perceptual whole.³⁸ Crooke describes this second process thus: ‘out of those formes the soule gathering phantasmes or notions doth either lay them up in the Memory, or worke upon them by discourse of Reason.’³⁹

In some ways, Crooke’s Aristotelian conception of perception has undeniable similarities to the representationalist theory which I outline above, and which Ingold refutes. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes it in his 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception*, this representationalist model:

begins by recognizing an anatomical path leading from a receiver through a definite transmitter to a recording station, equally specialized. The objective world being given, it is assumed that it passes on to the sense-organs messages which must be registered, then deciphered in such a way as to reproduce in us the original text.⁴⁰

³⁴ Ibid., Ss2v (472).

³⁵ Ibid., Q3v (174).

³⁶ Ibid., Iii5r (504). On the Thomist theory of species, see Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4-17.

³⁷ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Oo6v (432).

³⁸ Aristotle also calls it the ‘total sense,’ ‘master sense,’ and ‘primary sense.’ For a cogent account of Aristotle’s ideas about the common sense, see Daniel Heller Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 38, and Summers, *The Judgement of Sense*, 97-98. Jennifer Waldron links the common sense to synaesthesia; see Jennifer Waldron, “‘The Eye of Man Hath Not Heard’: Shakespeare, Synaesthesia, and Post-Reformation Phenomenology,” *Criticism* 54/3 (2012): 406-407.

³⁹ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Oo6v (432).

⁴⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 8.

Crooke's peripatetic vocabulary of 'spirits,' 'soule' and 'common sense' might not be in evidence here, but his basic narrative – the sense organs receive impressions which are transmitted to a central faculty or 'station' which then deciphers or 'workes upon' those impressions – is similar. If we move to a more detailed examination of Crooke's conception of the senses, however, major differences begin to emerge.

According to Ingold, in western science, 'life tends to be understood as a passive process,' and contemporary cognitive science is no exception.⁴¹ Informed by a 'Cartesian ontology... that divorces the activity of the mind from that of the body in the world,' in cognitive science 'the body continues to be regarded as nothing more than an input device whose role is to receive information to be 'processed' by the mind, rather than playing any part in cognition itself.' Drawing on the work of the psychologist James Gibson, as well as Merleau-Ponty, Ingold proposes that instead we conceive of 'the perceiving organism' not as 'a passive recipient of stimuli but... [as] an active agent who purposively seeks out information that would specify the meaningful properties of his or her environment.'⁴²

For Crooke, quoting the medieval Arabic philosopher Averroes, 'the first and chiefe consideration of Sense is, *Whether it bee to be accounted amongst the Active or Passive vertues or Faculties of the soule.*' Crooke goes on to challenge the terms of the question itself. It is, he implies, based on an overly absolute division of 'action and passion':

Active motion is that which proceedeth from the agent for the effecting of some thing; and Passive that which is received of the patient to make alteration in it: wherfore both action and passion being indeed one motion, as it commeth from the agent is an Action, and as it is received of... [the] Patient is a Passion.⁴³

Action and passion thus exist along the continuum of a single 'motion': they are opposites which constitute one another. As an act of sensing is understood as a single motion or action, it thus involves both an agent and a patient, or an active element and a passive element: 'sense... is absolved and perfected, neither by action onely nor by

⁴¹ Ingold, *Perception*, 50.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 165.

⁴³ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Kkk3r (653).

passion onely but by both together, that is both by action and passion.⁴⁴ The point is very similar to one made by Merleau-Ponty in the *Phenomenology of Perception*:

The sensor and the sensible do not stand in relation to each other as two mutually external terms, and sensation is not an invasion of the sensor by the sensible... in [the] transaction between the subject of sensation and the sensible it cannot be held that one acts while the other suffers the action.⁴⁵

As his descriptions of processes of tasting make clear, Crooke understands gustatory sensation as just this kind of mutual ‘transaction.’ ‘When any savoury quality or affection... is applied unto the tongue,’ he writes, ‘it stirreth up the taste.’⁴⁶ Sensation occurs as a result both of the purposiveness of the subject who applies the ‘savoury quality... unto the tongue,’ and of the force of the saviours themselves, which work dynamically to stimulate the taste. Elsewhere, the vitality of saviours is evident in Crooke’s belief that they ‘pierce through [the skin] into the pulpe and substance of the tongue,’ and his definition of ‘a Savour’ as ‘a quality... which alone by it selfe is able to moove the Taste.’⁴⁷ However, Crooke also remains aware of the agency of the organ of taste, commenting that ‘whilst wee chew our meate the Tongue rowleth it selfe on everie side of the mouth and applyeth it selfe to the Viands to take a say or Taste of them.’⁴⁸ Crooke is particularly sensitive to the ways in which the consciously-chosen bodily *practices* of tasting subjects not only facilitate but inform the experience of taste in specific ways. He comments, for instance, that ‘if... we desire to Taste any thing more curiously we apply it to the tip of our tongues.’ In contrast, ‘when wee are to swallow any thing whose taste is displeasing to us we hasten it to the roots of our tongue as soone as we can.’⁴⁹ Tastes exist simultaneously as objective properties of comestibles able to act on the tongue, and as ephemeral sensations shaped by the manner of ingestion chosen by the tasting subject (i.e. a thorough chewing, versus a curious application to the tip of the tongue, versus a swift swallowing).

For Crooke, then, the issue is not whether the act of sensing is active or passive, but where to locate agency and passivity *within* the act. As usual, Aristotle’s (alleged)

⁴⁴ Ibid., Kkk5r (657).

⁴⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 248.

⁴⁶ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Zzz1r (531).

⁴⁷ Ibid., Hhh2v, Ppp5v (628, 718).

⁴⁸ Ibid., Hhh3r (629).

⁴⁹ Ibid., Ppp6r (726).

opinion on the matter is expounded first. Aristotle, Crooke suggests, represents the sensing body as a ‘passive’ recipient of the ‘species,’ or image, of the objective world: ‘the act of Sensation’ is associated with the ‘sensible object’ rather than with the self that experiences it.⁵⁰ Crooke goes on, however, to counter that such an argument, ‘though it be approved of many and be held for *Aristotles*, yet... is neither agreeable to *Aristotle* nor to the truth.’⁵¹

There must be some part of the mind present in sensation; and hence it is that wee sometimes seeke a very small thing and yet see it not though we be very neare it, and though it be already received into the eye: Surely this is an argument most evident that the mind must be applied to that thing which we would see, and that something more is required to Sense then the bare reception of the species, for else a glasse might also *perceive* in as much as it doth receive the images...⁵²

Our phenomenal experience demonstrates that the body does not simply receive sense impressions, but must actively ‘seeke’ them out. Echoing Aristotle’s *De Generatione Animalium*, which had argued that ‘perception is a kind of cognition,’ Crooke insists that the mind does not belatedly process sense impressions; it is also ‘present in sensation’ itself.⁵³ Sensation is thus understood to have cognitive content: as Crooke says elsewhere ‘sense is not an alteration, but a *discerning* or knowing of the alteration.... the Action of the sensitive faculty is a knowing and dijudication of the sensible thing.’⁵⁴ To qualify as a sensation, a perceptual experience needs to join reception with apprehension. As Crooke’s use of the word ‘dijudication’ (judgement or discrimination) makes abundantly clear, acts of sensing, including tasting, are understood to quite literally *incorporate* judgement.

In a recent essay, David Morris connects Merleau-Ponty’s contention, in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, that (in Morris’ paraphrase) ‘perception is not a passivist intake of outside sensation, but an active inherence of the body in the world’ to

⁵⁰ Ibid., Kkk3r (653).

⁵¹ Ibid., Kkk4v (656).

⁵² Ibid., Kkk4v-5r (656-57).

⁵³ See Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium* / *The Generation of Animals*, in J. L. Ackrill, ed., *A New Aristotle Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 244.

⁵⁴ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Kkk5v (58).

Merleau-Ponty's later theory of reversibility.⁵⁵ 'Reversibility,' Morris explains, designates the fact that:

to see something is to inherently also be a being who can be seen. The seer is inherently seen, in something like the way that a front inherently has a back. Similarly with... the perceiver and the perceived generally... Perception is conditioned by the perceiver's being part of and open to the perceived world.⁵⁶

Processes of perception do not only disclose the world to the perceiver, they also reveal the perceiver as a being *in* the world, and as such subject to reciprocal acts of perception. Because sensory experiences are constitutionally embodied, that is, they simultaneously posit the self as a potential (passive) object, as well as an (active) origin, of sense. Morris employs the example of touch to illustrate this concept: 'the hand,' he writes, 'in the very activity of touching, inherently opens itself to being passively touched by things, such that the touching hand can reverse to a passive thing touched and the thing can reverse to something active.'⁵⁷ Put simply, if the hand touches the table, the table also touches the hand.

I would like to suggest that Croke similarly evinces an awareness of the way in which acts of sensing – including tasting – necessarily establish the perceiver as reciprocally subject to perception. Furthermore, because the active dimension of sensing corresponds to what Merleau-Ponty would call its intentionality, and what Croke describes as the application of 'the mind... to that thing' which we would perceive, the passive dimension of sensing correspondingly opens up the perceiver not only to recognition as a sensible thing, but also to judgement as a thinking being. In the case of touch, Croke writes:

the more simple and pure the touching is, the clearer also and the purer is the sence, and the phantasmes or imaginations the more subtle: by meanes whereof, the operation of the soule, is so much the more lofty and profound. And for this reason, *Aristotle* in his second Booke *De Anima*, is of opinion, that the

⁵⁵ David Morris, 'The Enigma of Reversibility and the Genesis of Sense in Merleau-Ponty,' *Continental Philosophy Review* 43/2 (2010): 156.

⁵⁶ Morris, 'Enigma,' 143. Ingold puts this more simply, commenting that for Merleau-Ponty the body 'both sees and is seen.' *Perception*, 264.

⁵⁷ Morris, 'Enigma,' 144.

strength and vigor of the wit and understanding, are to bee judged of by the coursenesse or finenesse of the touch...⁵⁸

Because the act of touching encompasses, rather than precedes, ‘the operation of the soule,’ haptic sensitivity both conditions, and provides a guide to, the acuity of the mind. A ‘simple and pure... touching’ does not only provide the subject with accurate information about the world, it also positions the subject as someone who can be ‘bee judged’ to be in possession of a strong and vigorous ‘wit and understanding.’ Touch is concurrently world-disclosing and self-revealing: an active striving for knowledge and a passive susceptibility to being known.

The same can be said for the sense of taste, both insofar as it ‘hath great affinity with the Sense of Touching,’ and in terms of the perception of saviours specifically. Indeed, Crooke uses taste as a test-case for the Aristotelian contention that ‘the Organ must potentially be the same thing which the object is actually, that so it might be altered & actually receive the nature of the object... [and] put on the qualities thereof.’ This necessary indistinction – even reversibility – between the organ and object of taste is confirmed by the substance of the tongue, which ‘is moist and hot neare of kinne unto the Nature of a Sapour, that it might more easily bee altered thereby.’⁵⁹ Elsewhere, Crooke emphasises what we might conveniently, if anachronistically, call the subjectivity of the sense of taste:

Because the Saviours themselves are infinite, their proportion very divers, and their causes so transcendent, it is not possible to make any definition or description of them to any purpose, who can deny but that some creatures, yea some men doe vehemently desire bitter things and abhorre that which is sweete? are bitter things therefore sweete to the one and sweet things bitter to the other? You will say no, because the difference ariseth from the diversity of his Temperament that Tastes it. I confesse it, but seeing there are almost so many divers Temperaments as there are *individua* [sic] or particular creatures in the world I would aske the question whether it bee possible that so many different kinds of Saviours may be reckoned or deduced from them? By no meanes...⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, B6v (12).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Qqq2v (724).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Ppp6v (721).

Crooke's conviction that it is impossible to 'make any definition or description' of the saviours stems not only from their multiplicity and the obscurity of their causes, but also from the 'diversity of his Temperament that Tastes.' The manifold vagaries of the sense of taste mean that expressions of gustatory preference and aversion are less representative of properties of foodstuffs – that is, of actual saviours – than they are of the peculiarities of 'his Temperament that Tastes.' A man who, contrary to the instincts of the majority, 'desire[s] bitter things and abhorre[s] that which is sweete' does not reveal any new information about the gustatory qualities of what he consumes. Instead, he displays the specificity of his own nature. Crooke's affirmation of the impossibility of identifying and describing saviours as objective properties of things thus comes to mark any expression of gustatory sensation – whether in words or actions – as a form of self-revelation.

So far, I have stressed imbrications of the commonly accepted senses as objects of knowledge, particularly between taste and touch. As I note in the introduction, however, history is also riddled with attempts to define their differences and arbitrate their relative worth, and – according to many scholars – such attempts frequently, if not overwhelmingly, privilege vision.⁶¹ The ranking of the rest of the senses is understood to be more fluid, although the distal senses – those which, as Crooke says, 'apprehend their objects by the interposition of an other, as Sight and Hearing' – are usually prioritized over the proximity senses, which 'woorke by contaction, as the Touch and the Taste.'⁶² Recently, however, some scholars have begun to complicate this picture, pointing to individuals and genres of texts who or which have offered alternative hierarchies. Charles Burnett's essay arguing for the superiority of taste in the medieval period is probably the most comprehensive revision of the traditional model, although others have also contributed to a reassessment of the putative degradation of this sense throughout history.⁶³ Robert Jütte notes that the conventional association of taste and touch meant that for the medieval Persian physician and philosopher Avicenna:

the haptic comprehension of the world is... of central importance for the survival of the individual and the species, since it is the means by which we

⁶¹ See Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, 11-37; Stewart, 'Remembering the Senses,' 61-62.

⁶² Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Ggg3r (617). The status of smell is ambiguous; Crooke calls it 'the middle Sence' and accords it an intermediary position between the two types. Ibid, Ggg3r (702).

⁶³ Charles Burnett, 'The Superiority of Taste,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 54 (1991): 230-38.

distinguish between the edible and inedible... With the exception of taste, the other senses merely serve to make life agreeable.⁶⁴

According to Jütte, when taste achieves priority over sight, smell and hearing it does so insofar as it is understood as vital to sustaining human life. The influence of this view in the seventeenth century is evident in the reactionary peripatetic Alexander Ross' assertion, in his 1652 *Arcana microcosmi*, that 'tact and taste... are the two absolutely needfull senses, without which we cannot live, (whereas without the other three we may).'⁶⁵ The value usually granted to sight, in contrast, is generally understood to stem from the status it bestows on mankind as epistemologically capable beings. Taste and touch are ontologically 'needfull,' vision is epistemologically 'agreeable.' As Ingold comments, conventionally, 'the superiority of vision over touch is not that of one sense over another, but that of cognition over sensation.'⁶⁶

Up to a certain point, Crooke's assessment of the relative value of the senses accords with such interpretations. His approving citation of Plato and Aristotle does indeed align vision and epistemological authority:

Plato said wel, that if we wanted our Eyes wee should bee ignorant of that excellent order which Nature hath established in the frame of the world and of our own bodies. *Aristotle* addeth that the Science or exquisite knowledge of all things is exceeding much furthered by the eyes.⁶⁷

Later, having affirmed Aristotle's assertion that there are five senses, Crooke offers two alternative ways of ordering them, namely, by 'dignity,' and by 'necessity.'⁶⁸ The order of dignity, he explains, is largely followed by philosophers and prioritizes sight, whilst medical practitioners, following the order of necessity, prioritize touch, closely followed by taste. Crooke's accumulative methodology, as he gathers and recounts the opinions and counter-arguments of numerous authorities, can be confusing: contradictory views are frequently juxtaposed without any evaluation of their relative validity. Here, however – with rare self-assertion – Crooke interposes a 'Quest.[ion]' on '*the Authors owne opinion,*'

⁶⁴ Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses*, 70.

⁶⁵ Alexander Ross, *Arcana microcosmi, or, The hid secrets of man's body* (London: Thomas Newcomb for John Clark, 1652), 39.

⁶⁶ Ingold, *Perception*, 225.

⁶⁷ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Bbb4v-5r (536-37).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Lll1r (661).

coming down firmly if unsurprisingly on the side of the profession he practised: 'because the Schoole of Physitians hath alleadged the more waighty arguments, I will more willingly cast in my lot with them.'⁶⁹ As we might expect, the reason he gives is that both touch and taste are absolutely essential to human life, for '*if any Creature be deprived of this Sense of touching death will of necessity ensue.*' Similarly, taste is 'not only commodious (for so are the other subsequent Senses) but also necessarie unto the conservation of the *Individuum.*'⁷⁰ Where Crooke does distinguish himself from other accounts which associate sight with epistemological dignity and taste with bare necessity, is in his insistence that it is impossible to disassociate the *pleasures* of taste from its necessary function of conserving life:

....without taste the creature cannot live... because all creatures taking delight in some one kinde of food or other when the Sense of pleasure is taken away, they abstaine from those meates, or take but little and so pine away to death.⁷¹

Crooke places a high premium on the pleasures of taste as the motivation for eating. The close association of taste and 'delight' is underscored by his punning reference to 'the Sense of pleasure,' which not only refers to one kind of experience provided by taste, but also names taste as inherently pleasurable. Utility does not exclude pleasure, nor is pleasure a mere by-product of usefulness. On the contrary, the utility of taste as it sustains life is a consequence of the delight it provides. For Crooke, then, taste is a kind of indispensable excess, which spills across and erodes the boundary between the exigencies of being and the ephemeral pleasures of perceiving.⁷²

III. 'of the Taste and of the Voice'

Crooke's discussion of the hierarchy of the senses addresses only the five accepted by Aristotle. Elsewhere, however, he acknowledges the claims of another contender to the title in the early modern period: speech. That speech might be considered as an adjunct to the senses is evident throughout Book Eight of *Mikrokosmographia*, entitled 'the

⁶⁹ Ibid., Ll12r (663).

⁷⁰ Ibid., Kkk1r (649).

⁷¹ Ibid., Ppp4r (715).

⁷² As such, it might be aligned to what Terry Eagleton has called 'the culture-as-supplementarity case.' See *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 100-101.

Senses and their Instruments, *as also of the Voice*.⁷³ The voice is a somewhat awkward addition; not included in the category of ‘the Senses,’ but articulated alongside them. Crooke writes that from the brain ‘doe issue... all the instruments of the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching yea and speech also.’⁷⁴ Certain kinds of verbal utterance, Crooke asserts, can express the experiences and desires of ‘the Sensative soule,’ for ‘the tongue of a man, sometimes... expresseth onelie those things that fall under the Sense, as when wee crie for paine, or for Foode and succour.’ The voice has the ability to express sensations as well as meanings, or ‘those things that fall under our understanding.’⁷⁵ Speech is thus peripherally but decidedly located with the senses.

Crooke’s suggestion that speech should be counted alongside the senses, even if it is not counted amongst them, has precedents. As C. M. Woolgar notes, speech was one of the ‘prime candidates for inclusion in the late medieval sensorium.’⁷⁶ Ambivalence about whether or not speech could be a sense lingered into the seventeenth century, with Thomas Tomkis’ academic comedy *Lingua: Or The Combat of the Tongue, and the five Senses for Superiority* (1607) providing a prime example of arguments for and against. The play dramatises the attempt of Lingua, or speech personified, to be accepted as a sense. Throughout, she is closely identified with Gustus. The relation is invoked both by Lingua herself, in defense of her cause, and by Common Sense as part of her punishment. ‘Oft,’ Lingua declaims proudly, ‘have I seasoned savorie periods / with sugred words, to delude *Gustus* taste.’⁷⁷ The language of sapour, here, encompassing ‘savorie’ and ‘sugred,’ has a strangely liminal status. It hovers between a literal application, as the sapsours evoked are supposed to stimulate Gustus, and a metaphorical application, as it qualifies ‘periods’ and ‘words.’ This ambiguity underlies Lingua’s appeal to be considered a sense, which rests partially on her self-proclaimed capacity to stimulate – and so deceive – Gustus. Lingua’s boast also proleptically undermines the punishment which Common Sense assigns to her for her many acts of deception in the play, for he ‘commit[s]’ her ‘to close prison, in Gustus his house,’ ordering Gustus to ‘keepe her under the custody of two strong doors... see she be well garded with 30. tall watchmen...’⁷⁸ If it is true that Lingua is as adept at beguiling

⁷³ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Yyy6v (530).

⁷⁴ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* Qq5r (453).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Hhh3r (629).

⁷⁶ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, 10 and 84-104.

⁷⁷ Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua, or The combat of the tongue, and the five senses for superiority* (London: G. Eld for Simon Waterson, 1607), I.1, A4v.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, V.17, M2v.

Gustus as she previously claimed, one might imagine her incarceration will not last too long.

The metaphor of the mouth as a prison which restrains the unruly tongue is conventional, as is *Lingua's* close association of speech and taste. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the conceptual propinquity of the two stemmed mainly from their spatial propinquity: Carla Mazzio notes that 'early etymologies of *'lingua'* traced the word to its root in the activities of both eating and speaking.'⁷⁹ Henry VIII's surgeon Thomas Vicary commented of the tongue that 'by him is received the taste of swéete and sower, and... by him is pronounced every speache.'⁸⁰ Both speech and taste, then, take the mouth, and particularly the tongue, as their common origin. Crooke himself repeatedly gestures to the multiple functions of the tongue, commenting that the tongue is 'a notable instrument both of the Taste and of the Voice,' and describing it in quick succession as 'the Sensor of Tastes' and 'the very organ of [verbal] Articulation.'⁸¹ Indeed, Crooke subsumes tasting and speaking into each other as the single, 'primarie use' of the tongue:

The use... of the Tongue is either primary or secondary. The primarie use is, that it might be a convenient and fit organ or instrument both of the Sense of Tasting & of the Speech.... The Secundarie Use of the Tongue is for mastication or chewing, or breaking of the meate, and for diglutition or Swallowing.⁸²

Here, Crooke makes a distinction between the intimately allied acts of tasting and speaking, and the tongue's secondary function, 'chewing.' Elsewhere, however, he emphasises that taste is predicated on mastication, for 'that a Sapor may be exactly judged of or apprehended, the body wherin that Sapor is, must be broken between the Palate and the Tong.'⁸³ Tasting thus follows from the fracturing of foodstuffs in the mouth. The belief that we access a sapor only by breaking the body in which it resides provides another correspondence to speech, which is similarly predicated on the fracturing, or 'articulation' of the voice. 'The body of the Tongue,' writes Crooke, is 'continuall not divided by any partition, whereby it becommeth fitter to Taste with, to

⁷⁹ Carla Mazzio, 'Sins of the Tongue in Early Modern England,' *Modern Language Studies* 28/3-4 (1998): 93-124 (see especially 98).

⁸⁰ Thomas Vicary, *The Englishmans treasure* (London: John Windet for John Perin, 1586), C2r.

⁸¹ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Hhh1v, Hhh3r (626, 629).

⁸² *Ibid.*, Hhh3r-v (629-30).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Hhh4v (632).

breake the meate, and to articulate the voice.⁸⁴ The basic formal integrity of the tongue facilitates its dual role, as the parallelism of ‘to breake the meate, and to articulate the voice’ underscores the relation between the two. Both the tongue’s experience of taste and its production of speech are thus based on division and ‘partition,’ as ‘Taste’ succeeds the breaking of ‘meate’ and ‘the voice’ works to ‘articulate,’ in the sense of divide as well as express, the stream of language.

IV. ‘to have in minde... at fingers end’

At this point, it becomes possible to explore how Crooke’s discussion of the senses – and taste in particular – as an *object* of knowledge might affect our conception both of how the dissector himself makes use of his senses in the anatomical theatre, and how ‘taste’ operates as an epistemological term in anatomical texts. Recent scholarship has begun to recalibrate the relationship between text-based, scholastic fields of learning and the empirical emphasis of natural historical knowledge. Whilst, as Kevin Killeen writes, ‘the presumed divergence of textual scholarship from empirical study... is still seen, in some accounts at least... as one of the defining attributes of the [early modern] period’s scientific practices,’ other accounts have highlighted imbrications of ‘the craft of observation’ and the ‘scholastic, Aristotelian and emblematic past.’⁸⁵ Gianna Pomata’s and Nancy Siraisi’s edited collection, *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, has played an important part in this recalibration. Invoking research on Renaissance anatomy as characteristic, Pomata and Siraisi comment that:

empiricism and book learning have conventionally been seen as almost antithetical. Scholars have found it hard to reconcile the emphasis on direct observation, in Renaissance anatomy for instance, with the enormous baggage of philological skill and antiquarian learning that Vesalius and his peers brought to the dissecting table. This philological and antiquarian apparatus has been seen

⁸⁴ Ibid., Hhh2v (628).

⁸⁵ Kevin Killeen, *Biblical Scholarship, Science and Politics in Early Modern England: Thomas Browne and the Thorny Place of Knowledge* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 20. David C. Lindberg notes that ‘[contemporary] commentators on the new philosophy were quick to perceive it as an extension and outgrowth of the humanist revival.’ Lindberg, ‘Conceptions of the Scientific Revolution from Bacon to Butterfield,’ in Lindberg and Robert S. Westman, eds., *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3. See also Anne Blair, ‘Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The Commonplace Book,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53/4 (1992): 541-51. Blair argues that ‘the method of commonplaces was not simply a tool of bookish natural philosophy that disappeared... with the rise of “modern” science during the seventeenth century. Indeed the core of the method lives on... in Francis Bacon’s precepts for a new science.’ Blair, ‘Humanist Methods,’ 549-50.

mostly as a handicap, an oppressively constraining theoretical filter that limited and distorted observation.⁸⁶

In contrast, Pomata and Siraisi demonstrate that examples of early modern *historia* ‘highlight... one of the most intriguing features of the early modern descriptive sciences, namely the interlocking of observational skills and philological learning – the coupling of empiricism and erudition.’ Early modern texts, they argue, present textual, scholastic learning and empirical, body-based knowledge not as opposed but as complementary, and the essays they collect ‘point out striking parallels between ways of observing and ways of reading, close links between firsthand observation and book learning.’⁸⁷

Pomata and Siraisi’s concept of what they summarily call “‘learned” empiricism’ provides a useful way of thinking about Crooke’s depiction of the anatomist’s use of his senses in *Mikrokosmographia*.⁸⁸ For Crooke, the anatomist’s use of his senses – including taste – to produce anatomical knowledge is structured by and understood in terms of humanist practices of reading and writing, particularly the practice of commonplacing. Conversely, Crooke also appears to think of and experience reading and writing as deeply embodied, sensuous practices; engagement with texts is a physical process, something like engagement with bodies. Because of this, the distinction between physiological taste as it operates in the realm of the anatomical theatre, and readerly taste as it operates on the authoritative text, begins to break down in ways which encourage us to rethink the critical distinction between empirical, body-based knowledge and the authority of language.

The sense that the body is a textual entity, and conversely that texts are produced and consumed through embodied processes, suffuses *Mikrokosmographia*. The literary work of writing an anatomical textbook is depicted as deeply physical, in ways which resonate with the embodied work of dissection itself. We have already seen a hint of this in Crooke’s assertion in ‘The Præface to the Chururgeons’ that ‘the streame and current of *Bauhines* discourse... I have broken off and parted as it might best be understood.’ The acts of reading and collation that undergird *Mikrokosmographia* are figured as processes of breaking asunder and parting that are implicitly akin to the processes of opening and parting the body itself. And, just as a skilful anatomical

⁸⁶ Gianna Pomata and Nancy Siraisi, introduction to *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 1-38, especially 17.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

dissection involves tactile sensitivity, so too does reading. In Crooke's dedicatory defence of his decision to write *Mikrokosmographia* in English, for instance, he responds to opponents who say he 'should have written in Latine' by asserting 'that indeed had bene easier for me by far, having the words made to my hands, the passages chalked out.'⁸⁹ Crooke experiences his familiarity with the Latin language as physical intimacy: his proficiency in using it is expressed in terms of manual skill, whilst the breadth of his learning is hypostatized in the physical traces of his reading, the 'chalked out' passages of books. The surgeon – and later physician – John Banister uses similar terminology in *The historie of man*, advising the 'frendly Reader... exactly to learne, and to have in minde (as the Proverbe is) at fingers end, those fewe deciffered names [for the bones].'⁹⁰ For both Crooke and Banister, then, mastery of language is founded in haptic competence. Correspondingly, if the manipulation of language is effected via manual as well as mental skill, readerly incompetence is described as a type of physical violence akin to an unskilfull dissection. Thus, Crooke writes of Galen that 'almost all the new Writers, do continually carpe and barke at him, yea teare and rend him, whether it be by right or wrong, wounding and lancing his credite upon every slight occasion.'⁹¹ In deploring the disrespect of 'new Writers' for ancient authority, Crooke does not, as we might expect, oppose the authority of the text and the evidence provided by empirical experience. Instead, he identifies book and body, *corpus* and corpse: it is not Galen's works, but Galen, that his detractors 'teare and rend.' Crooke figures his opponents' encounters with textual authority as a sensory experience in itself, and as a form of rough, crude anatomization.

Books, then, are like bodies for Crooke, and reading and writing them is something like the tactile and embodied experience of dissection. Conversely, in *Mikrokosmographia* the body is described as a kind of book, 'imprinted' with the image of the God which created it.⁹² This image is literalized both in its pictorial representation and in the vocabulary used to describe it. Many of the anatomical illustrations which accompany the text are densely crowded with letters which refer the reader to explanatory captions. The idea that the body is inscribed is also evident in the self-reflective language used to describe the organs of speech: the '*Genuoglossi* or the *chintongue* Muscles' which move the tongue, for instance, 'have also certaine lines in them

⁸⁹ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, ¶6v (unpaginated).

⁹⁰ John Banister, *The historie of man* (London: John Day, 1578), C3r (3).

⁹¹ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, C6v (22).

⁹² *Ibid.*, B2r (3).

which Anatomists call *inscription* [from the Latin *inscribere*, to write in or upon].⁹³ A humanist vocabulary of reading and writing infuses Crooke's conception of the practical work of dissection. He writes, for example, that the sixteenth-century French anatomist Jacques Dubois (called Jacobus Sylvius, the Latinized version of his name, by Crooke), 'hath digested in a most exquisite order, the vast and wilde Forrest as it were, and confusion of all the Muscles and Vessels, and given them particular and proper names.'⁹⁴ Crooke's depiction of the work of Dubois stands as a prime expression of 'learned empiricism': humanist textual practices of digesting and naming are presented as contiguous with the surgeon's practical exploration of the 'vast and wilde Forrest' of the body, with its corporeal 'confusion of... Muscles and Vessels.'

The body understood as a textual entity is subject to modes of interpretation, and capable of forms of action, that we more usually associate with books. In *Mikrokosmographia*, Crooke asserts that it is possible for the corpse to provide a commentary on and illuminate the sometimes incomprehensible 'body' of texts:

...how profitable and necessary it [i.e. anatomical dissection] is for the explaining of the writings of *Hippocrates*, *Galen*, and all the ancient Physitions. For in them there are many passages darke and obscure, whereunto the knowledge of Anatomy will give a great light and splendour.⁹⁵

According to conventional scholarly accounts, the relationship between canonical texts and empirical experience in early modern anatomy was one-way. Images such as figure 2.1, a frontispiece painting dating from *circa* 1580 which shows John Banister teaching from the second edition of the Paduan anatomist Realdo Colombo's *De re anatomica* (1562), are usually taken to represent that way that, for anatomists in the vice-like grip of authoritative texts, classical and other canonical works were supposed to provide a guide to the interior of the body. According to this model, Banister's experience of bodies – the skeleton he looks towards, the viscera his hand rests on – would be filtered through and skewed by the inaccuracies that books propagate. As the quotation from Crooke makes clear, however, the direction of exegesis might just as well go the other way: first-hand 'knowledge of anatomy' enables the student to understand 'the writings

⁹³ Ibid., Ttt3v (762). 'Inscribe, v.' *OED Online*, accessed 16 December 2012, www.oed.com/view/Entry/96648.

⁹⁴ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, D1r (25).

⁹⁵ Ibid., C3r (17).

of... Physitions.’ According to this model, the body provides a commentary or gloss on the book, not vice versa. Crooke’s conception of the sensory experience of dissection is thus consistent with his ideas about the senses as objects of knowledge. Sensory data is not ‘filtered through’ a mental frame, and in the process reshaped according to cultural (textually inculcated) prejudice, as in a modern representationalist theory of perception.

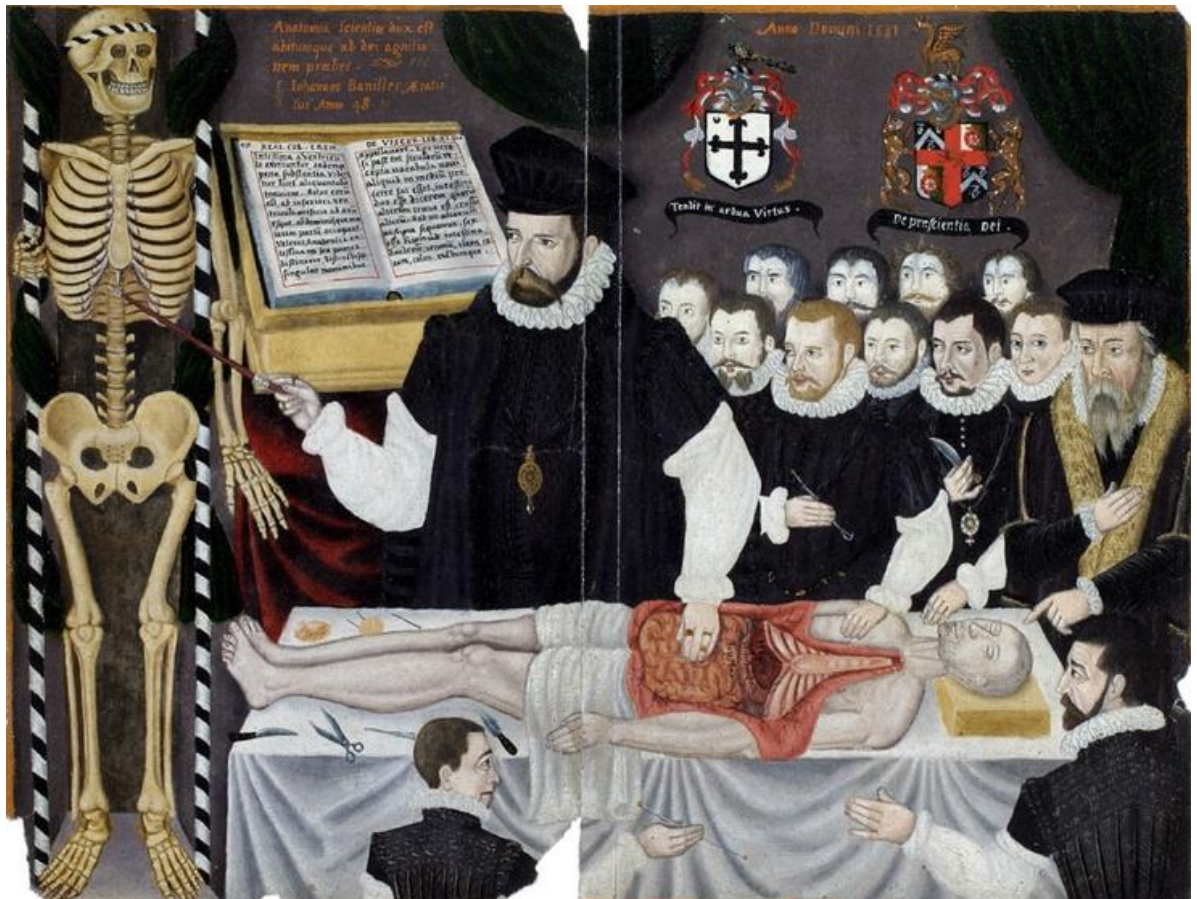


Figure 2.1. Anon., *Anatomical Tables*, frontispiece painting commissioned by John Banister (c1580). Ms Hunter 364, V.1.1. © University of Glasgow Library Special Collections.

Instead, sense perceptions always already have cognitive content: as Crooke says right at the beginning of *Mikrokosmographia*, the senses are ‘ordained’ not only to receive impressions, but ‘also for contemplation.’⁹⁶ The anatomist can think with his senses, as well as with his mind.

⁹⁶ Ibid., B3r (5).

V. 'a confusion of hungers'

In order to uncover the relevance of Crooke's depiction of the interimplication of body and book to his conception of the relation between physiological and epistemological taste, I turn now to Richard Selzer's depiction of the modern surgeon's experience of his craft. As a medical practitioner operating in the second half of the twentieth century, Selzer works not with criminal corpses but with anaesthetized bodies, and his aim is to cure rather than explain; nonetheless, his work offers an insight into the sensations, emotions and skills employed in the act of cutting human flesh. In *Mortal Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery*, Selzer poses a question: 'could this one-pound loaf of sourdough,' he wonders, 'be the pelting brain?'⁹⁷ Selzer might not know it (and elsewhere he deplores the 'reprehensible penchant' of pathologists for 'comparing the manifestations of disease to items of food') but his use of a food image to describe the interior of the body has a rich history.⁹⁸ However, whilst for Selzer the material similarity of the vital, dynamic brain to a loaf of leavened bread is bathetic, and the comparison of, for instance, a diseased liver to a 'nutmeg' registers 'a confusion of hungers,' for early modern surgeons and physicians the (usually visual) similarity of bodily organs and consumable foodstuffs is simply consistent with the use of taste as a diagnostic and epistemological faculty.⁹⁹

Selzer's disapproval of the use of food tropes to describe the body's interior is tinged by disgust at the implicitly cannibalistic association of corpse and consumable. In the early modern period, anatomical dissection and cannibalistic eating were frequently affiliated in both popular culture and learned discourse. In Ben Jonson's *Bartholemew Fair* (1614; 1631), for instance, Littlewit invokes 'the pothecary's wife... that longed to see the anatomy' in order to demonstrate to his pregnant wife Win, who craves pork, that 'you may long to see as well as to taste.'¹⁰⁰ For Littlewit, a desire to watch a dissection being performed is analogous to the desire to consume – or more specifically, 'to taste' – pork (the meat that was understood to be closest in constitution to human flesh).¹⁰¹ Anxieties about the potential overlap between anatomical dissection and cannibalistic consumption were exacerbated by the use of Egyptian mummy in medicine. The

⁹⁷ Richard Selzer, *Mortal Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery* (London: Random House, 1981), 22.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁰⁰ Jonson, *Bartholemew Fair*, III.vi.13-15.

¹⁰¹ On pork's supposed similarity to human flesh, see Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 6.

sixteenth-century French surgeon Ambroise Paré, whose works were translated from the Latin by Thomas Johnson and published in England in 1634, vigorously denounced this practice, calling it a form of ‘barbarous inhumanity’ and listing its less-than-salubrious effects: ‘this wiked kinde of Drugge, doth nothing helpe the diseased... it also inferres many troublesome symptomes, as the paine of the heart or stomacke, vomiting and stinke of the mouth.’¹⁰² Little wonder, especially if, as Paré asserts, the rarity of genuine mummy led:

certaine of our French Apothecaries... to steale by night the bodyes of such as were hanged, and embalming them with salt and Drugges they dried them in an Oven, so to sell them thus adulterated in steed of true Mummie. Wherefore wee are thus compelled both foolishly and cruelly to devoure the mangied and putride particles of the carcasses of the basest people.¹⁰³

The endurance, nonetheless, of a popular identification of anatomical dissection and the provision of mummy is clear from Jonson’s *Volpone* (1606; 1607), in which the eponymous villain, in the guise of the celebrated mountebank Scoto Mantuano, sells an oil which contains ‘some quantity of human fat... which we buy of anatomists.’¹⁰⁴ For anatomists, Jonson seems to suggest, the human corpse is a source of medicinal consumables as well as of knowledge, and the hungers that it provokes might result in forms of tasting that are alimentary, as well as epistemological.

In early seventeenth-century anatomical texts, the slippage between dissection and (cannibalistic) consumption is manifest in the frequency of the use of the kind of food images deployed by Selzer to describe the body. Thus, the anonymous author-compiler of the 1595 *The problemes of Aristotle* compares conception to cheese-making:

The seede of the father and the mother doth goe into the substance of the childe in the wombe: because that as creame doth goe into the substance of cheese, so the seede of man into the fruite in the wombe like unto the creame, and the flowers of the woman doth enter in like unto the milke.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Paré, *Workes*, Qq2v (448).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ben Jonson, *Volpone, or The Fox*, ed. Brian Parker, *The Revels Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), II.ii.157-58.

¹⁰⁵ Anon., *The problemes of Aristotle* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldgrave, 1595), E2v.

Here, a familiar domestic process of food production provides a set of explanatory terms which make the process of conception – also common, but less visible – comprehensible.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere, food images provide a way to make physiological forms, as opposed to physiological processes, understandable to the reader. From the evidence of *The historie of man*, Banister was particularly fond of nuts and pulses: he describes ‘the Membran envolving the whole hart’ by asserting that ‘the image, or portraiture’ of it ‘is very like unto y^e fourme of a Pine nut,’ whilst ‘the figure of the christalline humor [of the eye]’ is compared to ‘a lentill.’¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Paré describes the ‘Tonsillae’ as ‘like in substance to blanched Almonds.’¹⁰⁸ And, like Selzer’s pathologists, he also invokes foodstuffs to depict the pathological body: thus the corruption of ‘the melancholy humour,’ which usually ‘resembles the yolkes of eggs,’ is evident when ‘by adustion’ it ‘becomes leeke-coloured.’¹⁰⁹ It is in *Mikrokosmographia*, however, that food-comparisons most abound. When, for instance, Crooke declares that the cheek is sometimes called ‘the Apple of the Face, because in forme and colour it is not unlike an apple,’ and compares ‘the outward circumference of the eare to the writhen Tendrill of a Vine,’ the reader’s mental impression of the body he describes begins to resemble one of Giuseppe Arcimboldo’s bizarre portraits, a being constituted of fruits and legumes, pulses and grains.¹¹⁰ The frequency of Crooke’s use of foodstuffs as comparative terms can be illustrated by a reading of just one organ. If the eyes are observed, Crooke writes, ‘together with their muscles which grow to their back-sides, then is their figure turbinated like a sugar-loafe.’¹¹¹ Elsewhere, the cornea, which Crooke calls the ‘membrane,’ is described as ‘like the inward skinne of an Onion,’ whilst the pupil is the ‘Aple of the eye’ and the ‘watery humour’ contained in the eye ‘is much like the white of an egge.’¹¹² Finally, ‘the magnitude’ of the lens ‘is much like a lupine or small pease’ whilst its ‘figure’ is ‘somewhat flat like a greater Lentile... yet a little rising like a Lentile.’¹¹³

As Banister’s characterisation of the ‘image, or portraiture’ of the heart’s ‘Membran’ as analogous to that of a pine cone suggests, the comparisons cited above

¹⁰⁶ Merrall Llewelyn Price identifies a cannibalistic ‘conflation of stomach and uterus’ in early modern understandings of pregnancy: there are, perhaps, intimations of this here. Price, *Consuming Passions: The Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2003), 72.

¹⁰⁷ Banister, *The historie of man*, Cc3r, Ff3r (91, 103).

¹⁰⁸ Paré, *Workes*, K6v (108).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, C2v (16).

¹¹⁰ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Ggg4v, Ccc3v (620, 576).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, Bbb4v (536).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, Ccc1r-v (564-565).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, Ccc2r-v (566-67).

primarily evoke the visual qualities of foods. They invoke familiar consumables in order to illustrate the shape, size, substance and colour of various body organs. Nonetheless, a secondary effect is to call up the tastes of the food items mentioned. In *Mikrokosmographia*, the association of specific foodstuffs and tastes is underscored by the fact that the only other context in which Crooke mentions food frequently is his discussion of flavours. Whilst the most extreme ‘Sapors,’ he writes, ‘may fall under some... rude discription’ (although ‘no man for ought I know hath hitherto sufficiently described these maister Sapours, nay not so much as given them apt and fit names’) the less definite saviours evade language: ‘whose pensill can drawe so fine a line as to describe the intermediate Tastes?’ Consequently, the only way ‘to note them out’ is by giving ‘examples or instances’ of the foods which manifest them. A ‘sweet Sapour,’ for instance, ‘doeth consist in.... Figges, Hony, ripe Grapes, sweete and mellow Apples and such like.’¹¹⁴ Certain types of food, then, serve a dual descriptive function in *Mikrokosmographia*: they serve both to represent the tastes that belong to them, and the visual (or occasionally textural or haptic) qualities they embody. The association is stronger in some cases than in others. The relevance of the sensation of taste to the description of body parts is, for instance, particularly manifest in the case of the pancreas, which both Banister and Crooke call ‘the sweet-bread,’ and note, in Crooke’s words, that ‘in Swine it is esteemed a sweete morsel’ and in Banister’s that ‘in Calves, and such others creatures, [it] is most pleasaunt to be eaten.’¹¹⁵

Richard Sugg offers an interpretation of the interimplication of cannibalism and anatomical dissection in the early modern period in a number of contexts, including the anthropological, religious and medical. Sugg’s cogent analysis is compromised by its reliance on Jonathan Sawday’s seminal, but flawed, account in *The Body Emblazoned*.¹¹⁶ Most pertinently here, Sugg inherits Sawday’s teleological emphasis on the rise of science, suggesting that what he calls ‘the sharply perceptual images’ – including William Harvey’s description of the brain as a ‘divine banquet’ – found in anatomical texts ‘represent a decisive shift away from the medieval dominance of theory over practice... painstaking attention to the world of the senses is a vital step on the way toward an effective material science.’¹¹⁷ Images which draw on or evoke sense experience –

¹¹⁴ Ibid., Qqq1r (721).

¹¹⁵ Banister, *The historie of man*, Cc2r (90); Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, L3r (113).

¹¹⁶ For some ‘major problems’ in Sawday’s scholarship, see Mark S. R. Jenner, ‘Body, Image, Text in Early Modern Europe,’ *Social History of Medicine* 12/1 (1999): 144-46.

¹¹⁷ Richard Sugg, *Murder After Death: Literature and Anatomy in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 70.

including taste sensations – are thus inscribed into the narrative described earlier of scientific progress as a move away from textual authority to empiricism.

To some extent, it is accurate to suggest that use of the vocabulary of the feast to describe the interior of the body is rooted in the first-hand, empirical experience of dissection. Crooke stresses the active, albeit structural, role of the senses, including taste, in the anatomy theatre. ‘The subject of... Anatomy,’ he writes, is ‘a Part.’¹¹⁸ Crooke’s definition of a part is not of an isolated, physically disengaged fragment, for one of the necessary qualities of a part, he specifies, is that ‘it should cleave unto the whole.’¹¹⁹ A part is instead constituted by a perceptual sectioning off: it is identified by its ‘Substance,’ which in turn ‘is knowne by sensible qualities, such as are hardnesse, softnes, thickenes, thinnesse, raritie, density or thightnes [i.e. compactness], colour, and savour or taste.’¹²⁰ The senses, including taste, take an active role in dissection, distinguishing the parts that the knife then moves to separate in space. The surgeon’s knife can thus be thought to complete the process of separation that the eyes, hands, and tongue begin.

Anatomists were also, as mentioned above, encouraged to literally taste the bodies they examined. The sense of taste was understood as particularly useful in determining humoral composition: as noted in chapter 1, Paré distinguished the humors partly by taste, finding ‘Melancholy... acide or soure, choler bitter, Blood sweet,’ and ‘Phlegme unsavory.’¹²¹ The association must also have been encouraged by the location of many public dissections. As Hillary Nunn notes, until the completion of Inigo Jones’ Anatomical Theatre in 1638, members of the Company of Barber-Surgeons ‘had no permanent facilities for... [anatomical] demonstrations,’ and consequently dissections ‘took place in the hall’s kitchen.’ Furthermore, ‘the stern atmosphere of these dissections... dissolved into the festive spirit of the banquet hall, for the guild traditionally provided a lavish meal for those who attended its anatomy lectures.’¹²² In contrast to Sugg’s approach, I want to accentuate the fact that in Crooke and Banister, the use of the sense of taste to produce anatomical knowledge takes place in and is informed by contexts and expectations very different from those which shape modern conventions of controlled experiment.

¹¹⁸ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, D2r (27).

¹¹⁹ Ibid., D2v (18).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Paré, *Workes*, B6v (12).

¹²² Nunn, *Staging Anatomies*, 4.

Crooke's use of taste to understand the body, and food images to describe it, is located not in a rarefied experimental context, but works by invoking quotidian culinary experiences. After noting that the 'third coat' of the stomach 'is not unlike to the hony-combe,' for instance, Crooke goes on to explain that 'this crust may be separated from the Membrane or coate in bruit Beasts, yea also in the stomacke of a man *if it be perboiled*' (my emphasis).¹²³ Dissection is thus effected via the domestic arts of cookery, as well as by the force of blades, and the taste experience of sweetness suggested by the formal comparison of the alveolate stomach to honeycomb is mediated – perhaps intensified – by the mention of the processes of cooking which usually precede a meal. Crooke's use of taste in the course of intellectual enquiry and to communicate the results of that enquiry is inflected by the everyday experience of eating, and by expectations of enjoyment and nourishment. This is also the case when the object of Crooke's enquiry is an organ of sense. Thus, in an intriguing moment of self-reflectivity, he uses a culinary example to confirm the Aristotelian contention that 'every instrument of sence should be... devoide of all qualities whereby that sence is affected' in order not to mask or dilute the perception of external qualities, with specific reference to the tongue.¹²⁴ Crooke writes of the 'substance' of the tongue that:

because it was made to receive all Sapors was to be devoide of all Sapor, that is *insipid* or having no Taste at all as we usually speake, and that it is so any man may perceive if hee eat of the Tongue of any beast boyled fresh and without any sauce.¹²⁵

Here, the tongue is depicted not only as the organ of taste, but as the – admittedly insipid – object of taste. Perversely, the tongue's lack of sapor is confirmed by tasting it. Anatomical knowledge is apprehended or confirmed, according to this passage, in a culinary as well as a quasi-scientific context, borne out by the disappointing gastronomic experience offered by a beast's tongue 'boyled fresh and without any sauce.' The same is true of Banister, who writes in the *Historie of man* that:

those *Particles* so annexed to the bones, are called *Appendances*: which (contrary to the minde of *Galen*) we must needes affirme to be softer then the bones them

¹²³ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, L6v-M1r (120-121).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, H6v (84).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Hhh4r (631).

selves: since we delite of[t] tymes with our téeth, to plucke the *Appendances* of small Bones, & to chewe of them in our mouthes: for the pleasaunt juice that often they retaine. Which contrariwise we cannot do to the bone.¹²⁶

As evidence for his contention that the '*Appendances*' of bones are 'softer then the bones them selves,' Banister describes the 'pleasaunt juyce' which they release on mastication. He seems to presume that the 'delite' which supposedly accompanies the chewing of these appendances will be immediately familiar to his readers, as he imagines the experience as collective: '*we* delite.... to chewe of them in *our* mouthes.' Banister thus invokes this particular taste as a corrective to Galen, but the conclusions he draws from it are shaped not by a desire for accuracy but by the context of the meal and the expectations of pleasure and convivial shared experience which eating raises.

How are we to understand Crooke's and Banister's location of the forms of anatomical knowledge produced and communicated by taste experiences and food images in culinary contexts? It would be anachronistic to see their emphasis on the arts of cookery and on gustatory pleasure or disappointment as a deficiency of practice, a neglect of the ideals of objectivity which structure scientific knowledge today. Instead, given Crooke's insistence on the subjectivity of taste as an object of knowledge, his references to the culinary and domestic contexts of anatomical knowledge production are commensurate with Merleau-Ponty's argument that 'the sensation and images which are supposed to be the beginning and end of all knowledge never make their appearance anywhere other than within a horizon of meaning.'¹²⁷

VI. '*sucked from the sappe of... anathomistes*'

In the above instances, Crooke uses his sense of taste to confirm Aristotle's argument about the insipidity of the tongue, whilst Banister uses his sense of taste to contradict Galen's ideas about the '*Appendances*' of bones. When they use the language of taste to describe the production and communication of anatomical knowledge, however, it expresses the influence not of a new, 'scientific' emphasis on empirical experience, but of ancient modes of organising, expressing and absorbing information textually, in the form of commonplaces. As Crooke's dedication 'to the worshipfull Company of the Barber-Chyrurgeons' makes clear, the ways in which body parts correspond to

¹²⁶ Banister, *The historie of man*, C2r (2).

¹²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 18.

consumables informs not only the anatomist's experience of dissection, but also his conception of his pedagogical task. In the dedication, Crooke modestly acknowledges that 'there are some among you.... able to have set out this Banquet with greater variety and to have Cooked it fitter for you as being better acquainted with your diet and appetites.'¹²⁸ Crooke thus figures his work as a feast, and his own work as an anatomist and teacher as a form of cooking. The sense that the body provides a feast of cheese, lentils, egg yolks, apples, and sweetbreads slides into the implication that the text which describes that body offers the same. Cautiously advising the barber-surgeons to make use of opportunities to learn from physicians, Crooke admonishes them 'to feed... upon that which is good for nourishment rather than upon that which will delight and fill but not feed your minds'; soon after, in the first book, he comments that *Platerus* is accurate, but not fit Lettuce for every mans lips, hee must picke nicely that will gather a Sallet out of him, hee is so intricate and full of his Dicotomies.'¹²⁹ Those who desire to know anatomy, then, must 'feed' selectively, on texts and parts of texts which will nourish their minds. Notably, such language reveals that Crooke's approach to classical and other authorities was selective, critical and appropriative, rather than passive and assimilative.

In making use of bibliophagic figures, Crooke echoes earlier anatomical texts, and recalls the role of taste as an epistemological faculty involved in acts of readerly discrimination and epitomization. Banister in particular invokes literary 'taste' frequently, both in asserting that his works are the product of careful and selective attention to past authorities, and in urging his readers to afford his books the same kind of assiduous attention. The full title of *The historie of man* asserts that the text has been 'sucked from the sappe of the most approved anathomistes,' whilst the dedication to 'To the right Worshipfull, Sir Frauncis Willoughby' expresses the hope that:

as Darius denounced that to be the sweetest draught that ever he dronke, which, in his wearie flight, he had drawne from a filthy standing puddle, because, it seemeth before, he had never drunke thirstie: even so, I hope, my labour shalbe thankfully taken, of all honest Chirurgians, considering the barren draught, that Chirurgerie, throughout the Realme of England, in this present age, endureth:

¹²⁸ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, ¶7r (unpaginated).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, D1r (25).

and which can never be quenched, by the fruitfull water that floweth from the fountaines of Anathomie.¹³⁰

Banister alludes to the fact that both embodied taste sensations, and judgements of taste in the realm of anatomical discourse, are influenced by contextual factors. Just as thirst transforms what appears as a dirty puddle into the ‘sweetest’ tasting drink, Banister anticipates that *The historie of man* will be more acceptable to ‘honest Chirurgians’ because of the current dearth of such books. The point is underscored by the play on ‘draught,’ which Banister uses in the first instance to signify a drink, and in the second as in irregular form of drought: the paucity that ‘Chirurgerie.... endureth’ is expressed by a word which refers both back the sweet ‘draught’ which pleased Darius’ palate, and forward to the ‘fruitfull water that floweth from the fountains of Anathomie.’ Elsewhere, Banister recommends more explicitly the use of taste in the consumption of his works: the prefatory poem to his earlier *A needefull, new, and necessarie treatise of chyrurgerie* (1575) reads:

Ye learned dames that doe delite,
in sciences devine:
Refuse not now to taste a while,
this sacred sap of mine.¹³¹

Banister calls on women that ‘delite, / in sciences devine’ to ‘taste’ the ‘sap’ of the text, suggesting that the ‘dames’ who might purchase his book are motivated by the pleasures of learning as well as by practical considerations of healing. In contrast to this exclusive emphasis on the pleasures of taste, Banister’s 1589 *An antidotarie chyrurgicall* is figured as:

a fruitful medow, with some things serving to necessitie onelie, & other things affording delight besides: also as a faire forest which (besides the large scopes & delitesome chases) containeth trees likewise of all growths, and required uses: for in like maner, here are medicins, some of them bitter, biting & painful, serving wher neither ease, nor delight of taste, but recoverie of health requireth to be cared for.¹³²

¹³⁰ Banister, *The historie of man*, A3v.

¹³¹ John Banister, *A needefull, new, and necessarie treatise of chyrurgerie* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1575), C8r.

¹³² John Banister, *An antidotarie chyrurgicall* (London: Thomas Orwin for Thomas Man, 1589), *2r.

The passage makes use of the conventional trope of the *silva rhetoricae*, or forest of rhetoric, in order to conflate the text itself with the plant-based medicines it recommends: both, it suggests, might stimulate the taste in unpleasant ways, being ‘bitter, biting’ and even ‘painful,’ but both also have undoubted salutary effects.

VII. ‘the Art of Chyrurgery’

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed a frontispiece painting of John Banister, suggesting that it illustrates, not the distortion of sensory evidence by textual authority, but the use of sensation to apprehend authoritative texts. This painting is part of a set of three, and figure 2.2 shows another painting from the trio. The image shows the dissection of a dog and a pig; the wall and table display the chief instruments of the surgeon’s art. The anatomist himself, however, is oddly absent; and in his place is an ape. Most obviously, the monkey is present as another potential object for anatomical dissection; the ape’s anatomical similarity to the human body made it a common substitute for actual human cadavers in an age when the latter were difficult to acquire. So far, however, it has escaped its fate, and – given the absence of a human figure – the proprietorial air with which it surveys the scene suggests that the ape stands in as a temporary substitute for or double of the anatomist himself. What are we to make of this? On the one hand, the presence of the ape can be read as a implied joke about or criticism of anatomists’ reliance on authorities; I have already commented on the animal’s associations with mindless imitation, and in *Mikrokosmographia* Crooke calls Averroes ‘*Aristotles Ape*’ because he follows the philosopher too slavishly.¹³³ On the other hand, the ape also seems present as in iconographical image of taste: holding a piece of fruit to his mouth, the animal serves as a reminder of the ways in which anatomy is bound up with gustatory appetites; of the mutuality of the anatomical and the alimential.

To finish this chapter, I’d like to return to the beginning. ‘Taste’ used as a term to describe modes of knowing – and the vocabulary of the senses in general – I argued, does not manifest the increasing predominance of empirical practices in early modern anatomy. Such an argument is based on a conception of perception which sees knowledge as achieved in the operation of the mind on the raw data of sense experience. This is not how Crooke understood taste. So how *did* he conceptualise the

¹³³ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Xx2v (508).

work of dissection in sensuous terms? The following quotation, taken from *Mikrokosmographia*'s dedication 'to the worshipfull Company of the Barber-Chyrurgeons,' is informative:

...for my part I conceive of the Art of Chyrurgery as a part of Physick; and therefore of Chyrurgens as Citizens of the Physitians Commonwealth: the difference is, that wee having mostwhat better meanes by education to advantage our wittes, apply them unto the more abstruse part of the Art separated from the sense and consisting in contemplation and collection; the Chururgeon worketh by his eye and with his hand, and dwelleth as it were in the Confines of that Countrey whose inner part we inhabit. If therefore they warrant the frontiers and keepe their Stations well and duly therein, may not we better attend to improve the portion that is allotted unto us?¹³⁴

In my opening section, I extracted from this quotation in order to illustrate that in the early seventeenth century, physicians were understood to neglect the evidence of 'sense' in favour of 'contemplation and collection' whilst the surgeon 'worketh by his eye and with his hand.' Thus dismembered, the section described only the 'difference' between knowledge garnered from the sensuous experience, and that cultivated through 'contemplation and collection.' Addressed in more detail, however, the passage clearly also expresses Crooke's appreciation of the similarity of the methods of both groups. The surgeon, guided by his senses in his performance of the practical work of attending to the body, 'dwelleth as it were in the Confines' of the 'Countrey whose inner part' the physicians 'inhabit.'

Crooke's use of the language of dwelling and inhabiting recalls Heidegger's important essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking,' in which he claims that 'the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is buan, dwelling.' Heidegger's central tenets in the piece are, firstly, that locatedness, being-in, is a necessary, constitutive condition, not a contingent 'state,' of Being, and secondly that being-in is not to be identified with extension in space, but with modes of habitation, interaction and familiarity: dwelling. Ontology, 'Being' in the purest sense, is indistinguishable from ways of being; an insight that Merleau-Ponty exploited in his insistence that it is a 'fact' that 'sensory experience' is 'the assumption of a form of

¹³⁴ Ibid., ¶6r (unpaginated).

existence.’¹³⁵ Sensory perception, then, is not an addendum to the bare fact of the body’s existence, but constitutive of it: it is a form of familiarity which brings the self into being. For Crooke, both the sensory practices of surgeons and the cerebral preoccupations of physicians are forms of dwelling in this sense, jointly constituting the ‘Commonwealth’ of physiological knowledge. The positioning of the two professions is



Figure 2.2. Anon., Anatomical Table 1. Painting commissioned by John Banister (c1580). Ms Hunter 364, V.1.1. © University of Glasgow Library Special Collections.

¹³⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 257.

significant, however. Whilst physicians ‘inhabit’ the interior of this shared ‘Country,’ surgeons ‘dwelleth’ in its ‘confines,’ at its border. The significance of this, I believe, can be understood only if we abandon a characteristically modern set of binaries which associate the ‘inner part’ with authenticity and selfhood and the border with the marginal, the extraneous.¹³⁶ For, to call on Heidegger again, ‘circumscribing gives bounds to the thing. With the bounds the thing does not stop; rather, from within them it begins to be what after production it will be. That which gives bounds, [is] that which completes.’¹³⁷ A periphery, that is, does not have to be peripheral: it can be a constitutive circumference, delimiting and defining the thing. The point is underscored by the association of a country’s ‘Confines’ with military defense (a figuration which also recalls Crooke’s assertion that ‘the organs and instruments of the Sences are placed in the head as it were in a Citadell or Sconce’).¹³⁸ The profession of surgery provides a constitutive circumference which describes the outer edge of physic’s territory; similarly, the workings of the senses provide a defensive, constitutive circumference for the self.

In this chapter I have shown how, according to conventional accounts of early modern anatomy, an emphasis on the dissector’s accurate first-hand experience gradually replaced a reliance on error-riddled canonical texts. These accounts, I have argued, are flawed because their absolute distinction between embodied experience and textual authority is inconsistent with the picture presented in *Mikrokosmographia*, which presumes a degree of overlap between the two. Attention to Crooke’s conception of the senses – taste in particular – as objects of knowledge helps to explicate the significance of this overlap. For Crooke, the senses are ‘framed’ by circumstance and temperament in the same way that the skeleton ‘frames’ the human body.¹³⁹ That is to say, the data they make available to the mind is always already informed by a range of expectations, intentions, contingencies, and conventions, and as such is inherently meaningful. Conversely, acts of reading and writing are apprehended as deeply embodied, as sensory experiences in themselves. *Mikrokosmographia* thus encourages us to rethink the relationship between what I have termed physiological taste on the one hand, and epistemic or epistemological taste on the other. If acts of reading and writing are embodied, then epistemological taste – manifest in *Mikrokosmographia* both explicitly in

¹³⁶ Harvey explores the ‘shifting, dynamic relation’ between the ‘inside and outside’ of the body in ‘The Touching Organ,’ esp. 84-86.

¹³⁷ Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology,’ in *Basic Writings*, 315.

¹³⁸ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, Vv6r-v (503-504).

¹³⁹ My discussion here is influenced by Rayna Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse: The Technology of Poetic Invention in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 84.

uses of the term ‘taste’ to describe summaries of information and implicitly in Crooke’s use of the humanist bibliophagic metaphors – is rooted in physical sensation. Similarly, just as sensory experiences in general have cognitive content, the physical act of tasting is epistemologically significant, a way of producing and organizing information. Ultimately, taste as it operates in the anatomical theatre, and taste as it operates in the text, are conceptually and practically interlinked.

CHAPTER 3

Bitter Sin, Salvific Sweetness: Piety and Palate in Devotional Literature

I. 'wanton plenty'

In his 1578 theological epic *La Sepmaine; ou, Creation du monde*, a poetic retelling of the first two chapters of Genesis translated into English by Joshua Sylvester as the 1611 *Du Bartas his devine weekes and workes*, the Protestant poet Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas describes Eden immediately following the Fall:

...For I should say that still with smiling face
Th'al clasping heavens beheld this happy place;
That hunny sweet, from hollow rocks did draine;
That fostering milke flow'd up and down the plaine;
That sweet as Roses smelt th'il-savory Rew,
That still all soiles, all seasons, all things grew:
That still there dangled on the selfe-same treen
A thousand fruites, nor over-ripe, nor green:
That egest fruits, and bittrest hearbs did mock
Madera sugars and the Apricock
Yeelding more holesome food then all the messes,
That now tast-curious, wanton plenty dresses,
Disguising in a thousand costly dishes,
The various stoare of dainty foules and fishes,
Which far and neere we seeke by land and seas,
More to provoke then hunger to appease.¹

Du Bartas depicts a paradisaical landscape characterised by alimentary abundance: unshackled from the dictates of seasonal decay and regeneration, fruits hang suspended at the pinnacle of ripeness, whilst honey streams from rocks and nourishing milk flows

¹ Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, *Du Bartas his devine weekes and workes*, trans. Joshua Sylvester (London: Humfrey Lounes for Arthur Johnson, 1611), Q5r-v (217-18).

on the plains. In enumerating the gustatory pleasures of Eden, Du Bartas ratchets up the pathos: paradise's enduring perfection is in stark, uncanny contrast to the calamitous alteration to human nature recently precipitated by Adam and Eve's consumption of one particular fruit. The point is driven home by the subsequent comparison between the sweetness of Edenic fruit and herbs, and the lavish but unwholesome 'messes' devised to titillate the vitiated tastes of Adam and Eve's fallen descendants, amongst whom the narrator numbers himself and his readers.

Du Bartas' interest in the degeneration of postlapsarian appetites is characteristic of what this chapter will argue is an early modern obsession with the dangers, but also the utility, of the sense of taste as an aspect of religious experience. When early modern men and women discuss the Fall they describe it, almost ubiquitously, as precipitated by an act of tasting. Again, Du Bartas is representative: 'Adam did revolt from thee,' he informs God, 'and (curious) tasted of the sacred Tree.'² In this, they depart from all notable contemporary translations of the bible into English, which translate the Hebrew verb *עָסָהוּ*, to eat, literally. The 1611 King James Version, for example, recounts how Eve 'took of the fruit... and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.'³ In shifting the focus from consumption to gustation, poets, polemicists, and theologians made a subtle but profound alteration: mankind's postlapsarian misery and wickedness is not attributable to an act of ingestion, a full digestive incorporation, but to a sensation.

The weight that Du Bartas gives to the word 'curious' is significant. Contained but also accentuated by the parentheses which surround it, 'curious' modifies both Adam's originary act of tasting, and his descendants' 'tast-curious' desire for the 'wanton plenty' of exotic viands. The term hints that the Fall's atrophying of appetite also constitutes an epistemological decline, for contemporaneously its semantic reach embraced both finicky culinary tastes, and a depraved inquisitiveness about trifles or, more dangerously, occult knowledge.⁴ Correspondingly, Du Bartas laments the loss of prelapsarian certainty in terms which recall his mellifluous depiction of Edenic produce: 'Knowledge was then... / Not sower, but sweet: not gotten, but infus'd.'⁵ In Eden, gustatory pleasure and intellectual illumination were all of a piece.

² Ibid., M3r (149).

³ Genesis 3:6 (KJV). Tyndale's Bible, the Geneva Bible, and the Douay–Rheims Bible also describe the Fall as an act of eating, rather than of tasting.

⁴ 'curious, adj.' *OED Online*, accessed 21 April 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/46040.

⁵ Du Bartas, *Devine weekes*, Q8r (223).

Despite the sense's postlapsarian dissipation, however, Du Bartas retains taste's connection to knowledge of the sacred for contemporary readers:

God, of himself incapable to sense,
In's Works, reveales him t'our intelligence:
There-in, our fingers feel, our nostrils smel,
Our palats taste his vertues that excel:
He shewes him to our eyes, talks to our ears,
In th' ord'red motions of the spangled Sphears.⁶

Whilst a marginal note to this stanza asserts that God 'makes himselfe (as it were) visible in his Workes,' the verse itself stresses the extent to which divine presence is apprehended through taste. Whilst the other four senses are paired two to a line, 'taste' takes up a full pentameter, and its object is more specific: the palate apprehends not just the divine, but the excellency of divine 'vertues.' The 'mature and settled Sapience' of the soul, as Du Bartas writes elsewhere in the *Devine weekes*, implicitly punning on the Latin etymon *sapere*, to have a taste or savour, 'Hath som alliance with [God's] Providence.'⁷

Du Bartas' suggestion that taste – compromised though it may be – retains some value as a way of accessing the divine, finds its counterpart in post-Reformation ritual praxis.⁸ In line with the reformist insistence that the laity should partake, as the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* puts it, of 'both parts of the Lords Sacrament,' the sacramental tasting of bread (or wafer) and wine replaced the visual spectacle of the elevation of the Host as the climactic moment of the Eucharistic ceremony in England.⁹ This new emphasis on taste over vision was reflected, as we shall see, in Protestant poetics and polemic. Through consumption of the elements, the pious individual both

⁶ Ibid., C3r (5).

⁷ Ibid., N5v (170). 'Sapience, n.' *OED Online*, accessed 29 June 2010, www.oed.com/view/Entry/170820.

⁸ In recent decades, some historians have preferred the lowercase plural 'reformations' to the more traditional 'the Reformation,' arguing that the former offers a more accurate picture of the complicated, ongoing, plural, and socially variable processes of religious change in Tudor England. See Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). In preferring 'the Reformation,' I follow the reasons given Peter Marshall in his '(Re)defining the English Reformation,' *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009): 564–586. Notably, Marshall demonstrates that "'the Reformation" is... not just an artificial construct of later historians but a central perception and organizing category of contemporaries themselves.' Marshall, '(Re)defining the English Reformation,' 569.

⁹ 'The Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the Lay-people: For both parts of the Lords Sacrament... ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.' *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 682.

commemorated Christ's redemptive sacrifice, and regained some of the intimacy with God forsaken by Adam and Eve.¹⁰

This chapter explores the role played by taste in the cultivation of pious knowledge, and in the experience, articulation, and negotiation of religious identity, in the wake of the English Reformation. In this, I follow a number of scholars who have explored the relation between confessional allegiance and attitudes towards the senses. Two narratives – both of which bear traces of the religious commitments of their proponents – are particularly influential here. The first, represented by Eamon Duffy's seminal *The Stripping of the Altars*, presents early Protestants as cultural bogeymen whose iconoclastic distrust of the sensory stimulation offered by late-medieval religious art and ritual resulted in their vandalism of a vibrant cultural heritage, and richly affective form of worship.¹¹ The second presents reformist attitudes to sensory worship not as an outright rejection, but rather as a shift of sensory emphasis, arguing that a Protestant suspicion of visual images was compensated by a simultaneous (Lutheran) elevation of the status of hearing.¹² This putative shift from the visual to the aural corresponds to what Matthew Milner calls the 'inherently "protestant"' notion that the Reformation intellectually enfranchised the English nation, allowing access to the word of God unmediated by clerical authority.¹³

Whilst these approaches differ in their assessment of the impact of the Reformation on devotional sensing, both are united in a focus on the traditionally 'higher' senses of vision and hearing to the exclusion of the 'lower' senses of smell, touch, and taste. As Matthew Milner points out, however, 'sixteenth-century religion was more than eyes and ears; it was a full, synaesthetic experience.'¹⁴ Milner's own account highlights continuities between traditional and reformist approaches to the

¹⁰ Michael Schoenfeldt comments that 'the intimacy between God and human that was lost because of a dietary transgression – consuming the forbidden fruit – is restored by an act of eating.' Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves*, 100. Matthew Milner acknowledges, but does not pursue the implications of, the centrality of taste to these two key moments within Christian narrative and ritual: 'primarily, the mass was about taste: just as Adam fell by taste, so too was humankind restored to perfection by it in eating and drinking of Christ.' Matthew Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 152.

¹¹ See Eamon Duffy, *Faith of Our Fathers* (London: Continuum, 2004).

¹² See, for example, Mark Robson, 'Looking with Ears, Hearing with Eyes: Shakespeare and the Ear of the Early Modern,' *Early Modern Literary Studies* 7/1 (2001): 1-23, and Cynthia Marshall, 'Sight and Sound: Two Models of Shakespearean Subjectivity on the British Stage,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51/3 (2000): 353-61. Grace Tiffany argues that *Hamlet*, as a dramatic phenomenon, shifts the focus from visual spectacle to aural theatre, and that this correlates to Protestant orthodoxy. Tiffany, 'Hamlet and Protestant Aural Theater,' *Christianity and Literature* 52/4 (2003): 307-323, especially 308, 313. Wes Folkerth argues that 'for the early modern Protestant, the ear is the primary corporeal agent spiritual transformation.' Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare*, 51.

¹³ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

senses, arguing that ‘protestantism was itself dependent on sensual experience... reformers were still governed by traditional assumptions on sensory propriety and sensory theory.’¹⁵ Other scholars have offered different ways to understand the early modern use of sensory metaphors in pious discourse. Holly Dugan argues that whilst ‘Catholic theology... emphasized a direct, experiential link to God through sensory ways of knowing,’ including the use of fragrant incense, within Protestant ritual ‘sacrifice and prayer emerge as true censing, displacing the abject materiality of the censer.’ In English reformist sermons however, incense was used as ‘a metaphorical abstraction.’¹⁶ Here, metaphors of scent and incense are a counterpart to the supposed disembodiment of reformist worship. Joseph Moshenska offers a more helpfully nuanced reading of sensory metaphors in devotional discourse. For Moshenska, Thomas Cranmer’s sensuous descriptions of communion and baptism are neither straightforwardly abstract or metaphorical, nor clearly corporeal and literal. Instead, Cranmer’s cautious use of the qualifier ‘*as it were*’ to describe the sensory qualities of the elements ‘suspends the sensory practices that he describes between the literal and the figurative.’¹⁷

Attending to the ‘lower’ senses, then, offers a means to escape the dichotomy between a sensorially rich but corrupt Catholicism, and a sensorially impoverished but intellectually inclusive Protestantism, that has structured accounts of the period. Whilst my first chapter explored the relation between the sense of taste and the forms of mental judgement associated with discriminative reading, and my second chapter described imbrications of literary and empirical taste in the production of anatomical knowledge, this chapter asks what kind of value taste might have when the ultimate object of knowledge is not a worldly entity, but transcendent and ineffable God. I focus, in particular, on the pervasive distinction between the physical and the spiritual senses. Briefly, the doctrine of the spiritual senses – which originated with the Church Fathers, and remained influential throughout the early modern period – draws on instances of sensory language in scripture to posit that the physical senses have a parallel in the form of a set of internal, spiritual senses, belonging not to the body but (variously) to the spirit, soul, heart, or intellect, and capable of apprehending the divine.¹⁸ Within this schema, taste occupied an important place, for the transition from

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁶ Dugan, *Ephemeral History*, 30-31.

¹⁷ Moshenska, ‘Feeling Pleasures,’ 124-27.

¹⁸ See Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley, introduction to Gavrilyuk and Coakley, eds., *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-19, for an overview of the history of the concept.

physical to spiritual sensation also entailed a reorganization of the conventional sensory hierarchy. Anne Astell comments that, although it was ‘at the base of all the physical senses, touch was paradoxically at the pinnacle of the spiritual senses in the view of medieval mystics,’ and the same can be said of taste (often considered, of course, a variety of touch) in early modern England.¹⁹ Witness the moderate puritan Richard Sibbes in his posthumously-published 1650 *The glorious feast of the Gospel*:

it is the very beeing of a Christian to have a taste of spirituall things... the other senses fetch their objects afarre off, but as for taste there is a neer application in it, and therefore most necessary: every life is maintained by tast. *Taste and see how good the Lord is.*²⁰

Quoting Psalm 34:8 (the *locus classicus* for early modern discussions of spiritual taste), and invoking the Aristotelian notion – also endorsed, as discussed in the previous chapter, by Helkiah Crooke – that taste is the most essential sense, Sibbes asserts the paramount importance of spiritual taste to Christian identity.

If spiritual taste comes, in some contexts, to be privileged over spiritual sight, we might expect both to take precedence over their physical equivalents. Unsurprisingly, given the neo-Platonic slant of the patristic tradition that formulated the doctrine of the spiritual senses, this is sometimes the case: the physical senses are often thought inferior, and, ideally, subservient, to the spiritual. Physical taste was, however, valued as a means to spiritual illumination, not despite, but in many cases because of, its worldly qualities – notably its transience. There was no clear line between secular and sacred experience: faith was not an immaterial, intellectual addendum to the lived facts of everyday life, but inherent in the sensuousness of the quotidian. Establishing a liminal position between sensuous corporeality and intellection, the terms of taste allow us to appreciate the extent to which religious knowledge in the early modern period was itself grounded in embodied experience. At the same time, devotional writing offers a neglected source to uncover common understandings and experiences of the physical experience of tasting.

¹⁹ Anne Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3-4.

²⁰ Richard Sibbes, *The glorious feast of the Gospel* (London: John Rothwell, 1650), D3v (22). In his annotations on scripture, John Diodati glosses the psalmist’s use of the word ‘taste’ thus: ‘V. 8. *Taste*] cleere your judgements, that you may rightly know Gods goodnesse, examine the trials and proofes which hee gives you of it, and take pleasure and delight in it.’ John Diodati, *Pious annotations* (London: T.B. for Nicholas Fussell, 1643), Oo3r (109).

Given the enormity of the corpus of seventeenth-century religious writing, a comprehensive account of the uses of taste within contemporary religious literature and culture would be a gargantuan task. Accordingly, I focus on four broad ‘classes’ of text, each of which evidences a particular intensity in its use of the language of taste: devotional poetry; Eucharistic polemic; homiletic commentary addressing key ‘taste’ moments in scripture; and radical Protestant genres such as the spiritual testimony.

II. ‘the Corporall and Spirituall taste’

In Book 4 of his influential *Confessions*, translated by the Church of England clergyman and author William Watts in 1631, St Augustine wonders at the disjunction between his instinctive grasp of the liberal arts and sciences, and the obtuseness of his pre-conversion self in matters of religion. ‘What-ever was written,’ he boasts, ‘either of the Art of *Rhetoricke*, or *Logicke*, what-ever of *Geometry*, *Musicke*, and *Arithmeticke*, I attain’d the understanding of by my selfe, without any great difficulty, or any instructor.’²¹ His studious labours were of little avail, however: ‘what good did then my nimble wit, able to runne over all those *Sciences*... seeing I err’d so fouly, and with so much sacrilegious shamefulness in the *Doctrine* of *Piety*?’²² His mistake, he explains in Book 6, lay in expecting religious knowledge to have the same unassailable logic as secular arithmetical and propositional knowledge: ‘my whole desire was to be made so well assured of those things which I saw not, as I was certaine that *seven* and *three* make *tenne*.’²³ For Augustine, the difference between the unconverted self and the genuine Christian is not equivalent to the difference between disbelief and belief, or between ignorance and knowledge. Rather, it lies in the rejection of one mode of knowledge (namely *scientia*) in favour of another (namely *sapientia*).

Augustine’s distinction between secular and devout certainty allows us to consider religious belief as founded on distinct, and historically specific, conceptions of knowledge. Whilst today we tend to understand ‘belief’ as acceptance of a claim or creed, this is a relatively recent way of conceiving of faith. In the pre-modern world, belief in God did not equate to the opinion that God exists; rather, belief was understood as a kind of habitual trust which was both predicated on and enabled the

²¹ Augustine, *Saint Augustines confessions*, trans. William Watts (London: John Norton for John Partridge, 1631), K6r (203). Kathleen Lynch calls this a ‘solidly Protestant’ edition. Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 43.

²² Augustine, *Confessions*, K7r (205).

²³ *Ibid.*, N10r (283).

embodied, sensory practices (from ritual to asceticism) which constituted religion.²⁴ In the words of David Morgan, belief was understood ‘not as a linguistic phenomenon, but as a psychological and physiological one... Belief was feeling and habit intimately linked to action... belief happens as touching and seeing, hearing and tasting.’²⁵

In his 1679 *Contemplations upon the remarkable passages in the life of the holy Jesus*, the writer, satirist, and Bishop of Norwich Joseph Hall discusses faith in precisely these terms:

the endeavour and issue of all, both humane and spiritual, things depends upon our Faith. Who would commit a plant or a seed to the earth, if he did not believe to have it nursed in that kindly bosome? What Merchant would put himself upon the guard of an inch-board in a furious Sea, if he did not trust to the faithfull custody of that plank?... What benefit can we look to carry from a Divine exhortation, if we do not believe it will edify us? from a Sacramental banquet, (the food of Angels) if we do not believe it will nourish our Souls?... Oh our vain and heartless services, if we do not say, May I drink but one drop of that heavenly Nectar, may I tast but one crum of that Bread of life, may I hear but one word from the mouth of *Christ*, may I send up but one hearty sigh or ejaculation of an holy desire to my God, I shall be whole!²⁶

Just as ‘humane’ faith is understood as a kind of implicit, enabling trust which forms a necessary precondition for man’s negotiation of and action within the world – from husbandry to maritime trade – so too is spiritual faith a precondition of action and edification in the realm of the divine. For Hall, religious belief is not a matter of knowing things about God; rather, it is to have had an experience of God. Faith is a form of trust made manifest in affectively-charged ritual practice, and the sensory perceptions attendant on that practice. Just as worldly faith is experienced as trust in materiality (the firm tactility of the plank), religious faith is experienced sensorially, as a yearning to ‘tast’ the ‘Sacramental banquet’ undergirded by a confident faith in its efficacy. The sort of ‘tast’ that Hall invokes, however, is not exclusively corporeal; it is simultaneously physical and spiritual, equally alert to the perceptible ‘sweetness’ of the

²⁴ See David Morgan, ‘The Matter of Belief,’ in Morgan, ed., *Religion and Material Culture* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1-3.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 3, 8.

²⁶ Joseph Hall, *Contemplations upon the remarkable passages in the life of the holy Jesus* (London: E. Fleisher for Jacob Tonson, 1679), Hh1v-Hh2r (234-35).

wine and the friable ‘crum’ of the bread, and to the ‘heavenly’ sacredness of the elements.

Whilst the phrase ‘the spiritual senses’ (*sensus spirituales*) can be traced back to the church fathers, in the early modern period arguably the most influential expression of the doctrine was to be found in the *Confessions*. In Book 10, Augustine asks of God, ‘what... do I love, whenas I love thee?’ Answering his own question, he articulates the difference between corporeal and spiritual sensation:

...not the beauty of any *corporall thing*... not the brightnesse of the *light*, which to behold, is so gladsome to our eyes: not the pleasant *melodies* of songs of all kinds; not the fragrant smell of flowers, and ointments, and spices: not *Manna* and honey, nor any *faire limbs* that are so acceptable to fleshly embracements.

... and yet I love a certaine kinde of *light*, and a kinde of *voice*, and a kinde of *fragrancy*, and a kinde of *meat*, and a kinde of *embracement*. Whenas I love my God; who is both the *light*, and the *voice*, and the sweet *smell*, and the *meate*, and the *embracement* of my inner man: where that *light* shineth unto my soule, which no place can receive; that *voice* soundeth, which time deprives me not of; and that *fragrancy* *smelleth*, which no wind scatters; & that *meate* tasteth, which eating devoures not; and that *embracement* clingeth to mee, which satiety divorceth not...²⁷

Against Manichean doctrine, Augustine forcefully insists that God is not a ‘corporall thing,’ and love of God does not take the form of sensuous delight. This assertion is swiftly qualified, however, by Augustine’s introduction of a form of sense experience belonging to ‘my inner man... my soule.’ This spiritual sensing is distinguished from ephemeral worldly sensing by the endurance of its divine object, God, who is ‘that *meate*... which eating devoures not.’ The relationship between the corporeal and the spiritual senses is not – as we might expect – schematically hierarchical (with physical taste subservient to spiritual taste), or even analogical (with the spiritual and physical senses running parallel to, and providing images of, each other), but synecdochical. God is emphatically not light, melody, scent, honey, or sex, ‘and yet’ simultaneously he is ‘a certaine kinde’ of these things: a subtype of them. By extension, spiritual sensation can

²⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, Cc3v-Cc4r (582-83).

be understood as not entirely discrete from, but rather as a subcategory of, physical sensation; Augustine smudges the line between physical and spiritual sensation even as he draws it.

For many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestants, the distinction between the bodily and the spiritual senses was supposed to correspond to the distinction between fallen and salvific tasting outlined in the introduction to this chapter. Physical taste – epistemologically valuable as it might be – was morally compromised by the possibility that it might duplicate Adam and Eve’s sinful gustation.²⁸ In the words of a grimly punning Joseph Hall, writing in his 1612 *Contemplations upon the principall passages of the holy storie*, ‘the sons of *Eve* inherit [the] saucy appetite of their grandmother.’²⁹ Conversely, for Protestants, Eucharistic ritual properly engaged the spiritual, rather than the physical, sense of taste. The ‘exhortation’ from priest to congregation, as prescribed by the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, encouraged this approach, pronouncing that ‘if with a truly penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament... then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood, then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us...’³⁰ In the context of the Eucharistic ritual, salvation and spiritual tasting we supposed to coalesce. As we shall see, however, in practice these distinctions were difficult to maintain. Where physical and spiritual tasting were conceived of on a continuum, it could be difficult for early modern men and women to precisely identify their own taste experiences as one or the other, and subsequently to determine whether a particular sensation was fallen or salvific.

Both Augustine’s criterion for arbitrating the difference between spiritual and physical sensation, and his blurring of the boundary between the two, recur in works by early modern authors. In a short chapter titled ‘The difference between the Corporall

²⁸ The notion that physical taste is inherently fallen surfaces repeatedly in the prayers collated in Thomas Bentley’s 1582 *The monument of matrones*, many of which are intended to precede, accompany, or follow on from a meal. Bentley’s orisons consistently encourage diners to interpret their own culinary experience in terms informed by scriptural precedents, including the Fall. In a ‘praier before meat, to be used that daye that you have received the holie Communion,’ for example, Bentley ponders the disjunction between fallen, worldly tasting, and the spiritual feast of the communion table. After thanking God that ‘after the banket of paradise troubled by the divell & man, thou hast againe of thine infinite goodnesse, through thy sonne, prepared a sumptuous supper, and great feast,’ Bentley goes on to lament that ‘thy people... together with the most part of the world, do despise thy holie table, and suffer themselves to be caried about unto the bankets of Satan, and vaine pleasures of this world.’ The ‘vaine pleasures’ of worldly feasts are implicitly aligned with the Satanic act of tasting which resulted in Adam and Eve’s exile from Eden. Bentley, *The monument of matrones* (London: H. Denham, 1582), Ccc1r (629).

²⁹ Joseph Hall, *Contemplations upon the principall passages of the holy storie* (London: M. Bradwood for Sa. Macham, 1612), D1r (49). Hall makes full use of the semantic range of saucy, which had a stronger connotation in the early modern period than today, indicating hubristic insolence, wanton lasciviousness, and finicky, fastidious tastes. ‘Saucy, adj.1.’ *OED Online*, accessed 25 April 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/171348.

³⁰ Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 258.

and Spirituall taste' included in *A good companion for a Christian* (1632), for example, John Norden echoes Augustine's emphasis on the permanence of the objects of the spiritual senses:

corporall food, bee it never so sweete and pleasing to the Taste, yet it loatheth at length... the *sweet milke of the Word*, hath the vertue to season the inward *taste*, and to prepare the spirituall *Appetite*, to *feed the soule unto salvation*; and the more hee tasteth of it, the more his appetite (through Faith) inflamed is to hunger for more, hee cannot be satisfied with little, for the more hee tasteth, the sweeter he findes it, and the more he hungers for it.³¹

Spiritual taste is privileged because it endures: whereas corporeal taste sensations are inherently transient by virtue both of the natural confines of our appetites, and of the fact that the consumption of food is also its destruction, the insatiability of 'the inward *taste*' is amply supplied by its object: the '*sweet milke*' of the divine word, or scripture.³²

Richard Brathwaite, in his 1620 *Essaies upon the five senses*, also stresses transience as a constituent attribute of fallen, physical taste, and he similarly privileges spiritual taste on that basis. 'This Sence,' he laments at the beginning of the essay '*Of Tasting*,' 'makes mee weeppe ere I speake of her; sith hence came our greefe, hence our miserie... how pure I had bin, if this one *Sence* had not corrupted my pristine innocencie.' Physical taste is held responsible for the Fall; subsequently, it poses a threat to spiritual taste. 'I will rather distaste mine owne *palate* to give true relish to my soules appetite,' Brathwaite goes on, 'than by satisfying the *first*, corrupt the puritie of the *latter*.'³³ The bodily senses simultaneously parallel the spiritual senses, and jeopardize them.³⁴ Brathwaite's attitude here seems to substantiate Susan Stewart's description of the *Essaies* as characterized by 'an atmosphere of prurience and regulation.'³⁵ The 'concern with regulating the senses' which structures Brathwaite's work, Stewart claims, 'tends to increase our alienation from the senses.'³⁶ For Stewart, Brathwaite's advocacy of 'regulation' of the senses equates to 'alienation' from them. This very modern attitude

³¹ Norden, *A good companion*, H2r (163).

³² Norden echoes 1 Cor 3:2, Heb 5:12-13, and 1 Pet 2:2 (KJV).

³³ Brathwaite, *Essaies*, D3r (45).

³⁴ Maggie Kilgour similarly notes that, for Augustine, 'spiritual desire is analogous to bodily hunger yet also threatened by it... literal eating provides a model for his quest that may also become a dangerous substitute for it.' Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 48.

³⁵ Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 39.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

overlooks the ways in which regulation functions, in Brathwaite's text, as a form of attentiveness. Restricting the scope of the senses serves not to distance the individual from his or her corporeal life, but to reconcile her to it: delimiting the scope of the senses is a way to manage the physical world's assault on the contours of the self, enabling the individual to inhabit her experiences in a more focused, and thus fuller, way. Thus, bodily taste may pose a threat to spiritual gust according to Brathwaite, but – properly managed – it also has the potential to provide spiritual edification, and self-definition, for the believing subject.

It is important to note that, for Brathwaite, worldly taste is such a threat to spiritual taste precisely because the two are on a continuum: the physical palate could not corrupt the spiritual taste if it were not in some way affiliated with it. Likewise, for Joseph Hall, the distinction between the physical and spiritual senses is legitimate, but by no means absolute: 'those two parts whereof we consist (the bodily, the spiritual),' he asserts in his *Contemplations upon the remarkable passages*, 'do in a sort partake of each other.'³⁷ This sense that physical and spiritual perception exist in a relation of kinship, as well as antagonism, extends into a suggestion that they may be functionally indistinct. Thus, for Brathwaite, physical taste's ephemerality is a marker of its inferiority; but it is also morally and spiritually instructive:

Hence doe I gather the frailty and brevity of all earthly pleasures? Whatsoever ministers singular'st content unto our *appetite*, is no longer satisfieing then in the *palate*; for after going into the stomach, that content is done. So delights momentary, and limitarie to an instant, may for the present yeild a satisfaction, but how soone be these joyes extinguished, how soone forgotten?³⁸

It is the transience of worldly taste – the very attribute which identifies it *as* worldly – which enables it to communicate a spiritually edifying *momento mori* message.³⁹ It is worth noting that Brathwaite's rhetoric may have had a material application for early modern readers: as Robert Appelbaum demonstrates in a discussion of *Hamlet's* 'funeral baked meats,' the vocabulary of early modern food preparation and the processes of consumption could verge on the macabre: pie-crusts were 'coffins'; 'one recipe for

³⁷ Hall, *Contemplations upon the remarkable passages*, Hh3r (237).

³⁸ Brathwaite, *Essaies*, D3v (46).

³⁹ In an article on Richard Crashaw, Ryan Netzley argues similarly that 'it is the very failure of taste as a sense that reaffirms its privileged devotional value.' Ryan Netzley, 'Oral Devotion: Eucharistic Theology and Richard Crashaw's Religious Lyrics,' *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44/3 (2002): 251.

baked leg of lamb has an undertone... of internment, disinterment, and embalment.⁴⁰ For Brathwaite, bodily taste is indubitably fallen, inherently corrupt, and potentially sinful. Simultaneously, however, the phenomenal experience of worldly taste prompts a recognition of our inherent fallenness and corruption which is itself potentially virtuous, a form of humility and a necessary precondition of spiritual reformation. The moral dubiety of physical taste is at least partially compensated by its capacity to invoke a state of intensified self-awareness, a self-reflective scrutiny of sinfulness which might precede salvation.⁴¹

The relation between the physical sense of taste and spiritually redemptive self-knowledge is attested by chapter xvi of Philip Sidney's 1587 translation of the French Protestant Philippe de Mornay's *A woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion*, "That mans nature is corrupted, & man false from his first originall: and how."⁴² Mornay suggests that the capacity of worldly taste to perceive and arbitrate between a diversity of flavours makes it capable of apprehending spiritual truths about our fallen condition:

...the Vintener [createth not] the sowernesse in the Wine, nor the Smith the rust in the iron; but they come in from elsewhere. Neverthelesse, the man that never dranke other drinke than Vineger, would think it to be the naturall sap and taste of the Grape. And wee likewise who never felt other in ourselves than corruption... would beare ourselves on hand, that GOD is the cause and author thereof. Now, let us which have tasted both the Wine and the Vineger, judge what maner of creatures we may have bin in our first creation: in doing whereof there is yet notwithstanding this great difference, that the palat of our bodily mouth is able to discern the swéete from the sower; but the palat or tast of our soule, is unable to do either of them both the one, because corruption can not judge of cleannesse; and the other, because it cannot judge well of it selfe. In Wine and Vineger we discern a liquid nature common to them both: but as concerning their qualities, the Wine is swéete, warme, and friendly to nature; whereas the Vineger is sharpe, cold, and corrosive: yea and the very colours of them are unlike one another... Let us judge of our Soules with like discretion.

⁴⁰ Appelbaum, *Aguecheek's Beef*, 15, 19.

⁴¹ Several scholars have noted a relation between taste sensations and spiritual self-reflection. See, for example, Terry Sherwood, "Tasting and Telling Sweetness in George Herbert's Poetry," *English Literary Review* 12/3 (1982): 339-40; Rachel Fulton, "'Taste and see that the Lord is sweet'" (Ps. 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West," *The Journal of Religion* 86/2 (2006): 193.

⁴² Philippe de Mornay, *A woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion*, trans. Philip Sidney (London: John Charlewood and George Robinson for Thomas Cadman, 1587), S8r-U2r (287-307).

We finde there a spirituall nature, immateriall and immortall; and that is the onely remainder of her first originall.⁴³

We only blame God for the evil in our own natures, Mornay argues, because we cannot remember the time when we were – as we were created – purely good. We can learn, however, to recognise that the source of our sinfulness is not God, the divine vintner, through an act of comparative tasting: the difference in flavour between sweet and salutary wine, and ‘corrosive’ vinegar allows us to ‘judge’ of the difference between the perfection of our created natures, and the degeneration of our postlapsarian selves. Significantly, the ‘bodily mouth’ has an explicit advantage over the spiritual ‘palat.’ Whereas Brathwaite suggests that physical taste’s utility as a prompt to spiritually edifying self-reflection is despite its fallen condition, which is in contrast to the enduring purity of spiritual taste, according to Mornay physical taste escapes infection by original sin. Instead, it is mankind’s spiritual taste which is compromised by Adam and Eve’s act of eating. The postlapsarian corruption of spiritual taste precludes it from discriminating between sweet and bitter, for ‘corruption can not judge of cleannesse,’ nor can it ‘judge well of it selfe.’ We must, then, understand the soul by extrapolating from the corporeal palate. Once again, the phenomenal experience of physical taste is an occasion for, and provides a way of articulating, spiritual self-reflection.

The transience of taste – spiritually instructive as it may have been for Brathwaite – presents a challenge to modern scholars. It is impossible to archive a flavour, and even apparently historically accurate recreations of early modern dishes are freighted with anachronism: agricultural and genetic changes mean that basic foodstuffs may have altered dramatically in nature and taste; we lack the kinds of vernacular, embodied knowledge needed to accurately recreate historical recipes; the physical and mental contexts of consumption have been transformed. Whilst it is impossible to fully recapture past repasts, however, consideration of what does endure – the paraphernalia of the table – offers some insight into how early modern men and women conceived of and experienced the physical sense of taste.

In particular, the evidence provided by the material culture of dining adds weight to my argument that physical taste was thought of and experienced as inherently fallen; and that its transience was an aspect of this fallenness, as well a *memento mori* prompt to spiritual self-scrutiny. ‘*Apples*,’ writes Brathwaite, ‘are suspicious to me, being

⁴³ Mornay, *A woorke concerning the trewnesse*, T9r-T9v (303-304).

the first that depraved me.⁴⁴ Items such as the seventeenth-century earthenware dish shown in figure 3.1 suggest that Brathwaite was not alone in framing quotidian acts of eating in scriptural terms.⁴⁵ The dish represents Adam and Eve by the tree of



Figure 3.1. Pickleherring Pottery, tin glazed earthenware dish. London, 1635.

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁴⁴ The forbidden fruit was usually thought to be an apple, although some alternatives were suggested. Thomas Browne writes: 'that the Forbidden fruit of Paradise was an Apple, is commonly beleaved... [but] some have conceived it a Vine, in the mystery of whose fruit lay the expiation of the Transgression.' Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Vv2r. Thomas Buttes suggests 'a Figge.' Thomas Buttes, *Diets dry dinner* (London: Thomas Creede for William Wood, 1599), B2r (339).

⁴⁵ The V&A's catalogue description of the first dish notes that 'it is unclear whether dishes painted with this subject were intended to have a deep moral message, or whether it was simply considered an appealing and decorative theme.' I believe that such items *were* 'intended to have a deep moral message.' As the painted initials suggest, the platter was probably made to commemorate a marriage, and possibly given as a marriage gift. As such, its message might be seen as didactic: a pointed reminder to a soon-to-be wife about the consequences of female insubordination. See <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O11566/the-temptation-of-adam-and-dish-pickleherring-pottery>, accessed 03 January 2012.

knowledge, the latter reaching out to accept the forbidden fruit from the serpent's mouth. This example is by no means isolated: the temptation and Fall was a common decorative theme for pottery from the early seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries, and whilst many of the surviving examples (including the dish shown in figure 3.1) were probably destined not for use but for display, the endurance of cruder, less well-preserved instances suggest that the topic was also thought appropriate for items intended for use at the table.⁴⁶ Such dishes suggest that diners saw their own quotidian acts of physical tasting in typological terms, as potentially repeating Adam and Eve's catastrophic gustation. By the same token, the popularity of *momento mori* cutlery (figure 3.2) reifies Brathwaite's assertion that the transience of taste exemplifies the 'brevity of *all* earthly pleasures' (my emphasis), serving as a reminder of human mortality and thus as an incitement to moral and spiritual rectitude.



Figure 3.2. Thomas Mangy, silver spoon. York, England, 1670.
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London; photo © Simon Moore.

⁴⁶ Cruder examples are often found in auction catalogues rather than in museums.

I use the term ‘typological’ with intent: understanding the ways in which early modern men and women experienced eating as haunted by scriptural precedents also encourages us to expand the jurisdiction of typology as an aspect of religious, and particularly Protestant, experience. A number of scholars have explored the Protestant expansion of typology from an exegetical mode, to a model of historical time, focusing for example on the ways in which the fate of the English nation under perceived tyranny (whether Papist, Stuart, or Cromwellian) was believed to replicate the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt.⁴⁷ Less frequently noticed than the typological explanation of national, political events, however, is the way in which more immediate, transient moments of sense experience were also construed as echoing scriptural precedents. The famous madeleine episode which opens Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-27) established an influential association between taste and involuntary, individual memory.⁴⁸ I propose that, for early modern men and women, the sense of taste functioned not to prompt private reminiscence, but to recall and reanimate key moments in the Christian narrative. Taste’s multilayered temporality brings into focus the individual’s place in a gustatory genealogy stretching from Adam and Eve through Christ to the present moment. If Adam and Eve provided the archetypal model of how not to taste, Christ was often evoked as a paradigm of gustatory propriety, and physical acts of tasting in imitation of this exemplar could be appropriately pious. If a sense that physical tasting is inherently fallen can be characterised as broadly Protestant, an interest in Christ’s status as ‘the most experienced and perfit taster,’ as Robert Southwell puts it, is typical of Catholic writers.⁴⁹ Ignatius of Loyola’s *A manuell of devout meditations and exercises*, translated by the Jesuit Henry More in 1618, advises moderation at the table by contemplating the Last Supper, emphasising its function as a typological figure of Christ’s self-sacrifice. In partaking of the paschal lamb, Ignatius writes, Christ was indicating his intention to ‘fullfill that ceremony of the Law, & for the accomplishing of the shadows and figures of the old law, be sacrificed as the true Lambe.’ Ignatius urges his readers to ‘consider, how christ our Lord did behold and contemplate that Lambe which he had before him on the table,’ seeing in it ‘himselpe represented more innocent

⁴⁷ See, for example, Alice A Dailey, ‘Typology and History in Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*,’ *Prose Studies*, 25/3 (2002): 1-29. Steven Zwicker’s *Dryden’s Political Poetry: The Typology of King and Nation* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1972) was influential in establishing this approach.

⁴⁸ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, vol. 1, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin, and Andreas Mayor, revised by D. J. Enright. (London: Random House, 2005), 51-55.

⁴⁹ Robert Southell, *An epistle of comfort to the reverend priestes* (Paris [London]: John Charlewood [?], 1587), M8r (95).

then a lambe, and how without any his deserts, he was to be... put as it were upon the spit, & stretched on the table of the Crosse, where, with the hote burning coals of love, he was to be rosted to death.’ Ignatius goes on:

Ponder how bitter this supper was unto thy Redeemer, being mingled with sauce of so distastfull a representation, as was that of his death and passion.

Purpose, when thou sittest at table, to mingle thy meat with this sauce, to wit, with the consideration of the passion and paines of thy Saviour, that thou be not carried away with the gust and savour of the meat: and that if thy meat be not good, or not so well dressed or seasoned, or not in such due time prepared [as] thou wouldst, thou mayst have patience... & make thy spirituall profit therof.⁵⁰

With the evocative detail characteristic of his meditative method, Ignatius imagines Christ’s response as he sat to his final Passover meal: mingling the emblematic and the edible, the lamb vividly invokes Christ’s own incipient fate, and his experience of it is flavoured by the ‘bitter’ knowledge of his imminent death. The believer, Ignatius advises, should imitate Christ in this regard, blending and tempering pleasure in ‘the gust and savour’ of ‘thy meat’ with thoughts of Christ’s suffering. Conversely, the minor dissatisfactions of a bad meal must be accepted with a patience analogous to that of Christ on the cross: from this perspective, minor culinary disappointments become opportunities for ‘spirituall profit.’

My suggestion that early modern diners experienced food in terms informed by scriptural precedents has implications for the way in which we understand the relation between the domestic and the divine in early modern culture. Both Caroline Walker Bynum and Matthew Milner refer to what Bynum calls ‘basic medieval attitudes toward food’ and Milner calls ‘secular feasts’ as interpretive contexts for Eucharistic experience.⁵¹ Bynum argues that the fact that ‘the [medieval] feast was a banquet for all the senses,’ involving music, elaborate visual displays and so on, ‘helps us to understand’ sources which describe the Eucharistic ritual in multi-sensory or synesthetic terms: ‘given such assumptions about and expectations of food, it is small wonder that

⁵⁰ Ibid., O7r-v (325-26).

⁵¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 60. Milner, *The Senses and the Reformation*, 151.

medieval mystics considered sounds and sights as crucial to the Eucharistic banquet as eating.’⁵² Similarly, Milner references the *trompe l’oeil* cookery characteristic of aristocratic feasts in the sixteenth century as an explanatory background for the Catholic acceptance of the ‘sensory disjuncture... at the very heart’ of Eucharistic transubstantiation.⁵³ In both cases, worldly dining practices provide a rational explanatory framework for what, to modern scholars, are the more specious and bizarre features of devotional ritual experience. The influence, however, is mutual: in early modern culture, quotidian corporeal acts of tasting are imbued with spiritual significance.⁵⁴

Milner’s reference to the ‘sensory disjuncture’ which marked the Eucharistic ritual for Catholics demands some exposition. The question of the nature of the Eucharistic elements, and the most appropriate forms of ritual for their celebration, was of course one of the major theological battlegrounds of the Reformation and its aftermath. The conflict hinged on participants’ understandings of Christ’s words at the last supper: *hoc est corpus meum*, translated in the King James Version as ‘this is my body.’⁵⁵ Following the fourth Lateran council of 1215, which ratified the doctrine of transubstantiation, most Catholics took this literally: the Eucharistic elements were supposed to be transformed by consecration into the actual body and blood of Christ. Making use of the Aristotelian distinction between substance (the essential nature of something) and accidents (including sensory qualities such as smell, texture, taste, and colour), medieval apologists for this doctrine – notably Aquinas – argued that the fact that the latter miraculously remained consistent with bread and wine was a divine concession to our revulsion at the idea of eating a human body.⁵⁶ Such is the sensory disjuncture Milner refers to: what is perceived as bread and wine, is in fact body and blood.

Protestants, on the other hand, usually argued that *hoc est corpus meum* must be taken metaphorically: the Eucharistic elements only represented, or symbolized, Christ’s body and blood. Subsequently, building on the Book of Common Prayer’s assertion, quoted earlier, that the communicant ‘*spiritually* eat[s] the flesh of Christ,’ polemicists

⁵² Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 60.

⁵³ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, 151.

⁵⁴ Food culture thus participates in what a number of scholars have identified as a Protestant impulse to collapse the boundaries between the secular and the sacred, infusing everyday life with devotional meaning. See Elizabeth Clarke, ‘Women in Church and in Devotional Spaces,’ in Laura Lunger Knoppers, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 110-23.

⁵⁵ Luke 22.9 (KJV).

⁵⁶ See Kimberly Johnson, ‘Crashaw’s Indigestible Poetics,’ *Modern Philology* 107/1 (2009): 49-50.

repeatedly highlight spiritual taste as the most appropriate means to apprehend Christ's metaphorical body.⁵⁷ As the clergyman and polemicist Daniel Featley insists in his 1638 *Transubstantiation exploded*, 'wee eate not Christs flesh in the Sacrament with the mouth, after a carnall manner, but onely by faith after a spirituall.'⁵⁸ From this perspective, the mystery of the sacrament resided not in the gap between the substances and accidents of the elements, but in the gap between the bodily and spiritual senses of the percipient. A genuine alteration occurs, but it occurs in the believer, rather than in the elements themselves.⁵⁹

I have argued that – from the evidence both of scriptural commentary and material culture – physical tasting was conceived of and experienced as inherently fallen. Nonetheless, properly regulated and in some contexts, it could occasion spiritual self-reflection and improvement. Conversely, in the context of the Eucharistic sacrament, spiritual tasting – understood as salvific – had a tendency to collapse back into the physical. The issue is complicated by the fact that, for Protestants, the physical senses were not entirely irrelevant to the Eucharistic ritual: indeed, they had a more prominent role than for their Catholic counterparts, for whom the sensory accidents of the elements were ontologically irrelevant. In particular, reformers argued that the physical sense of taste testified to the absurdity and impiety of the doctrine of transubstantiation. According to this logic, if the elements retain the appearance, smell, texture, and, most importantly, the flavour of bread and wine, then that is precisely what they are.⁶⁰ To take just one example, in his 1608 *A sermon preached in the cathedrall church of Yorkee against popish transubstantiation*, Thomas Dodson contended that:

⁵⁷ On the spiritualisation of Eucharistic tasting, see also Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, 264.

⁵⁸ Daniel Featley, *Transubstantiation exploded* (London: G. Miller for Nicholas Bourne, 1638), F2r (99).

⁵⁹ Many Protestants claimed that their approach was not new. William Guild's 1624 *Three rare monuments of antiquitie*, part of the Protestant effort to counter accusations of novelty by claiming distinguished precedents for reformist doctrine, includes an abridged translation of 'De corpore et sanguine Domini,' a tract on the Eucharistic elements written by the ninth-century monk Ratramnus. 'Taste it,' writes Ratramnus, of the Eucharistic wine,

and it is Wine; smell it, and it savours Wine; looke to it, and you shall beholde the colour of Wine: But if it bee considered inwardlie in the minde, it tasteth not as Wine, but as the Blood of Christ, unto the Believers soules, and is acknowledged so while it is seene, and is approven while it is so smelled.

Ratramnus, 'De corpore et sanguine Domini,' in *Three rare monuments of antiquitie*, trans. William Guild (Aberdeen: Edward Raban for David Melvill, 1624), C1r (33).

⁶⁰ See, for example, Featley, *Transubstantiation exploded*, E2v (76), and Thomas Gataker, *A discussion of the popish doctrine of transubstantiation* (London: John Legat for William Sheffard, 1624), C4v (18).

there is no mutation in the substance of [the elements] but onely in the use; I do for... proove in this behalf, appeale to the outwarde senses: as, to the eyes, nose, mouth, taste, hands, and even to the reason of man, what it is, that wee do receive, when wee come at the feast of Easter, and at other times to the Lords table. Whereunto in answering if these senses jumpe and agree, that it is bread and wine consecrated to a holy and heavenly use; they verilie speake the truth and lye not, for there was never any transubstantiation and conversion of one substance into another, but the outwarde senses judged it to be so.⁶¹

In their alacrity to affirm that the elements are no more than consecrated bread and wine, the senses ‘jumpe’ in agreement, refusing to ‘lye’: that is, both to deceive, and to remain prone. ‘Taste,’ in particular, stands out as the only sense which is directly named, rather than indicated metonymically by reference to the sense organs.

As Milner acknowledges, in order to ratify their argument that the communicant’s sensory experience of the Eucharistic elements disqualifies the doctrine of transubstantiation, Protestant polemicists needed to bolster the accuracy and the reliability of the senses more generally.⁶² Reformers had to prove, in the words of Cambridge Platonist Henry More, that ‘the *outward Senses...* are fit Judges touching sensible Objects.’⁶³ Daniel Featley cites Tertullian, arguing that ‘*you must not question the truth of your senses, lest thereby you weaken the sinewes of our faith...* Were not the senses competent judges of their proper objects... Christ would never have appealed to them as hee doth. *Behold my hands and my feet, that is, I my selfe, handle me and see...*’⁶⁴ Featley refers to Luke 24:39, in which Christ urges his sceptical disciples to accept the truth of his resurrection by using their senses to confirm his physical presence. As Thomas Gataker writes, ‘our Saviour himselfe teacheth us by... *sense* to judge.’⁶⁵ In this way, Christ is supposed to offer divine sanction for the accuracy of the human senses, and the admissibility of their evidence regarding the nature of the world. The role which taste played in the experience of the Eucharistic sacrament for Protestants, then, was twofold: whilst spiritual taste apprehended Christ’s spiritual flesh and blood, physical taste focused on the flavours of bread and wine as ‘proof’ of the absurdity of

⁶¹ Thomas Dodson, *A sermon preached in the cathedrall church of Yorke against popish transubstantiation* (London: H. Lownes for Mathew Lownes, 1608), C1r (9).

⁶² Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, 241.

⁶³ Henry More, *A brief discourse of the real presence* (London: Walter Kettily, 1686), C1r (13).

⁶⁴ Featley, *Transubstantiation exploded*, E2v (76).

⁶⁵ Gataker, *A discussion of the popish doctrine*, D1r (17).

transubstantiation. Milner reads the reformist emphasis on the trustworthiness of the senses as a guide to the nature of the Eucharistic elements as an aspect of a wider cultural move towards empirical epistemologies: reform, he writes, ‘rested solely on increasing legitimation of sensible realism to religious life and empirical accuracy to scripture.’⁶⁶ But this is not the whole story. For some Protestant authors, the taste sensations attendant on Eucharistic ritual are significant not because they confirm, with proto-empirical accuracy, that the elements do not undergo a substantial transformation, but rather because they can illuminate apparently unrelated doctrinal issues.

In his *Contemplations upon the principall passages*, Hall brings doctrine into dialogue with sensation in order to cast light on the former. Hall begins by considering Edenic arboriculture. ‘The tree of knowledge, and the tree of life,’ he claims, were placed in the garden in order that Adam might see ‘his Saviour before him; ere hee had need of a Saviour... after man had tasted of the tree of knowledge, hee might not taste of the tree of life: Yet then did he most savour that invisible tree of life, when he was most restrained from the other.’⁶⁷ The trees offer Adam and Eve a proleptic reassurance, before the Fall has even occurred, that it will be redeemed by Christ, ‘that invisible tree of life,’ of whom the tree of life mentioned in Genesis is a typological symbol. Behind this lies the Augustinian notion of the Fall as *felix culpa*: what was lost to man when the primordial parents tasted of the tree of knowledge, is more than recompensed by mankind’s subsequent ability to ‘savour’ Christ in the Eucharistic elements. Hall describes this communion in intensely sensory terms:

O Saviour, none but a sinner can relish thee: My tast hath bin enough seasoned with the forbidden fruit, to make it capable of thy sweetnesse; Sharpen thou as well the stomacke of my soule by repenting as by beleeving, so shall I eate [and] in despight of *Adam*, live for ever.⁶⁸

Hall’s plea to Christ to ‘sharpen.... the stomacke of my soule’ frames the form of ‘tast’ involved in consuming the Eucharistic elements as spiritual, rather than physical. Simultaneously, however, his strikingly gustatory language of appreciative relishing, seasoning and sweetness, evokes the experience of worldly tasting. A familiar

⁶⁶ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, 241. See also 246.

⁶⁷ Hall, *Contemplations upon the principall passages*, C8r (47).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, C8r-C8v (47-48).

gastronomic phenomenon – that the tongue is more sensitive to sweetness after it has been ‘seasoned’ with something salty, bitter, or sour – expresses, in immediate and recognisable terms, the knotty theological concept of the Fall as *felix culpa*. The spiritual experience of tasting God, like the physical tasting of food, is intensified through the contrasts: the spiritual palate perceives the sweetness of the divine more intensely once it has been made keener by the bitterness of sin.

For Hall, then, physical taste has a role to play in the Eucharistic ritual not because it verifies empirically the reformist conviction that the elements undergo no substantial change, but rather because the experience of taste provides a vivid and comprehensible way of articulating complex theological issues. As such, Hall’s way of thinking pushes in the opposite direction to that of most modern scholarship on religion and the senses, which typically explores how theological debates influenced the embodied, sensory experience of worship via transformations in ritual practice. Hall, however, is less interested in how doctrine informs the sensory experience of worship, than in how ideas about and experiences of sensation (particular, gustation) provide a set of terms for the negotiation and elaboration of key doctrinal issues.

III. ‘ruminate and chew these things’

At this point, it should be clear that in early modern England both physical and spiritual taste were central to ritual experience, to domestic dining, and to the negotiation of doctrine. Simultaneously sacred and profane, taste provided a set of terms for navigating the postlapsarian human condition, similarly poised between perdition and grace. In this section, I consider more closely the role that taste played as a mode of religious knowledge, and in particular as a route to God. I bring some of the findings of my previous chapters to bear in order to consider the relation between ritual, scripture, and intuition as competing routes to knowledge of the divine, and the role which the language of taste played in defining and arbitrating between all three. What utility does ‘taste,’ understood as a mode of literary discrimination, have when its object is not a secular poem, but the Gospel? Do taste’s associations with experiential immediacy hold when they are used to assert knowledge, not of human cadavers, but of the transcendent deity?

Taste – indeterminately indicating corporeal and spiritual apprehension – is a central term in articulating the kind of experiential, affective knowledge of the divine

associated with faith in early modern England.⁶⁹ This is the case across confessional divides: both John Calvin and Ignatius of Loyola use the language of taste to describe intimacy with God. Humility, Calvin claims in Arthur Golding's 1567 translation *A little booke of John Calvines*, is a necessary precondition of religious wisdom: in order to have the 'taste' of 'heavenly Philosophy,' it is 'requisite' to have 'a subdewed minde.'⁷⁰ In contrast, those who are 'voide of the feare of God... have no taste at all of the spirituall doctrine.' At the other end of the confessional spectrum, for Ignatius, too, the apprehension of God is both predicated on passionate affect, and expressed using the language of taste. In his *A manuell of devout meditations*, Ignatius insists that the 'understanding' is 'exercised' in prayer only when one considers:

those things which best may help to move the Will, pondering and as it were chewing them againe and againe by leasure to the end we may find our selves moved with the vertue and fruite included therein. For that which is not well chewed, is neither bitter nor sweet: and so neither Sinne, nor Death, nor Judgment, nor Hell it selfe, is bitter or loathsome unto the sinner, because he doth not ruminare and chew these things, but swalloweth them whole...

Hence it is also, that we take no gust, nor have any feeling in the Misteries of the Incarnation, Passion, & Resurrection of Christ: because we doe not throughly ruminare & chew them. Let us therefore bruize and chew with our Understanding this graine of mustard seed, searching out the precious & divine vertue which therein is hidden, that is to say, within this holy and divine Mistery: and we shall see by experience that it doth not only heat and bite us, but also provoke and cause in us teares of devotion.⁷¹

'Gust,' or taste, mediates between and unites the understanding and will, reasoned consideration and passionate affect. In 'chewing' over concepts such as sin, death, and judgement, the individual cultivates in him or herself a state of intense, transformative, affective awareness: he or she is moved away from 'bitter' vice, and the human will is aligned with the divine. Ignatius invokes Christ's parable of the mustard seed: where the

⁶⁹ Mary Carruthers comments that in Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons, 'tasting flavors is also a means of knowing, even knowing God.' Carruthers, 'Sweetness,' 1001.

⁷⁰ John Calvin, *A little booke of John Calvines*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: H. Wykes for William Seres, 1567), B5v (13).

⁷¹ Ignatius, *A manuell*, B7r-v (37-38).

original focuses on scale, however, exploiting the contrast between the smallness of the seed and the large size of the plant in order to describe the kingdom of heaven, Ignatius shifts the emphasis to flavour.⁷² In this case, the mustard seed represents the mystery of Christ's corporeal life: incarnation, passion, and resurrection. Ruminating on, or chewing, this mustard seed is an act of violence: it 'bruize[s]' it, a term that implicitly holds the meditating subject liable for some of the violence inflicted on Christ's body during the passion. Such violence, however, rebounds on the individual, who finds him or herself reciprocally subject to the 'bite' of the seed, its hot sapour provoking 'teares of devotion.' Pious contemplation of the divine, figured as a form of gustatory practice, physically transforms the subject's body as it stimulates his or her passions.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, Ignatius' meditative method proved influential across denominational boundaries. Hall's 1606 *The art of divine meditation* is notable in this respect: as Richard McCabe notes, the work 'served to introduce continental contemplative methods to an English protestant readership.'⁷³ Hall writes:

After that the minde hath... traversed... through all the heads of reason, it shall indeavour to find in the first place some feeling touch, & sweete rellish in that which it hath thus chewed In Meditation wee doe both see and taste; but we see before we taste: sight is of the understanding; taste, of the affection; Neither can we see, but we must taste; we can not knowe aright, but wee must needes bee affected.... Let the heart therefore first conceive and feele in it self the *Sweetnesse* or *bitternesse* of the matter meditated; which is never done without some passion...⁷⁴

For Hall as for Ignatius, the processes of 'reason' must be completed by a more direct, affective appreciation of the object of knowledge, effected through a chewing and tasting which provides access to the nature of 'the matter meditated.' Hall's tortured syntax mirrors his convoluted negotiation of the temporal and epistemic priority of taste and affect, versus sight and intellection, and his ultimate refusal to promote one over the other. His initial statement, 'we see before we taste,' is complicated, rather than

⁷² For the parable of the mustard seed, see Mark 4:30-32, Matthew 13: 31-32, Matthew 17:20, Luke 13:18-19, and Luke 17:6 (KJV).

⁷³ Richard A. McCabe, 'Hall, Joseph (1574–1656),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 02 March 2012, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11976.

⁷⁴ Joseph Hall, *The arte of divine meditation* (London: Humfrey Lownes for Samuel Macham and Mathew Cooke, 1606), G12v-H1v (150-52).

simply buttressed, by his subsequent statement, ‘neither can we see, but we must taste.’ The conjunction ‘but’ is ambiguous: overtly, it suggests that taste necessarily follows on from sight, but a secondary implication that taste is a necessary precondition of sight is retrospectively reinforced by Hall’s ensuing exhortation to ‘let the heart therefore first conceive and feele in it self the *Sweetnesse* or *bitternesse* of the matter meditated.’⁷⁵ Taste and ‘affection,’ and sight and intellection, exist in a shifting and unstable hierarchical relation, in which precedence is ambiguous and negotiable.

Drawing on the Protestant meditative tradition, George Herbert’s ‘The Agonie’ uses the opposition between affective taste and intellective sight to describe the forms of knowledge appropriate to ‘Sinne and Love,’ both of which are exemplified simultaneously in the crucifixion. Herbert advises anyone who wishes to ‘know’ sin to:

...repair

Unto Mount Olivet; there shall he *see*

A man so wrung with pains, that all his hair,

His skinne, his garments bloudie be...⁷⁶ (My emphasis)

Knowledge of sin, Herbert advises, is attained through seeing. Specifically, it is attained through meditation on the spectacle of the crucified Christ: through noticing, as Herbert’s poem does, the visual details of his bloody hair, skin, and garments, and subsequently comprehending the sinfulness of those who condemned the son of God to death. In contrast, Herbert recommends:

Who knows not Love, let him assay

And *taste* that juice, which on the crosse a pike

Did set again abroach; then let him say

If ever he did *taste* the like.

Love is that liquour sweet and most divine,

Which my God feels as bloud; but I, as wine.⁷⁷ (My emphasis)

⁷⁵ The suggestion that affective taste must precede intellective sight has a precedent in the works of Bernard of Clairvaux. See Fulton, ‘Taste and See,’ 192.

⁷⁶ George Herbert, *The Temple* (Cambridge: Thomas Buck and Roger Daniel, 1633), B3r (29).

⁷⁷ Herbert, *The Temple*, B3r (29).

Whereas knowledge of sin is associated with seeing, Herbert associates knowledge of divine love with tasting. Vision, of course, is a distal sense, whereas taste is a proximity sense: whilst sight maintains a safe distance between perceiving subject and the perceived object (in this case, sin), tasting is predicated on direct contact between subject and object (in this case, the blood or wine which manifest divine love). ‘The Agonie,’ then, recommends alternate forms of sensory engagement in order not only to describe, but to covertly prescribe, the nature and intensity of the reader’s engagement with sin and love: whilst the first may be apprehended and understood, but only at a distance, the second invites the more direct, experiential form of knowledge represented by the sense of taste.

Herbert’s description of celestial love as liquor negotiates deftly the convolutions of the Eucharistic controversy: his invitation to the reader to ‘taste’ the blood which flows from the crucified Christ’s side flirts with Catholic dogma, even as his circumvention of the word ‘blood’ itself in favour of the non-committal ‘juice’ sidesteps transubstantiation.⁷⁸ Herbert, then, roots the association between taste and experiential immediacy in ritual practice. This is also the case for Edward Reynolds, whose 1638 *Meditations on the holy sacrament* includes a call to readers to partake frequently and fully in the Eucharistic sacrament:

we should use this pretious gift of Christ crucified, not to look on, but to eat, not with a gazing, speculative knowledge of him, as it were at a distance, but with an experimentall and working knowledge, none truly knowes Christ but he that feels him. *Come taste and see* saith the Prophet, *how gracious the Lord is:* in divine things, *tasting* goes before *seeing*, the *union* before the *vision* Christ must first *dwell in us*, before wee can *know the love of God*, that passeth knowledge.⁷⁹

Whereas Hall reserves judgement about whether taste or vision should be prioritized as a mode of religious knowledge, for Reynolds taste emerges as the clear victor in the epistemological clash between them, and this triumph is tied to the importance of the Eucharist as a source of ‘experimentall and working knowledge’ about Christ.

⁷⁸ Herbert’s precise place on the sliding scale between Laudianism and Puritanism is a matter of much debate. Whilst he acknowledges that ‘Herbert... no doubt saw himself in the tradition adumbrated by the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Elizabethan and Jacobean mainstream,’ Brian Cummings stresses the distinctly Calvinist aspects of his thought. Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 319-27, especially 322.

⁷⁹ Edward Reynolds, *Meditations on the holy sacrament* (London: Felix Kingston for Robert Bostock, 1638), L13r (93).

In the meditative tradition, then, ‘taste’ as a term to describe a practical, experiential, and passionate form of religious knowledge is intimately associated with the ritual practice of sacramental tasting. For many Protestants of the ‘hotter’ sort, however, the Eucharistic sacrament remained suspiciously redolent of the Popish mass.⁸⁰ Instead, reformers emphasised the authority and efficacy of the word of God. Indeed, even those more moderate Protestants who continued to affirm the Eucharist’s value as a means of communion with the divine stressed that the outward forms of ritual were no match for the divine word. The transition from bread and wine to scripture does not equate to a transition from the physical to the intellectual or spiritual, however, for, following Origen, scripture itself was understood as incarnational: just as Christ embodied the word, the word embodied Christ.⁸¹ Protestantism’s status as a religion of the book, moreover, complicated the reformist adoption of the Pauline elevation of spirit over letter.⁸² In this context, anxieties about the materiality of the word – its reification as paper and ink – abounded.

In his recent study of Protestant sermon culture, *The Art of Hearing*, Arnold Hunt highlights reformist concerns that the written word was a form of image, subject, like all images, to idolatrous misinterpretation.⁸³ Many responded to this danger, he argues, by emphasising the importance of the spoken word, apprehended aurally, over the written word, apprehended visually. Consequently, influenced by Romans 10:17 (‘faith cometh by hearing’), ‘many early modern Protestants were adamant that only the word preached – not the word read – could suffice for salvation.’⁸⁴ In stressing the importance of hearing the word of God for many Protestants, Hunt’s research complicates a still-dominant scholarly presumption that the early modern period participated in a shift, originating in the medieval period but ‘accelerated’ by the invention of printing, from predominantly aural / oral cultures to predominantly visual / literate cultures.⁸⁵ Hunt’s own model, however, can be further nuanced if we attend to the ways in which both vision and hearing were themselves understood and experienced synaesthetically, as deeply imbricated with the apparently lower senses of touch, smell,

⁸⁰ On hot Protestants, and on problems of classification, see Ian Hugh Clary, ‘“Hot Protestants”: A Taxonomy of English Puritanism,’ *Puritan Reformed Journal* 2 (2010): 41-66.

⁸¹ On Origen’s notion that ‘the Word... is made flesh in scripture,’ see James Kearney, *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 244 n. 25. Kearney cites Origen’s *Homilies on Leviticus* (c.238-244 C.E.). Milner argues that the reformist move to replace the Eucharistic elements with scripture as the site of ‘a corporeal real presence... [was] more than simply hermeneutic; it was very real and formal.’ Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, 266

⁸² See 2 Cor. 3:6 (KJV): ‘the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.’

⁸³ Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, 29.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-7.

and taste. For, in privileging the word over the elements as a site of divine presence, reformers did not discard the language of tasting and consuming; far from it.

‘How sweet are thy words unto my taste!’ exclaims King David in the Psalms, ‘yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!’⁸⁶ St Peter enjoins Christian converts to desire ‘the sincere milk of the word.’⁸⁷ The prophets Ezekiel and John, meanwhile, describe visions of eating, respectively, a scroll and a book; in both cases, they find the repast ‘sweet’ to the mouth, but ‘bitter’ in the belly.⁸⁸ ‘Doth not,’ a beleaguered Job asks, ‘the ear try words? And the mouth taste his meat?’⁸⁹ All these scriptural examples imply that words – and in the case of King David, the divine Word – are fundamentally similar to food: both nourish, and both are assessed using the sense of taste. Drawing on these moments, Western Christianity developed a long and rich tradition of what might be called biblical bibliophagy: imagery which conflates reading the word of God with tasting and eating. In the middle ages, the four-stage Benedictine practice of *lectio divina*, or divine reading, was often compared to the stages of eating: *lectio*, or reading, corresponded to biting or tasting; *meditatio* or meditation to chewing; *oratio* or prayer to savouring and enjoying; and *contemplatio*, or contemplation, to digesting and absorbing.⁹⁰ In the early modern period, Protestants both radical and moderate continued to advocate the practice of *lectio divina*, and retained the alimentary rhetoric used to describe it. To take just one example, George Gascoigne advises in his 1576 *The droomme of Doomes day* that ‘even as the taste of the mouth doth discern and taste everie morsell or péece of the bodily sustenance, whilst it cheweth and gnaweth it, even so the inwarde taste of the soule oughte in prayer and singing of Psalmes to marke and taste the sence of everye worde and sentence.’⁹¹ In Gascoigne’s formulation, Job’s comparison between the discerning ear and the discerning mouth is amalgamated with the doctrine of the spiritual senses: the ‘inwarde’ or spiritual taste ‘marke[s]’ or meditates on the holy words of the psalms.

James Kearney offers one way to read the reformist use of bibliophagic images to describe devotional reading in relation to anxieties about the materiality of scripture,

⁸⁶ Psalm 119:103 (KJV).

⁸⁷ 1 Peter 2:2 (KJV).

⁸⁸ Rev. 10:9-10 and Ezekiel 3:1-3 (KJV).

⁸⁹ Job 11:12 (KJV). John Norden appropriates this association in *A good companion*: ‘yet is thine eare an excellent and necessary Organ, it tryeth words (as thy taste tryeth meat, and thy palat Wine) whether good or evill.’ Norden, *A good companion*, F5r (121).

⁹⁰ On *lectio divina* and its connection to physical acts of eating, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 204-212.

⁹¹ Gascoigne, *The droomme of Doomes day*, R8r.

and the threat of bibliolatry.⁹² Kearney contends, somewhat counter-intuitively, that reformers used ‘the conceit that one could smell or taste the gospel not because they wanted to locate authority in the body, but because they wanted to illustrate that their response somehow bypassed the intellect... This kind of affective response to scripture authenticates one’s reading as the work of the spirit.’⁹³ According to Kearney, the corporeal is a metaphor for the affective, which in its turn is opposed to the intellectual. Gustatory and spiritual modes of reading are aligned only insofar as both are antithetical to intellectual, mental modes of reading: bodily metaphors attest, paradoxically, that ‘one’s reading [is] the work of the spirit.’ In contrast, I want to emphasise how frequently the corporeal, the affective, and the intellectual were conceived of and experienced as deeply imbricated. Biblical bibliophagy draws simultaneously on the sensory, the epistemological, and the spiritual connotations of ‘taste’ in order to describe a mode of reading which exercises every aspect of the tripartite self: body, mind, and soul.

This is evident if we consider the ways in which the language of biblical bibliophagy is used to valorize the Protestant project of making scripture more widely available. In chapter 1, I argued that authors including Philip Sidney made use of the language of taste in order to defend vernacular poesy. Similarly, for both radical and moderate reformers, the association between the sense of taste and discriminative reading constitutes a crucial rhetorical tool in efforts to defend the notion that scriptural meaning is inherently lucid, and should be made accessible to the laity in the vernacular, without the need for clerical or learned exegesis. In his *De Scandalis*, for example, published in Arthur Golding’s English translation in 1567, Calvin builds on Matthew 4:4, asserting that ‘the Gospell is the bread of life,’ and going on to coruscate those ‘Papists’ who ‘scarre the siely people from taking any tast of the Gospell.’⁹⁴ Calvin suggests that, like bread, scripture is a basic human need, shared by learned and ‘siely’ people alike. By suggesting that the gospel is apprehended by ‘tast,’ furthermore, Calvin draws on what, in chapter 1, I identified as taste’s democratic associations: if a discerning reading is rooted not in extensive education, but in physical sensation, then it is common both to the clergy and the laity.

⁹² As Kearney puts it, ‘for some the book became an emblem of the desire to transcend the merely material and irredeemably fallen world of objects, of things. At the same time, Reformers were suspicious of all human media, of the fallen material dimension of all representation... all that might be associated with the letter rather than the spirit.’ Kearney, *Incarnate Text*, 3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁴ Calvin, *A little booke*, J4r, K4v (63, 73).

The translators' address 'to the reader' which prefaces the King James Version attests to the cultural and political legitimacy of biblical bibliophagy. The address compares the 'spiritual and sincere milk of the word' to:

...a whole paradise of trees of life, which bring forth fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat, and the leaves for medicine. It is... a shower of heavenly bread sufficient for a whole host... it is a panary of wholesome food against fenowed traditions; a physician's shop (as St Basil calls it) of preservatives against poisoned heresies...⁹⁵

The address to the reader departs from the model offered by Calvin in associating readerly consumption of the word with ritual consumption of the sacramental bread and wine. In describing the translation that the 'address' introduces as 'a whole paradise of trees of life... a shower of heavenly bread [i.e. manna],' this passage positions vernacular scripture both as a *version* of the Eucharist, and as a *replacement* for it. Like the elements, salutary scripture fulfils the promise made by the Old Testament 'types' of the tree of life and of manna, offering a redemptive antidote to the menaces of 'fenowed' (mouldy) traditions and 'poisoned heresies.' In this context, then, biblical bibliophagy serves to downplay the potentially radical implications of making gospel more widely accessible by associating reading scripture with older, more ritualistic forms of worship.

The association of scripture with manna is an early modern commonplace. *Palladis Tamia*, for example, cites Origen's warning that 'as... *Manna* was wholesome foode unto some, and corruption and wormes unto others: so the same worde of God is salvation unto some, and destruction unto others.'⁹⁶ Importantly, the analogy insists on the formative impact of the bodily state of the reader on his or her reception of gospel: both manna and scripture are either salubrious or hazardous, depending on the prior constitution of the recipient or reader. *Pace* James Kearney, the imagery of biblical bibliophagy positions the devout reader's experience of scripture as *concurrently* discriminative, or intellectual, affective, and corporeal.

⁹⁵ Anon., 'The Translators to the Reader,' in *The Bible: Authorised King James Version, with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), lvi.

⁹⁶ Meres, *Palladis tamia*, D7r (23).

IV. 'his palate that could judge'

So far, I have argued that in post-Reformation England, taste, understood as indeterminately physical and spiritual, functions as a reminder of mortality and prompt to self-reflection; as a means to experiential intimacy with the divine in the context of the Eucharistic ritual; and as a term in the legitimization of vernacular scripture. If mankind can taste God, however, might the opposite also be true? In his 1652 devotional epic *Theophilia*, the poet Edward Benlowes writes of Adam and Eve that 'both taste, by tasting, tastelesse Both became.'⁹⁷ Benlowe's use of polyptoton both accentuates the instrumental role of taste in precipitating Adam and Eve's downfall, and extends the action through history, as the simple present tense of 'both taste' is repeated as the present continuous 'tasting.' In tasting, Benlowes continues, Adam and Eve become 'tasteless': a word that indicates both that they become devoid of the capacity to taste, and that they themselves become insipid, flavourless. Conversely, for the radical Essex minister John Smith, tasting the Eucharistic wine effected a change for the better in the sensory attributes of the communicant's body: 'a man having tasted of it,' he claims, 'it will make his very breath smell the sweeter for it.' 'The blood of Christ' operates in the same way: 'a man having tasted of it by faith, all his actions and all his thoughts will be full of the good taste, and good relish of the same.'⁹⁸

But who are Adam and Eve, and their descendants, tasteless or tasty *to*? We are very used to thinking of God's omnipotence in terms of the comprehensive scope and penetrating acuity of the divine senses, but usually the emphasis is on God's aural and visual supremacy: God is all-seeing and all-hearing. A number of early modern authors, however, suggest that God also makes use of the traditionally lower senses of smell and taste.⁹⁹ In his *An exposition uppon the v. vi. vii. chapters of Mathew*, for example, included in his 1573 *Works*, William Tyndale argues that those who fast for self-serving reasons such as pride in their own piety are tasteless to God: 'thy sacrifice were cleane without salt, & all together unsavery in the tast of God.'¹⁰⁰ Blurring the line between spiritual

⁹⁷ Edward Benlowes, *Theophila* (London: R.N. for Henry Seile, 1652), E1r (25).

⁹⁸ John Smith, *Essex dove* (1629), K5r (137).

⁹⁹ Potentially, this tendency might be understood as an aspect of the reformist abjuration of visual imagery. Psalm 115:4-7, an important source for debates about idolatry, reads: 'Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not.' (KJV) The idol has something of the nightmarish quality of the automaton, fusing the appearance of life with a lack of sensitivity, and thus of vulnerability. Emphasising God's sensitivity is therefore one way to define the divine against the dead image.

¹⁰⁰ William Tyndale, Robert Barnes, and John Frith, *The whole workes of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doct.*

and physical tasting, Tyndale implies that there is a direct link between the individual's physical tastes, and the 'tast' which God has of the individual.¹⁰¹

On the face of it, this need not be controversial: earlier in this chapter, I cited Robert Southwell's description of Christ as 'the most experienced and perfitt taster,' and in his Christological incarnation the trinitarian God would of course be expected to possess the full quota of human senses. Consideration of the 1616 *A divine herball*, a collection of sermons by the episcopal Calvinist clergyman Thomas Adams, however, reveals that a keen sense of smell and taste also belong to God in his transcendent, paternal manifestation: God the lawgiver and judge.¹⁰² In his third sermon, Adams expounds on Hebrews 6:7, 'the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God.'¹⁰³ His exegesis expands on the 'meetness' of the herbs produced by the earth – which represent those believers who drink in the 'rain' of God's grace – by stressing their sensory qualities. In particular, Adams stresses that the herbs (that is, the believers) must '*taste* well':

Many a flower hath a sweet smell, but not so wholesome a taste. Your Pharisaeall prayers and almes smelt sweetly in the vulgar nostrils: *taste* them, and they were but rue, or rather worme-wood. When the Pharise sawe the Publican in the lower part of the Temple, standing as it were in the Belfrey; he could cry, Foh this Publican: but when they were both *tasted*, by his palate that could judge, the Publican hath an *herbe* in his bosome, and the Pharise but a gay, gorgeous, stinking weede.¹⁰⁴

In a peculiar departure from scripture, Adams describes God's arbitration between the Pharisee and the publican, recounted in Luke, as an act of tasting.¹⁰⁵ Taste's associations with discrimination are apotheosized as divine judgement: the capacity to discriminate between adherence to ritual forms, and genuine faith.

Barnes (London: John Daye, 1573), Ff5r (229).

¹⁰¹ Matthew Milner comments on a pervasive belief that the believer must be 'seasoned by the salt of faith. [The Eucharist] was a meal where both God and communicant were both feast and feaster...' *The Senses and the English Reformation*, 152.

¹⁰² For Adams' episcopal Calvinism, see J. Sears McGee, 'Adams, Thomas (1583–1652)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 01 August 2012, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/131.

¹⁰³ Heb. 6: 7 (KJV).

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Adams, *A divine herball* (London: George Purslowe for John Budge, 1616), K1r-K1v (65-66).

¹⁰⁵ See Luke 18:9-14.

At moments, Adams' insistence on a sensing deity slips into bathos: to God, Adams suggests, 'A good life is a good sallet... the true Gods diet, is the vertues of his Saints... Faith, love, patience, meeknes, honestie; these dishes are his dainties.'¹⁰⁶ God, Adams imagines, similarly has an intensely sensory response to sin. Whilst 'man is naturally delighted with pleasant savours, and abhorres noisome and stinking smels,' God is even more susceptible to olfactory stimulation: 'our God hath purer nostrils, and cannot abide the polluted heapes of iniquities.'¹⁰⁷ In the third sermon, human virtue and vice emerge as sensible, subject to the perceptual acuity of a deity with eyes, palate, and even nostrils. God's perception might be inherently spiritual, but in Adam's description it also has distinctly corporeal aspects.

Adam's portrayal of a deity who is partial to a nice salad also presents us with a somewhat epicurean God. Augustine's *Confessions*, too, implies at points a God who is susceptible to the pleasures of the table. In a discussion of Luke 15:7 ('joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance'), Augustine draws a parallel between God's pleasure at the conversion of a sinner, and the drinker's pleasure in quenching a painful thirst.¹⁰⁸ 'There is no pleasure in eating and drinking' he asserts,

unlesse the pinching of hunger and thirst goe before it. The Drunkards eate certaine salt meats, with purpose to procure a thirstie hotnesse in the mouth, which whilst the drinke quenches, the pleasure is procured.¹⁰⁹

The suggestion that the pleasures of eating and drinking are enhanced by the natural rhythms of abstention and consumption – the necessary gaps between meals which allow hunger and thirst to develop – slides into a more artificial cultivation of gustatory pleasure, in the image of the drunkard who procures thirstiness intentionally to heighten his enjoyment of drinking. God's pleasure in the conversion of the sinner is similarly epicurean, a relish which draws its intensity from the relief of an intentionally cultivated self-deprivation.

¹⁰⁶ Adams, *A divine herball*, K1r (65).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, I4r (63).

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, T10r (227).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, T11v-T12r (230-31).

V. 'sweet sins'

Above, I argued that, understood as the incarnate word, scripture demanded a mode of reading which blended spiritual receptivity, mental acuity, and physical sensitivity. The vocabulary of taste – with its traditional associations with intimate, experiential knowledge of the divine, with discrimination and judgement, and of course with corporeal gustation – provided a way to describe and advocate this form of reading. As always, however, this promising association of embodied and redemptive readerly interpretation of scripture had a diabolical twin: fallen, corrupt readerly tasting. If scripture could serve as a locus for real presence, then conversely, secular literature could be akin to the forbidden fruit of knowledge; and readerly gustation could have similarly catastrophic consequences.¹¹⁰

The language of sweetness is important here. Augustine's suggestion that the conversion of a sinner is a culinary event for God, resonates with his descriptions of his own particular conversion in terms of taste. On the one hand, Augustine opposes the sourness or bitterness of a heathen life to the sweetness of Christian faith; on the other, he opposes the corrupt sweetness of sin to the pure sweetness of virtue. He also uses the language of sweetness to map both his *confessional* conversion from the intellectual temptations of Manichaeism to the rectitude of Christianity, and his *moral* conversion from the carnal delights of his mistress to devout chastity. The erotic pleasures to which he is susceptible are a form of 'deadly sweetnesse'; conversely, God is 'my most sweet God,' 'the onely assured sweetnesse,' a 'sweete *light*,' and 'secure sweetnesse.'¹¹¹ The moment of conversion is thus described as a transformation not of bitter to sweet, but of types of sweetness:

How pleasant was it all on the sudden made unto me, to want the sweets of those Toyes? Yea, what I before feared to lose, was now a joy unto me to forgoe. For thou didst cast them away from me, even thou that true & chiefest sweetnesse. Thou threwest them out, and instead of them camest in thy selfe, sweeter than all pleasure, though not to flesh and blood...¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Here, I use 'secular literature' to refer to literature written by laypeople, which may or may not have a religious theme.

¹¹¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, P6v (324), V3v (438), Dd12v (624), Ee1r (625).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, Y4r (407).

Sweetness is highly over-determined, indicative at once of deep spiritual danger and the most profound virtue.

Augustine's sense of the profound moral duality of sweetness is also widely in evidence in early modern devotional discourse; and early modern writers similarly use the language of sweetness to articulate and negotiate confessional identity. We have seen ample evidence of reformist uses of sweetness to indicate pious intimacy with the divine: the chapter is saturated with examples, from Du Bartas' dulcet depiction of paradise onwards. Conversely, however, sweetness could have strongly Catholic associations. Sweetness was central to the devotional culture of medieval England: scholars including Caroline Walker Bynum, Mary Carruthers, Rachel Fulton, and Richard Newhauser have documented its ubiquity in monastic and mystical writings, and its importance to female piety in particular.¹¹³ In the early modern period, notorious Catholic converts including Robert Southwell and Richard Crashaw consciously and skilfully maintain this tradition: their verse is dense with voluptuous descriptions of the intense sweetness of Christ's blood, sweat, and tears.

Reformists, then, might be expected to eschew the language of sweetness as part of the project of overturning the sensual indulgences of the old faith. As we have seen, they do not do so.¹¹⁴ In some cases, however, they do utilise it in order to align Catholicism with the kinds of self-indulgent erotic sweetness which Augustine eventually abjured; a pejorative association between Catholicism and confectionary is a common feature of reformist polemic. Tyndale's *An exposition*, for example, paints a picture of 'the Pope's fast' which employs the saccharine in service of the savagely satirical. The pontiff eschews 'fleshe,' Tyndale acknowledges, only 'to banquet with... all maner of fruits and confections, marmelad, Succad, Grenegynger, comffettes, sugerplate, with malmesay & romney burnt with suger, Synamond & cloves, with bastarde, Muscadell and Ipocrasie.'¹¹⁵ Tyndale's pointed punning – which aligns the sweet Spanish wine *bastarde* with illegitimacy, and the spiced wine *hippocras* with hypocrisy – extends the accusation of gluttony into an allegation of sexual licentiousness

¹¹³ See Bynum, *Holy Feast*; Carruthers, 'Sweetness'; Fulton, 'Taste and See'; Richard Newhauser, 'John Gower's Sweet Tooth,' *Review of English Studies* 64 (forthcoming, 2013). Advanced access at 10.1093/res/hgt027. Accessed 01 May 2013.

¹¹⁴ Peter Marshall notes – specifically in regard to Henrician 'evangelicals' – most reformers 'seem to have had few qualms about this adjective.' Marshall's cautiousness, evident in his qualifier and his tentative litotes, is belied by his examples: he collates a plethora of instances of reformers enthusiastically employing the language of sweetness in order to describe a transformative encounter with vernacular scripture. Marshall, 'Evangelical Conversion in the Reign of Henry VIII,' in Marshall and Alex Ryie, eds. *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 26-27.

¹¹⁵ Tyndale, *Workes*, Ff5r (299).

and duplicity. In the following century, Andrew Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House,' written around 1651, describes the seduction of one of Thomas Fairfax's ancestors, the heiress Isabel Thwaites, by the inhabitants of the Catholic convent at Nunappleton.¹¹⁶ A nun enumerates the sensory pleasures of convent life in terms highly reminiscent of the erotic banquet of the senses trope, and the penultimate sense she elaborates on is taste:

... Here pleasure piety doth meet.
One perfecting the other Sweet.
So through the mortal fruit we boil
The Sugars uncorrupting Oil:
And that which perisht while we pull,
Is thus preserved clear and full...

...Balms for the griv'd we draw; and pasts
We mold, as Baits for curious tasts.
What need is here of Man? unless
These as sweet Sins we should confess.¹¹⁷

In the nun's sibilant, insinuating couplets, culinary trickery replaces virtuous action: the nuns 'boil... Sugars uncorrupting Oil' through the 'mortal fruit' which inevitably recalls that tasted by Adam and Eve, preserving as sweetmeats what they should reject as poison, in lieu of the preservation of their own souls. The virtuous labour of drawing salutary 'balms' for the afflicted segues into frivolous efforts to form pastes into attractive shapes to entice over-refined tastes. In the context of the previous stanza's image of fruits which are already 'perisht' even as they are pulled from the tree, the nuns' 'mold[ing]' of pastries accrues shadowy connotations of decay as well as of artistic shaping. Spiritual rottenness is made manifest as the effort to stimulate a jaded palate, and the nun concludes by undermining her own initial association between sweetness and licit pleasure: in the final instance, it is sin, not 'piety,' which is 'Sweet.' Marvell portrays sinful lasciviousness, sweetness, and Catholicism in an alluring but ultimately deadly cinch.

¹¹⁶ Blair Worden argues for a 1651-52 composition date in *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England: John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Marchamont Nedham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 400.

¹¹⁷ Andrew Marvell, 'Upon Appleton House,' in *Miscellaneous poems* (London: Robert Boulter, 1681), N1v (82).

Sweetness, then, occupies a somewhat paradoxical position in reformist discourse: it is simultaneously a marker of pious intimacy with God, and of (often papist) sensuality. Much of George Herbert's poetry confronts this inconsistency head-on. Herbert presents himself as engaged in an effort to wrest the affective power of what 'The Forerunners' calls 'sweet phrases, lovely metaphors' away from the 'stews and brothels' of secular (especially erotic) poetry, and reclaim it for devotional verse. Addressing language directly, Herbert goes on:

Lovely enchanting language, sugar-cane,
Honey of roses, whiter wilt thou fly?..
... Wilt thou leave the church, and love a sty?¹¹⁸

In 'The Forerunners' the sinful sweetness of desire is mingled with the sweetness of the language that describes it. Secular poetry is infected by its lascivious subject matter.

Amelia Lanyer's long devotional poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611) is, amongst other things, a sustained examination of the vexed but immensely fertile relations between sweetness, sensuality, the pleasures of poetry, and devotional experience.¹¹⁹ It is important to establish that whilst, in the early modern period, there was some debate about how to distribute blame for the Fall, it was generally accepted that it was Eve, not Adam, who first tasted the forbidden fruit, and whose hubristic hunger resulted in the Fall of mankind.¹²⁰ In the poem, Lanyer offers to exculpate Eve both by emphasising her role as the antitype of Mary, bearer of the 'sweet foode' of Christ, and by declaring the insignificance of Eve's fault in comparison to the exclusively male (according to Lanyer) sin of the crucifixion.¹²¹ In order to claim his kind of exegetical authority, however, Lanyer must first confront her relation to Eve's appetites. In particular, Lanyer must negotiate the possibility that, in the very act of writing and publishing, she demonstrates a level of ambition commensurate with Eve's original sin.

¹¹⁸ Herbert, 'The Forerunners,' in *The Temple*, H2v (171).

¹¹⁹ For an account of *Salve Deus* that reads the poem with a different sensory emphasis, as a 'feminine re-conception of seeing, reading, and believing which clashed with contemporary patriarchal ideas of vision and cognition,' see Yaakov Mascetti, "'Here I have prepar'd my Paschal Lambe': Reading and Seeing the Eucharistic Presence in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 9/1 (2011): 1-15.

¹²⁰ Some commentators argued that Adam's culpability exceeded Eve's, as he received the prohibition directly from God, whereas she received it indirectly, from Adam. See Almond, *Adam and Eve*, 195-96.

¹²¹ Amelia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (London: Valentine Simmes for Richard Bonian, 1611), H1r..

In a long dedicatory poem ‘To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie,’ Lanyer manipulates what she anticipates will be the reader’s unease at the extraordinary spectacle of a women writing and publishing ‘of divinest things’ (l.4):

Behold, great Queene, faire *Eves* Apologie,
Which I have writ in honour of your sexe,
And doe referre unto your Majestie,
To judge if it agree not with the Text:
And if it doe, why are poore Women blam’d,
Or by more faultie Men so much defam’d?

And this great Lady I have here attired,
In all her richest ornaments of Honour,
That you faire Queene, of all the world admired,
May take the more delight to looke upon her:
For she must entertaine you to this Feast,
To which your Highnesse is the welcom’st guest.¹²²

The imperative ‘Behold, great Queene, faire *Eves* Apologie’ is syntactically ambiguous: the possessive ‘*Eves* Apologie’ primarily presents the poem as an apology *for* Eve, but also admits the possibility that the apology is *by* Eve, aligning her with Lanyer as the poem’s author. This suggestion is compounded in the next stanza, which presents *Salve Deus* as a feast presided over by Eve: ‘she must entertaine you to this Feast, / To which your Highnesse is the welcom’st guest.’ Lanyer tacitly, but audaciously, conflates herself as author/host with Eve, and her poem with the forbidden fruit: in proffering it for readerly consumption, she momentarily places her royal addressee (and subsequent readers) in the position of Adam, subject to a terrible temptation. The promise to redeem Eve, and consequently women more generally, from the blame and defamation of ‘more faultie Men,’ is momentarily compromised by Lanyer’s evocation of Eve’s error.

The succeeding stanza, however, glosses the poetic ‘feast’ over which Eve presides in such a way as to disrupt the reader’s premature associative linking of that feast with the prohibited fruit:

¹²² Lanyer, *Salve Deus*, A4r.

For here I have prepar'd my Paschal Lambe,
 The figure of that living Sacrifice;
 Who dying, all th' Infernall powres orecame,
 That we with him t'Eternitie might rise:
 This pretious Passeover feed upon, O Queene...¹²³

Lanyer identifies the feast of the poem as the feast of the Passover, and hence as a type of the Eucharistic feast which represents Christ's 'living Sacrifice.' Lanyer's initial association of *Salve Deus* with the forbidden fruit is superseded by this subsequent identification of it as proto-Eucharistic Passover. The effect of the transition is exacerbated in the 1611 edition, in which the stanza break between the invitation to the 'Feast' of the poem, and the poem's identification with the paschal lamb, corresponds to the end of the recto page.¹²⁴ The shift from implied sin to confirmed grace, then, corresponds to a break in the reader's experience of the poem: a break which is experienced both as a narrative pause, and as a physical action – turning over a new leaf – which, in the seventeenth century as today, had proverbial associations with spiritual and moral renewal.¹²⁵

In offering the reader two alternative images of the collection it introduces, and endorsing the second, 'To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie' attempts to elicit a particular interpretive mood in its readers. In particular, Lanyer hints that *Salve Deus* should be consumed in a sacramental spirit: one which recognises the poem as a vehicle of grace. This cultivation of a sacramental hermeneutic is elaborated, in part, through Lanyer's use of the terms of sweetness. In her poem 'The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of Pembroke,' Lanyer dedicates *Salve Deus* to Mary Sidney:

...to this Lady now I will repaire,
 Presenting her the fruits of idle hours;
 Thogh many Books she writes that are most rare,
 Yet there is hony in the meanest flowers:

¹²³ Ibid., A4v (4).

¹²⁴ Ibid., A4r-v (3-4).

¹²⁵ The OED cites Holinshed's *The firste volume of the chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*: 'he must turne the leafe, and take out a new lesson, by changing his former trade of living into better.' 'Leaf, n.1.' OED Online, accessed 22 June 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/106624.

Which is both wholesome, and delights the taste:
Though sugar be finer, higher priz'd,
Yet is the painfull Bee no whit disgrac'd,
Nor her faire wax, o[r] hony more despiz'd.¹²⁶

In a move reminiscent of the authors discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis, Lanyer employs the bee trope in order to direct the reader's response to the 'fruits' of her poem: even the 'meanest flowers,' she claims with conventional humility, offer wholesome and delightful sweetness to the discerning reader's 'taste.'¹²⁷ In establishing this association between sweet tastes and readerly virtue, Lanyer prepares the reader for the deeply eroticised blazon of Christ which forms the climax of *Salve Deus* itself:

This is that Bridegroom that appeares so faire,
So sweet, so lovely in his Spouses sight...

His lips like skarlet threds, yet much more sweet
Than is the sweetest hony dropping dew,
Or hony combes, where all the Bees doe meet...

Sweet holy rivers, pure celestiall springs,
Proceeding from the fountaine of our life;
Swift sugred currents that salvation brings...

This hony dropping dew of holy love,
Sweet milke, wherewith we weaklings are restored,
Who drinke thereof, a world can never move,
All earthly pleasures are of them abhorred.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Lanyer, *Salve Deus*, D3r.

¹²⁷ Kim Hall argues that the passages shows that 'there would have been a keen awareness of the process of making sugar since the entire metaphor rests on the distinction between honey, a "natural product," and sugar, which results from... African labour.' Kim F. Hall, 'Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century,' in Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan, eds., *Feminist Readings of Early-Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 177.

¹²⁸ Lanyer, *Salve Deus*, F2r. and G4r.

Christ's superlative sweetness is sacramental, as well as sensual: the 'swift sugred currents' of his blood convey 'salvation.' Simultaneously, however, Lanyer's depiction of Christ's body as a feast of sweet things – 'where all the Bees doe meet' – recalls her presentation of her poem as a literary feast, yielding 'hony' to the reader's 'taste.' The blazon of Christ – the 'lamb' of God – integrates the sweetness of sacramental tasting with the sweetness of poetry, suggesting that just as partaking of the 'Nectar and Ambrosia' of Christ's body is salvific, so too can a judicious tasting of the 'Passover' feast of poetry prove redemptive. Lanyer employs images of honey, and sugar in order to frame a causal association between sacramental virtue and hermeneutic virtuosity.

VI. 'how sweet a thing grace is'

So far, I have argued that taste as a mode of religious knowledge is used in two main ways by early modern Protestants. Whereas more moderate reformers use the language of taste to position Eucharistic ritual as a route to experiential intimacy with the divine, others use the language of taste to valorize vernacular scripture as the primary locus of divine presence. As the seventeenth century progressed, however, yet more radical forms of Protestantism emerged; and with them, the idea that an individualistic, experiential faith takes precedence, not only over the dogma of organized religion and ritual, but in some cases also over the word of God itself, as a route to salvation. Here, too, the language of sweetness has a part to play. In his *Obel or Beth-shemesh* (1653), the fifth monarchist John Rogers makes extensive use of the language of taste to elevate the direct experience of God putatively gained through prayer and contemplation over knowledge gained from works of religious instruction. In a section on the uses of such spiritual testimony, Rogers writes:

*...if so be ye have tasted how gracious the Lord is... not onely taken grace (for so many do) but tasted grace (per metonymiam effecti) and found experimentally feelingly, feedingly how it tastes: O then, you will say, O it is good! O this is sweet! and say to others, Come and taste!*¹²⁹

Like many of the more moderate Protestants quoted in this chapter, Rogers draws on Psalm 34:8 in order to highlight the utility of taste as a route to experiential intimacy

¹²⁹ John Rogers, *Obel or Beth-shemesh* (London: R.I. and G. and H. Eversden, 1653), Zz3r (357).

with God. For Rogers, however, the chief object of devotional taste is neither the Eucharistic elements, nor the word of God, but ‘grace’ itself.¹³⁰ Rogers goes on to use the language of sweetness in order to advocate a form of faith unshackled from scripture:

Now as a *Physitian* findes those secrets (and oftentimes excellent things) by his *practise* and *experience* which hee could never *attain* unto by all his *reading* or search, or *study out of books*, or out of *others mouth*; so I say, many *sweet Christians* by *experience* finde and feed on that *sweetnesse* and *excellency* of *the love of God* in Christ, which the *greatest Rabbies* or *learnedst* alive cannot *acquire* or *attaine* by *reading books*, *Scriptures* or the like, so that experience teaches more, and better then all.... And one that hath tasted *honey*, and *fed* on it, knowes better the *sweetnesse* of it, then one that never *tasted it*, but onely can tell it is *sweet* by *reading* (not by eating)...¹³¹

For Rogers, genuine faith must stem not from ‘*reading books, Scriptures* or the like,’ but from direct, affective ‘*practise* and *experience*.’ In order to drive the point home, he uses the example of honey as an analogy: just as its sweetness is indescribable, and must be experienced to be known, so too does the experience of God’s grace evade language. In this, Rogers is not alone: the notion that the sweetness of honey evades the second-hand authority of language, and is analogous to the sweetness of divine grace, is axiomatic. Similar examples abound in early modern devotional discourse: amongst them, Robert Harris’ 1632 *The way to true happinesse* affirms that ‘a man by discourse can never possibly perswade another of the sweetnesse of honey so fully as if himselfe did tast it.’ Equally, Harris goes on, ‘it cannot be told how sweet a thing grace is.’¹³² Or, in the words of Richard Younger in his 1638 *The Drunkards Character*: ‘what is the notionall sweetnesse of honey, to the experimentall tast of it?’¹³³ Sweetness is apposite to describe the experience of God, and particularly of God’s grace, precisely because it evades full articulation: God’s goodness cannot be spoken, only tasted.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Rogers draw heavily on the works of the Protestant controversialist William Ames, who similarly writes that ‘the taste of the faithful is of grace.’ *An analytically exposition of both the epistles of the Apostle* (London: E.G. for John Rothwell, 1641), F1r (41).

¹³¹ Rogers, *Obel*, Ddd1r (385).

¹³² Robert Harris, *The way to true happinesse* (London: R. Badger[?] and John Beale for John Bartlet, 1632).

¹³³ Richard Younger, *The drunkard’s character*, N6r (187).

¹³⁴ This has precedents in earlier reformist discourse: in the dedication of his translation of Musculus’ *Common places of Christian religion*, for instance, John Man writes that ‘my selfe doe dailye feele and enjoy for my parte the most sweete taste of [God’s] unspeakable goodnesse.’ Man, dedicatory epistle in Musculus, *Common places of Christian religion* (London: Reginald Woolfe, 1563), ¶2r.

In some cases, then, the language of sweetness is used to actively deny biblical bibliophagy's basic premise that scripture is a site of divine presence, and can offer an authentic and immediate experience of God. The Leveller and ranter Abiezer Coppe was amongst those who rejected the dictates of both ecclesiastical and scriptural authority.¹³⁵ For Coppe, his own spiritual experiences were sufficient assurance that he was numbered amongst the elect. Coppe's confident conviction of his own salvation, and concomitant rejection of conventional means of knowing God, is encapsulated in an episode, recounted in his 1650 *A fiery flying roll*, which takes biblical bibliophagy to an extreme, claiming a contemporary reality for the eschatological book-eating described in Ezekiel and Revelations.

A fiery flying roll is an extraordinary account of Coppe's experience of spiritual death and rebirth. In the preface, Coppe describes his sense of being 'utterly plagued, consumed, damned, rammed, and sunke into nothing.'¹³⁶ Coppe calls on God: 'what wilt thou do with me[?]' God assures Coppe: 'I will take thee up into mine everlasting Kingdom,' warning him however that 'thou shalt (first) drink a bitter cup, a bitter cup, a bitter cup; wherupon (being filled with exceeding amazement) I was throwne into the belly of hell.'¹³⁷ Coppe spends, he claims, four days and nights in this state, subject throughout to 'visions and revelations of God.'¹³⁸ Towards the end of this spiritual crisis, he hears one voice in particular, urging him to:

Go up to *London*, to *London*, that great City, write, write, write. And behold I writ, and lo a hand was sent to me, and a roll of a book was therein, which this fleshly hand would have put wings to, before the time. Whereupon it was snatcht out of my hand, & the Roll thrust into my mouth; and I eat it up, and filled my bowels with it, where it was as bitter as worm-wood; and it lay broiling, and burning in my stomach, till I brought it forth in this forme.¹³⁹

Coppe's vision, as he acknowledges, replicates in some respects that of the prophet Ezekiel. As in Ezekiel, the vision of being forced to eat 'a roll of a book' initiates the prophet's proselytization to a nation (in Ezekiel's case, the Israelites, and in Coppe's,

¹³⁵ On Coppe's radicalism, see Ariel Hessayon, 'The Making of Abiezer Coppe,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 62/1 (2011): 38-58.

¹³⁶ Abiezer Coppe, *A fiery flying roll* (London, 1650), A2v.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, A2v-A3r.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, A3v.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, A3v.

England).¹⁴⁰ Coppe, however, departs from his source in presenting the text which the reader holds as a regurgitated version of the scroll he is compelled to consume. The visionary scroll is transformed, by Coppe's (truncated) digestion of it, into the material book. Coppe uses the bibliophagic model offered by Ezekiel in order to transgress the boundaries both between Old Testament and contemporary experience, and between visionary prophecy, and the phenomenal world of mid-seventeenth-century England.¹⁴¹ If we can assume the scroll represents scripture, furthermore, then his ingestion of it represents an act of violent defiance: as he has been 'consumed' by the intensity of his spiritual visions, he is able to 'consume' (in the sense both of eat, and destroy) scripture, replacing it with a work written by himself, and recounting his own experiences.

VII. 'by *experience* tasted'

On 1st May 1687, Janet Fraser, daughter of a Scottish weaver, went out into the fields with a female companion to read the bible. Leaving to get a drink of water, she left the bible open. Robert Chambers, author of *Domestic Annals of Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution*, recounts what ensued:

On returning she found a patch of something like blood covering the very text. In great surprise, she carried the book home, where a young man tasted the substance with his tongue, and found it of a saltless or insipid flavour. On the two succeeding Sundays, while the same girl was reading her Bible in the open air, similar blotches of matter, like blood, fell upon the leaves.¹⁴²

The anonymous young man's tasting of the matter which stains Fraser's bible constitutes a moment in which the metaphor of tasting or consuming scripture is

¹⁴⁰ See Ezekiel 3:1-11 (KJV).

¹⁴¹ This erasure of the line between millenarian prophecy and materiality is also present in the imprint to *A fiery flying roll*, which proclaims the book was 'imprinted at *London*, in the beginning of that notable day, wherein the secrets of all hearts are laid open; and wherein the worst and foulest of villainies, are discovered, under the best and fairest outsides.' The millenarian message of *A fiery flying roll* infiltrates its bibliographic information, troubling the membrane between sacred and secular time. As such, it chimes with Helen Smith's assertion that early modern imprints 'operate within generic conventions which, read carefully, reveal imprints to be fictive engagements with a suprising range of literary and cultural concerns.' Smith, "'Imprinted by Simeon such a signe": Reading Early Modern Imprints,' in Smith and Wilson, *Renaissance Paratexts*, 17.

¹⁴² Robert Chambers, *Domestic Annals of Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh and London, 1859), 487-88, UK Reading Experience Database, accessed 15 August 2011, www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/record_details.php?id=21264.

literalized, whilst the comparison of the ‘matter’ to ‘blood,’ and the implication that its origin is divine, suggests a sacramental dimension. That the first instinct of the ‘young man’ to whom Janet shows the bible to is to taste the mysterious ‘substance’ also, however, indicates the importance of gustation to the forms of first-hand, sensory enquiry central to the development of what would come to be known as empirical science. The young man’s act of tasting plays out at a crossroads between an ancient, mystical sense that communion with God might be best achieved through tasting, and a newer interest in the experimental, proto-scientific utility of taste.

Peter Harrison claims that the Puritan insistence on encountering God first-hand corresponds to the rejection, by experimental philosophers, of written authorities in favour of experiential knowledge.¹⁴³ At points, this chapter has seemed to substantiate this argument. Most obviously, the radical Protestant use of the language of sweetness to avow the superiority of ‘experience’ and ‘experiment’ over clerical and sometimes even over scriptural authority seems to echo the early Royal Society’s determination to, as its motto counsels, ‘take no man’s word for it.’ This narrative is also present in my discussion of the reformist investment in shoring up the accuracy of the senses as guides to the nature of the Eucharistic elements, and by extension of the material world more generally.

In suggesting that taste is a key term for the articulation of experiential knowledge of the divine, I have, however, elided somewhat the historicity of ‘experience’ and ‘experiment’ as distinct categories in themselves. In the next chapter, I investigate the role played by taste in early science, interrogating more closely the forms of empirical or proto-empirical ‘experience’ offered by gustation.

¹⁴³ Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 133.

CHAPTER 4

‘Those fruits of Natural knowledge’: Taste and the Early Royal Society

I. ‘those fruits of Natural knowledge’

... as at first, mankind *fell* by *tasting* of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, so we, their Posterity, may be in part *restor’d* by the same way, not only by *beholding* and *contemplating*, but by *tasting* too those fruits of Natural knowledge, that were never yet forbidden.¹

My opening quotation is taken from the prologue to Robert Hooke’s 1665 *Micrographia*, a compendium – as its full title proclaims – of ‘descriptions of minute bodies’ observed with the aid of the microscope. Lavishly illustrated by its author, the book is suffused with the thrill, recently made possible by improvements in microscopic technology, of seeing the world in previously unimaginable detail.² Everything from flies’ eyes to razorblades, poppy seeds to full stops, falls under the scrutiny of Hooke’s lens: *Micrographia* is a paean to the pleasures of looking, a monument to ocularcentric science. What, then, should we make of Hooke’s insistence not merely on ‘beholding’ and ‘contemplating,’ but also on ‘tasting,’ the ‘fruits of Natural knowledge’? Locating the quest for natural historical (and ultimately, natural philosophical) knowledge firmly within the narrative framework of the temptation and Fall that I addressed in the previous chapter, Hooke posits natural knowledge as a source of redemption, a way to regain the Eden lost by the original act of human disobedience. This recovery, furthermore, is to be carried out through precisely the same route as the dispossession: namely, through acts of ‘*tasting*.’

Following Foucault’s influential assertion, in *The Order of Things*, that early natural history is ‘nothing more than the nomination of the visual,’ the historiography

¹ Robert Hooke, *Micrographia, or, Some physiological descriptions of minute bodies* (London: John Martyn and James Allestry, 1665), A6r-v.

² Hooke had received (prematurely truncated) tutelage in the visual arts as an apprentice of the painter Peter Lely. Patri J. Pugliese, ‘Hooke, Robert (1635–1703),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 01 May 2013, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13693.

of seventeenth-century science has been dominated by an emphasis on the ocular.³ Undoubtedly, vision *was* paramount to seventeenth-century science: from Galileo Galilei gazing at the pitted surface of the moon to Isaac Newton's 1604 *Opticks*, the increased status of empiricism and experimentalism in this period occurs in tandem with some spectacular specular discoveries. Nonetheless, as Stuart Clark has recently documented, questions of reliability continued to vex visual evidence throughout the seventeenth century. 'Between the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution,' Clark asserts, 'vision was anything but objectively established or secure in its supposed relationship to "external fact."' ⁴ Recognising this instability, I propose, clears the way for a more nuanced appreciation of the prominence of the other senses.

Focusing on the Royal Society, this chapter explores the role played by taste in the formation of early experimental and empirical science. Founded in 1660, the Royal Society represented, as Michael Hunter puts it, 'a new type of institution, a public body devoted to the corporate pursuit of scientific research.'⁵ Consisting, in its earliest instantiation, of twelve members united by an interest in the inductive and experimental methodologies advocated by Francis Bacon, the 'College for the Promoting of Physico-Mathematical Experimental Learning,' as it was originally called, was modelled in part on Salomon's House, the fictional foundation described in Bacon's *New Atlantis* as 'an Order or Society... dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God.'⁶ Granted a Royal Charter by Charles II in July 1662, the College adopted the more familiar – and somewhat snappier name of the Royal Society of London, along with the motto 'Nullius in Verba,' or 'take no-one's word for it': a statement of its members' rejection of

³ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), 144. Post-Foucauldian examples of the emphasis on vision in studies of early science include David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Catherine Wilson, *The Invisible World: Early Modern Philosophy and the Invention of the Microscope* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Langley, 'Anatomizing the Early Modern Eye.' The issue of terminology, in relation to seventeenth-century natural history and philosophy, is complex and vexed. Here, my use of the term 'science,' despite its apparent anachronism, is informed by Deborah Harkness' rehabilitation of it in *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xv-xviii. Throughout this chapter, I use both 'natural history and philosophy' and 'experimental science' to indicate the varied activities of the early Royal Society, determining the relative appropriateness of each on a case-by-case basis.

⁴ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

⁵ Michael Hunter, *Establishing the New Science: The Experience of the Early Royal Society* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), 1.

⁶ On Salomon's House as a model for the Royal Society, see Michael Hunter, *Science and Society in Restoration England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chapters 1 and 2, and Chloe Houston, 'Utopia and Education in the Seventeenth Century: Bacon's Salomon's House and its Influence,' in Houston, ed., *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 70-71.

authority in favour of first-hand experience.⁷ The Society's original members incorporated natural philosophers, mathematicians, and virtuosi who had previously met under the auspices of more informal groups centred around London's Gresham College and Oxford's Wadham College, and were similarly interested in the utility of experimentalism for natural philosophy.⁸

In his 1667 *The history of the Royal-Society*, which documents the Society's beginnings for partisan ends, the Royal Society fellow and enthusiast Thomas Sprat describes 'those parts of the visible World, about which they [members of the Society] have chiefly bestow'd their *pains*.'⁹ Despite his emphasis on the 'visible World,' however, the account Sprat goes on to give describes a perceptually varied experimental program of natural philosophical research. Sprat's catalogue includes:

Experiments of the Propagation of Sounds through common, rarify'd, and condens'd *Air*... of the heat and cold of the *Water*, at several depths of the *Sea*... of a stinking Wood brought out of the *East-Indies*... of killing Frogs, by touching their skin, with Vinegar, Pitch, or Mercury... *Experiments* of *Light*, *Sound*, *Colours*, *Taste*... of *Ecchos* and reflected *sounds*: of *Musical sounds*, and *Harmonies*: of *Colours*...¹⁰

In this list, smell, touch, taste, and hearing, as well as vision, are in evidence both as *topics*, and as means of *accomplishing*, experimental enquiry. Whilst the Society's interests range from the aural (how do sounds propagate in rarefied air?) to the tangible (what is the relation between the temperature of the sea, and its depth?), its modes of enquiry also range across the senses, encompassing the fatal 'touching' of frogs with vinegar, and olfactory attention to a malodorous foreign wood. For the most part, this kind of multisensory discourse has been overlooked by historians intent on the period's optical innovations. Recently, however, a few scholars have begun to lay the foundations for an

⁷ On 'Nullius in Verba,' see Hunter, *Establishing*, 17. As Hunter notes here, the motto is 'a paraphrase of a passage from Horace's *Epistles* affirming freedom from any master or school.'

⁸ Kerry Downes writes that 'the Wadham and Gresham circles become the nucleus of the Royal Society.' See Kerry Downes, 'Wren, Sir Christopher (1632–1723),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 28 June 2012, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30019.

⁹ Thomas Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society of London* (London: T. R. for John Martin and James Allestry, 1667), Dd4r (215).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Ee1v (218); Ee4r (223); Ff1r (225).

understanding of the experimental and experiential world of early modern natural history and philosophy as sensorially heterogeneous.¹¹

Most pertinently here, Mark Jenner has recently drawn attention to taste's role in the production and verification of natural historical knowledge within the early Royal Society, and early experimental science more generally.¹² Jenner focuses on the physician John Floyer, who – in his dedication to putting a range of strange and often repulsive things in his mouth in the name of experiment – stands out as exceptional amongst his contemporaries. The works of many of Floyer's less obsessive colleagues and precursors in the Royal Society, however, also the experimental importance of an alert and enquiring palate. Indeed, Hooke himself practiced what he preached. Literally, as well as metaphorically, he tasted the fruits of natural knowledge: alongside the objects of its author's technologically-enhanced gaze, *Micrographia* records the flavours of diverse phenomena ranging from frozen urine to mould (the former is apparently disappointingly insipid; the latter, 'unpleasant and noisome.')¹³ In *The history of the Royal-Society*, Sprat includes an 'Apparatus to the History of the Common Practices of Dying' by the natural philosopher William Petty, in which Petty remarks that 'River-water is far more fat and oilie, [and] sweeter' than 'the Pump water in great Cities and Towns.'¹⁴ This indicates that it retains 'its fatty earthy particles,' of which pump water has been 'divested,' and that consequently it will be of more use to commercial cloth dyers, for 'soap dissolves more easily in it.'¹⁵ Petty's claims rely on his presumption that there is an established link between the flavour of a substance (in this case, water), its composition or qualities, and its practical uses. In this presumption, Petty was not alone: as I will show, a number of natural historians and philosophers believed that the flavours of substances testified to their properties, and that consequently the sense of taste could be used to generate reliable data about the material world.

In chapter 2, I argued that the language of taste in Helkiah Crooke's anatomical compendium *Mikrokosmographia* (1615) attests not to the incipient epistemological triumph of the senses as a source of knowledge about the human body, but rather to

¹¹ Notably, Joseph Moshenska has highlighted the importance of the sense of touch to members of the early Royal Society, especially Robert Boyle. Moshenska, 'Feeling Pleasures,' 363-82. On hearing, see Penelope Gouk, 'Acoustics in the Early Royal Society, 1660-1680,' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 36/2 (1982): 155-75.

¹² Jenner similarly cites Foucault's influence on the ocularcentricity of the history of science, and the corresponding neglect of taste. Jenner, 'Tasting Lichfield,' 655.

¹³ Hooke, *Micrographia*, O1r (90) and S4v (126).

¹⁴ William Petty, 'Apparatus to the History of the Common Practices of Dying,' in Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society*, Oo2v-Oo3r (292-93).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Oo3r (292).

fundamental imbrications of textuality and sensation, humanist erudition and proto-scientific empiricism, in the realm of early modern anatomy. In contrast, focusing on the botanist, physician, and Royal Society member Nehemiah Grew's magisterial 1682 *The anatomy of plants with an idea of a philosophical history of plants*, and on the works of his mentor Robert Boyle (1627-1691), this chapter argues that the early Royal Society's use of gustation to generate knowledge about the material world chimes with Society propaganda, in which the language of taste proves indispensable to the rhetorical justification of experimental and empirical methodologies.¹⁶ Not everyone was convinced by the early Royal Society's program; contemporaneously, intellectual curiosity was viewed with suspicion as well as acclaim, and detractors both censured the bold scale of the Society's epistemological ambitions, and mocked their methods as absurd and ineffective.¹⁷ Against these criticisms and anxieties, the language of taste provided a way to articulate the nature and value of the kind of experimental and empirical methods promoted by the Society. In particular, taste's association with trial and testing (preliminary forms of knowledge generation) correlated to the Society's emphasis on tentative experimentalism, whilst taste's status as a proximity sense was exploited to suggest that gustation offered a more intimate, and thus more accurate, knowledge of the material world than did the distal senses.

In a poem dedicated 'To the *Royal Society*,' which prefaces Sprat's *History of the Royal-Society*, for example, the poet and experimental science enthusiast Abraham Cowley describes how the scholastic 'Guardians' and 'Tutors' of a personified (and masculinised) 'Philosophy,' anxious that that he should not usurp their 'Autoritie,' kept him in his 'Nonage,' choosing 'his Eye to entertain... With painted Scenes.'¹⁸ Dogmatic authority maintains its tyranny by subjecting true 'Philosophy' to a series of entertaining, but infantilizing, visual images. This deplorable state of affairs is challenged, finally, by the 'mighty' Francis Bacon:

From Words, which are but Pictures of the Thought,
 (Though we our Thoughts from them perversly drew)
 To Things, the Minds right Object, he it brought,

¹⁶ On Boyle's role as Grew's mentor, see Michael Hunter, 'Grew, Nehemiah (*bap.* 1641, *d.* 1712),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 24 May 2012, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11521.

¹⁷ On resistance to and mockery of the early Royal Society, see Peter Anstey, 'Literary Responses to Robert Boyle's Natural Philosophy,' in Juliet Cummins and David Burchell, eds., *Science, Literature, and Rhetoric in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 145-62.

¹⁸ Abraham Cowley, 'To the *Royal Society*,' in Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society*, B1r-v.

Like foolish Birds to painted Grapes we flew;
He sought and gather'd for our use the Tru;
And when on heaps the chosen Bunches lay,
He prest them wisely the Mechanic way,
Till all their juice did in one Vessel join,
Ferment into a Nourishment Divine,
The thirsty Souls refreshing Wine.¹⁹

From a sterile epistemological economy in which words and thoughts reflect only each other, Bacon shifts the collective attention towards the material world. This transition is figured by Cowley as a move from misleading sight to the immediate gustatory pleasures offered by real ‘Things.’

Rhetorical uses of taste to valorize the experimental enterprise may in some contexts refer to empirical uses of taste to generate experimental data. As in my opening quotation, however, they may equally associate that enterprise with alternative experiential and epistemological frameworks: in particular the framework for understanding and producing human knowledge established by Christian history and soteriology, explored in my previous chapter. Gustatory rhetoric does not only refer to experimental practices; it works to locate those practices firmly within a Protestant narrative of the Fall, of moral and epistemological degeneration, and of possible – but always uncertain – redemption. Acts of natural historical tasting are framed as a way to regain the paradise forsaken by Adam and Eve.²⁰ In particular, gustation could be used to develop new medicines that might restore the postlapsarian body to something approaching an Edenic state of health.

The association between gustation and intimate experiential knowledge, and thus between gustation and Edenic redemption, rests on the assumption that tastes can reveal the innate qualities of the material world. In the second half of this chapter, I explore how this assumption was problematized both by a widespread belief that the Fall led to the degeneration of the human senses, and by new research into taste understood not as a property of things, but as a physiological process. How and why, asked Society luminaries including Robert Boyle, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, Marcello

¹⁹ Ibid., B2r.

²⁰ On natural philosophical experimentalism as part of an effort to regain Eden, see James Bennett and Scott Mandelbrote, *The Garden, the Ark, the Tower, the Temple. Biblical Metaphors of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1998), especially 26-34.

Malpighi, and Thomas Willis, does taste *happen*? Investigating the microscopic structure of the tasting organs, and of vegetables and other esculents, early Royal Society researchers reflected, indirectly, on their own sensory and gustatory methodologies. The mechanistic and corpuscular theories that they developed in the process disrupted the association of taste with authentic knowledge. In exploring how flavours are experienced by subjects (as opposed to what flavours can reveal about the properties of material substances), these researchers came to understand tasting as fundamentally (rather than merely incidentally) subjective, comprising not an act of human apprehension, which may be more or less accurate, but a transformative interaction between self and world.

II. 'the fruite forbid?'

Within the complex landscape of early experimental science, the sense of taste had a number of related applications. In particular, taste had an important role to play in the associated fields of early chemistry, botany, and physic, and it also continued to play a part in anatomy and surgery.²¹ Tastes had long been taken to indicate the composition of chemical substances. For example, in his Paracelsian *The practise of chymicall, and hermeticall physicke* (1605), translated by Thomas Timme, the French physician and chemist Joseph Du Chesne notes that bitterness attests to the presence of 'Salt-Niter, or Niterous salts' in a substance; 'a Sulphurus Salt... yéeldeth out of it a swéete oylely taste... Mercurial Salt... representeth a sower taste.'²² The influence of this approach on early Royal Society members is clear: Hooke asserts in *Micrographia* that 'the business of this sense [taste].... [is] to discover the presence of dissolved Bodies in Liquors put on the Tongue, or in general to discover that a fluid body has some solid body dissolv'd in it, and what they are.'²³ In particular, gustatory sampling helped determine the acidity or otherwise of a substance: 'the *Tast*,' as Boyle notes in his 1676 *Experiments, notes, &c. about the mechanical origine or production of divers particular qualities*, 'by many is made a great

²¹ I use the disciplinary categories of chemistry, botany, etc. for convenience, but with an awareness that – whilst they do map *broadly* onto the interests of the early Royal Society – they do not correspond exactly to contemporary demarcations of knowledge. On early modern categorizations of 'scientific' knowledge, see Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, 'The Age of the New,' in Daston and Park, *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 3, 2-6.

²² Joseph Du Chesne, *The practise of chymicall, and hermeticall physicke*, trans. Thomas Timme (London: Thomas Creede, 1605), D2v-D3r.

²³ Hooke, *Micrographia*, c2v.

Touchstone, whereby to know Acids and Alcalies.’²⁴ The importance of taste to chemistry is further attested by Margaret Cavendish’s 1666 *The description of a new world, called the blazing world*, in which the Empress of the eponymous Blazing World designates its ‘Ape-men’ as ‘her chymists.’²⁵ In part, Cavendish’s intention is satirical: the apishness of chemists positions them as essentially imitative, manipulators of nature rather than cultivators of it. The apish natures of the chemists correlates to Cavendish’s insistence, in her *Observations upon experimental philosophy*, to which *The blazing world* is appended, that ‘chymists need not think they can create any thing anew; for they cannot challenge to themselves a divine power, neither can there be any such thing as a new Creation in Nature... though they produce new forms, as they imagine; yet those forms, though they be new to them, are not new in Nature.’²⁶ However, the iconographical association between apes and the sense of taste presumably also informs Cavendish’s choice of creature.

For botanists, tastes offered both a means of recognizing organic substances, and of assigning them a place within flavour-based taxonomies. In a letter published in the *Philosophical Transactions* in 1672, the naturalist Martin Lister described the ‘fierce biting tast’ of some unfamiliar fungi that had recently provoked his curiosity during a walk through Marton woods in North Yorkshire. It was the distinctive ‘great acrimony of the Juice’ (alongside the colour and woodland location) which enabled a respondent to his letter, the naturalist John Ray, to identify the fungi as pepper mushrooms, previously described by the Swiss botanist Johann Bauhin in his *Historia plantarum universalis* (1650-51).²⁷ The intimate relation between tastes and the nature of plants is evident in William Coles’ 1656 *The Art of Simpling*; for Coles, ‘differences in Plants’ are

²⁴ Boyle himself is sceptical: ‘I consider that there is a multitude of mixt bodies, wherein we can so little discern by the Tast, which of the Principles is Predominant, that this Sense would not oblige one to suspect, much less to conclude, there were one grain of either of them to be found there.’ His denial, however, acknowledges the pervasiveness of the notion that taste is useful in this regard. Robert Boyle, *Experiments, notes, &c. about the mechanical origine or production of divers particular qualities* (London: E. Flesher for R. Davis, 1676), B1v (18).

²⁵ Margaret Cavendish, *The blazing world*, in *Observations upon experimental philosophy to which is added The description of a new blazing world* (London: A. Maxwell, 1666), E2r (15).

²⁶ Cavendish, *Observations*, T2v (72).

²⁷ ‘A Description of an Odd Kind of Mushroom, Yeilding a Milky Juice, Much Hotter upon the Tongue Than Pepper, &c. Observed by Mr. Lister, and by Him Communicated to the Publisher, Novemb. 15. 1672,’ *Philosophical Transactions* 7 (1672): 5116-5117. Nearly 30 years later, a Monsieur Reneaume of the Royal Academy of Sciences responds in much the same way when confronted with an apparently unknown species of tree. See ‘A Description of a New Kind of Walnut Tree, Discovered by Monsieur Reneaume,’ *Philosophical Transactions* 22 (1700 - 1701), 909.

not simply indicated by, but rather ‘arise from’ or are caused by their ‘Smells and Tasts.’²⁸

Finally, for physicians, apothecaries, and surgeons, taste had long formed an important part of the diagnostic arsenal. The taste of a patient’s urine, for example, was supposed to help determine the balance of humors in his or her body.²⁹ By the middle of the seventeenth century, uroscopy was declining in medical prestige.³⁰ Nonetheless, in *Dr. Willis’s practice of physick* (1682), the celebrated physician and anatomist Thomas Willis commented on the ‘exceedingly sweet’ taste of diabetic urine; it is, he notes, ‘as if there had been Sugar or Honey in it.’³¹ Taste also played a role in port-mortem diagnostics. The herbals, dietaries, and medical dispensatories used to determine an appropriate course of treatment, moreover, included elaborate information about the flavours of the substances they prescribed, and about how these flavours corresponded to the substance’s effect on the humoral body.³² Thus, when the physician Thomas Muffett describes the properties of the seven ‘ordinary tastes of meats’ in his popular 1655 *Healths Improvement*, he notes of ‘soure meats ([such] as sorrel, lemons, oranges... and all things strong of vinegar and verjuice)’ that ‘naturally they offend sinewy parts, weaken concoction... and hasten old age.’³³ For phlegmatic and choleric constitutions, however, they may be helpful, particularly ‘in cutting phlegm, opening obstructions, cleansing impurities, bridling choler, resisting putrifaction, [and] extinguishing superfluous heat.’³⁴ Conversely, ‘*Sweet Meats* agree well with nature... [they] fatten the body, encrease natural heat, fill the veins, digest easily, soften that which is too hard, and thicken that which is too liquid.’ Nonetheless, ‘if they be over-sweet and gluttish, they soon turn into choler, stop the liver, puff up lungs and spleen, swell the stomach, and cause oftentimes most sharp and cruel fevers.’³⁵ In a taxonomy in which sweet

²⁸ William Coles, *The art of simpling* (London: J.G. for Nathaniel Brook, 1656), C10r (43).

²⁹ Richard Palmer emphasises the importance of smell and sight for uroscopic diagnosis, but also acknowledges a role for taste. See Palmer, ‘In Bad Odour: Smell and its Significance in Medicine from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century,’ in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, eds., *Medicine and the Five Senses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 67. On medieval uroscopy, see Faith Wallis, ‘Signs and Senses: Diagnosis and Prognosis in Early Medieval Pulse and Urine Texts,’ *Social History of Medicine* 13/2 (2000): 265-78.

³⁰ See, for example, Thomas Brian, *The pisse-prophet, or, Certaine pisse-pot lectures* (London: E. Purslowe for R. Thrale, 1637).

³¹ Thomas Willis, *Dr. Willis’s practice of physick* (London: T. Dring, C. Harper, and J. Leigh, 1684), K4r (71).

³² For a discussion of the importance of gustation to apothecaries, herbalists, and other medical practitioners, see Jenner, ‘Tasting Lichfield,’ 563.

³³ Thomas Muffett, *Health’s Improvement* (London: Thomas Newcomb for Samuel Thomson, 1655), F4r (39).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, F4r (39).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, F3v (38).

meats are firmly salubrious, but ‘over-sweet’ meats are decidedly dangerous, the importance of attending to subtle graduations of taste is clear.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, this diagnostic and dietetic tradition merged with a new emphasis on the experimental analysis of substances, both organic and – as interest in the principles of Paracelsian iatrochemistry grew – metallurgical and chemical. In his 1663 *Some considerations touching the Usefulness of experimental naturall philosophy*, for example, Boyle comments that the ‘Vertues’ of the ‘the volatile Salt of Urine’ are attested by that fact that ‘it differs so little in smell, tast, volatility, penetrancy and some other manifest Qualities, from the Salt of Harts-horn, and that of Mans Blood; that such effects... may be not improbably expected from it as are produc’d by the other.’³⁶ The sensory similarities between the salt of urine and more established remedies such as salt of harts-horn offers strong assurance that it will also duplicate the medical ‘effects’ of those remedies.

The intense interest of early Royal Society members in taste’s utility as a means of identifying the composition of a range of chemical and botanical substances, and as indicative of the medical virtues of those substances, is exemplified by Nehemiah Grew’s 1682 *The anatomy of plants with an idea of a philosophical history of plants*. The culmination of nearly two decades of research, *The anatomy of plants* brings Grew’s investigations into the anatomical structure of plants together with a number of lectures on their sensible properties, originally read before the Royal Society.³⁷ Called, by A. G. Morton, ‘the first comprehensive programme of botanical research,’ the compendious *Anatomy* is something of a hybrid, combining a botanist’s interest in plant physiology with a chemist’s interest in the experimental analysis of the substance of plants.³⁸ As a physician, however, Grew emphasises his desire to establish the relation between the flavours of plants and their medicinal properties: in his ‘Discourse of the Diversities and Causes of Tasts Chiefly in Plants,’ originally read before the Society in 1675, Grew proclaims that ‘by duly observing the *Tasts of Plants*, we may be directed to understand

³⁶ Robert Boyle, *Some considerations touching the Usefulness of experimental naturall philosophy* (Oxford: Henry Hall for Richard Davis, 1663), Rr3r (325).

³⁷ On the complicated compilation and publication history of *The anatomy of plants*, see William LeFanu, *Nehemiah Grew: A Study and Bibliography of his Writings* (Winchester: St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1990). For a reading of *The anatomy*’s use of bibliographic tropes, see Whitney Anne Trettien, ‘Plant→animal→book: Magnifying a microhistory of media circuits,’ in *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 3/2 (2012): 97-118.

³⁸ A.G. Morton, *History of Botanical Science: An Account of the Development of Botany from Ancient Times to the Present Day* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 194.

...the *Use and Virtues* of those *Plants* or *Parts* of *Plants* in which they reside.³⁹ Grew's advocacy of 'observation' – characteristic of the Royal Society – refers not, as we might expect, to the appearance of plants, but to their '*Tasts*.' He comments, for example, that plants which have a 'soft' and 'sweetish' flavour 'may be accounted good *Antiscorbuticks*' (that is, they are good for treating scurvy), whereas 'those *Plants*, whose *Parts* are not only *Hot* but *Volatile*, as *Onions*, are generally good for *Burns*.'⁴⁰ It is Grew's belief in the capacity of the sense of taste to accurately apprehend the medicinal uses of plants that motivates, and provides a rationale for, his undertaking to understand, describe, and categorize their flavours. Grew's belief that tastes reflect the nature and uses of plants, and thus are a helpful principle for the construction of botanical taxonomies, is, moreover, echoed by many of his contemporaries. For Boyle, the unfamiliar fruit and flora of the New World generated excitement, offering fresh medical possibilities: 'how many new Concretes,' he speculates, 'rich in Medicinal vertues, does the New World present the Inquisitive Physitians of the Old?' He reports, as proof, the efficacy of 'the *American Bark* against Agues,' noting – significantly – that he recommends its use 'after having tasted and considered it.'⁴¹ Notably, Boyle's conjunctive 'and' implicitly forges a relation of equivalence, as well as addition, between the sense of taste and thoughtful consideration.

Grew's labours to chart the relation between the tastes of plants and their utility as physic should be understood in the context of the wider Royal Society conviction that natural historical and philosophical research might go some way towards assuaging the manifold sorrows of the postlapsarian condition. As Grew writes in a dedicatory epistle to Viscount William Brouncker, first president of the Royal Society, the president's 'command' that he undertake further research into plants added 'force to my own Desires, of being somewhat instrumental to the Improvement of Medicinal, and other wholesom Knowledge: if peradventure, as we increase herein, we may become better, and more happy.'⁴² Grew's ambiguous syntax is revealing: the knowledge he seeks is 'medicinal' insofar as it is knowledge *of* medicine, but Grew also leaves open the possibility that knowledge *itself* is 'medicinal,' or more generally curative. As he writes

³⁹ Nehemiah Grew, *The anatomy of plants with an idea of a philosophical history of plants* (London: W. Rawlins, 1682), Uu1v (290).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, D2v (15).

⁴¹ Boyle, *Some considerations*, H2r (67).

⁴² Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, N3v (102).

elsewhere in *The anatomy*, ‘*Nature*, and the *Causes* and *Reasons* of Things, duly contemplated, naturally lead us unto *God*.’⁴³

Grew’s semi-utopian goals resonate, not only with the words of Robert Hooke in my opening quotation, but also with Royal Society propaganda more generally, which frequently utilizes the language of taste. In *The history of the Royal-Society*, for example, Thomas Sprat anticipates the rewards of a pedagogical turn away from the ‘empty *disputations*’ of the scholastics, and the substitution of a curriculum incorporating experimentalism, by promising that:

the Beautiful Bosom of *Nature* will be Expos’d to our view: we shall enter into its *Garden*, and tast of its *Fruits*, and satisfy our selves with its *plenty*: instead of Idle talking, and wandring, under its fruitless shadows; as the *Peripatetics* did... and their Successors have done ever since.⁴⁴

For Sprat, tasting the ‘Fruits’ of natural knowledge is associated with a delightful and satisfying productivity, in comparison to the futile endeavours of the Society’s predecessors. This progression, moreover, is figured as a re-entry into paradise: the fruitful garden, inevitably, recalls the garden of Eden forsaken by Adam and Eve. Grew’s project of tasting plants in order to identify their medicinal utility constitutes a literalisation of this kind of rhetoric: by advancing the state of physic, acts of botanical tasting can help to accomplish a partial restoration of the illness-prone postlapsarian body to its Edenic state of vigour and longevity.

The use of Edenic rhetoric to valorize the work of early Royal Society members might seem dangerously audacious: after all, the Fall was frequently read as a cautionary tale of epistemological over-reaching.⁴⁵ As Francis Bacon comments in the *Advancement of learning* (1605), detractors of knowledge claim that ‘th’ aspiring to overmuch knowledge, was the originall temptation and sinne, whereupon ensued the fal of Man.’⁴⁶ In his long 1599 poem *Nosce Teipsum*, John Davies laments of Adam and Eve that ‘by tasting of that Fruite forbid, / Where they sought *knowledge*, they did *error* find.’ This mistake is repeated by their descendants: ‘Do not wee still tast of the fruite forbid?’ Davies asks rhetorically, ‘Whiles with fond, fruitlesse curiositie / In bookes prophane

⁴³ Ibid., Q4r (79).

⁴⁴ Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society*, Ss4r (327).

⁴⁵ See Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, and Peter Harrison, ‘Curiosity, Forbidden Knowledge, and the Reformation of Natural Philosophy in Early Modern England,’ *Isis* 92/2 (2001): 265-90.

⁴⁶ Bacon, *The twoo bookes*, A4v.

we seeke for knowledge hid?⁴⁷ Whilst Davies links original sin to readerly curiosity and, elsewhere in the poem, to scholasticism specifically, opponents of empirical and experimental epistemologies also often articulated their anxieties in precisely these terms. In his 1652 *Arcana microcosmi, or, The hid secrets of man's body discovered*, for example, the unapologetic peripatetic Alexander Ross offers an explanation for his censuring of Bacon's works: 'what hurt is it to tell our friend when he eateth too much raw fruit, that his health will be thereby indangered?'⁴⁸ Under a guise of amiable concern, Ross figures Bacon and his devotees as caught in the grip of an epistemological appetite for fruit that is at once insalubrious and sinful.

Given the common assumption that the Fall was triggered by a hubristic hunger for knowledge, and that subsequently human curiosity is infected by sin, the Royal Society's attempts to frame their investigations – gustatory and otherwise – as effecting a *return* to Eden is apparently counter-intuitive, if not injudicious. Indeed, respondents to *The history of the Royal-Society* objected vociferously to Sprat's use of the temptation and Fall narrative. In his 1670 *A censure upon certaine passages contained in the history of the Royal Society*, for example, the physician Henry Stubbe criticises Sprat's suggestion that mankind fell because Adam neglected the work of enquiring 'into the *nature* of all Creatures.' 'This,' Sprat had written in *The history*, 'had bin the only *Religion*, if men had continued innocent in *Paradise*, and had not wanted a *Redemption*.'⁴⁹ Stubbe responds indignantly:

No man ever taught, that *Adam's* fall (which was a breach of his *religious duty towards God*) was a deficiency from the study of *Experimental Philosophie*: or that *he* was not ejected *paradise* for the breach of a *positive command*, but for not minding the *cultivation of the Garden*, and *natural curiosities*. I never heard that *this* was that *sin* for which *death passed upon all men*, nor *this* the *transgression* wherein *Eve* was the *first*.⁵⁰

I want to suggest, however, that for disciples of the Royal Society, it is precisely the role of the epistemological appetite in precipitating the Fall which secures its potency in

⁴⁷ Davies, *Nosce Teipsum*, B1v (2).

⁴⁸ Ross, *Arcana microcosmi*, S8r (267).

⁴⁹ Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society*, Xx3v (350).

⁵⁰ Henry Stubbe, *A censure upon certaine passages contained in the history of the Royal Society* (Oxford: Richard Davis, 1670), F3v-F4r (38-39). On the exchanges between Sprat and his detractors, see R. H. Syfret, 'Some Early Critics of the Royal Society,' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 8/1 (1950): 35-36.

reversing it (or at least reversing some of its effects). Inherent in the notion that just as mankind fell by tasting the fruit of knowledge, so too might mankind be redeemed, is the supposition that – in medical terms – the cure of a disease must resemble its cause. This presumption reflects transformations in contemporary medical theory. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Galenic model of human physiology and physic, according to which the pathological superflux of one humor should be cured by the application of its opposite, was in decline, along with the doctrine of the humors more generally. The waning of humoralism is evident, for example, in Grew's explanation of the urgency of his taxonomical project: 'it much importeth us,' he advises, 'more precisely to distinguish' between the '*Tastes*' of the 'fluid' parts of plants in part because such distinctions will substitute for the humoral properties of heat, moistness and so on that were more usually used as a means of differentiating between them.⁵¹ 'Although it may be thought rashness,' he acknowledges, 'to take away the distinctions of *Hot, Cold, Moist, Dry, Thin, Gross*, and other *Qualities*... which the *Ancients* have affixed to particular *Plants*,' he might be excused in so doing not only by the fact that there is 'much uncertainty' in such affixations, but also because such attributes 'are, more properly, the *Effects* and *Operations* of *Plants*, than their *Qualites*.'⁵² Grew demotes humoral properties from the status of innate 'Qualities' to secondary and ephemeral '*Effects*.'

Conversely, Paracelsian iatrochemistry, or chemical medicine, gained ground in this period. The emphasis that Theophrastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541), better known as Paracelsus, had placed on first-hand observation and experiment was congenial to the interests of later natural philosophers, as were Paracelsus' efforts to yoke physic with the precepts of Christianity.⁵³ In particular, a number of Royal Society luminaries declared allegiance to the Paracelsian precept that a cure must approximate to the pathology it treats, and that the toxic can segue into the salutary.⁵⁴ As Boyle writes in *Some considerations touching the Usefulness*, 'many Poisonous Bodies contain their own Antidotes... the noxiousnesse of many is not so incorrigible, but that by Mans Art and Chymical Preparations, they may be made, not onely innocent and harmless, but

⁵¹ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, D2r (13).

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ On Paracelsus' emphasis on experience and on his incorporation of Christian beliefs into medical practice, see Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues, and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 27-8; Dear, 'The Meanings of Experience,' 110.

⁵⁴ See Anna Marie Roos, *The Salt of the Earth: Natural Philosophy, Medicine, and Chymistry in England, 1650-1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 10-107, and Allen G. Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Dover Publications, 2002).

useful too.⁵⁵ In this context, it is possible to appreciate how, just as many organic and chemical substances are simultaneously poison and cure, depending on how they are prepared and administered, so too might taste sensations simultaneously rehearse and reverse the original sin. The duality of taste – and correspondingly, of the epistemological appetites that taste represents – gains force and cogency in the context of Paracelsian medicine; the means of restoring spiritual wellbeing echoes the means of restoring physical health.

Boyle's 1665 *Occasional reflections* is interesting in this context. Couched in the form of short meditations and dialogues, the *Occasional reflections* extrapolate precepts from a plethora of varied phenomena and practices ranging across ague, clouds, a branch of coral, distillation, a windmill, a looking glass, and a paper kite. Boyle emphasises the celestial over the terrestrial; his ultimate aim is to identify moral laws, not natural philosophical causes and effects. Nonetheless, he stresses the wider value of the practice of making occasional reflections: the 'Objects' which men 'contemplate,' he affirms, may have 'not onely a Theological and a Moral, but also a Political, an Oeconomical, or *even a Physical use*' (my emphasis).⁵⁶ His methods, furthermore, are commensurate with Baconian induction; general rules proceed *from*, rather than *precede*, the particular examples he collates. As such, the *Occasional reflections* constitutes an intriguing merger of the Protestant contemplative tradition discussed in the previous chapter with the methodologies which characterise the emergence of experimental science.

Noticing this composite nature, Scott Black argues that in the *Occasional reflections*, 'a practice of Protestant reading begins to develop into a desacralized natural science.'⁵⁷ In contrast, I argue that the particular form of the *Occasional reflections*' combination of Protestantism and natural philosophy is not a process of displacement, as science comes to supplant the devotional practices it initially develops out of. Rather, the influence is mutual: practices of natural history and philosophy are suffused with devotional significance. As Boyle proclaims in *Some considerations touching the Usefulness*, the 'born' natural philosopher is a 'Priest of Nature... bound to returne Thanks and Praises to his Maker, not only for himselfe but for the whole Creation.'⁵⁸ Crucially, the

⁵⁵ Boyle, *Some considerations*, G4r-v (47-8).

⁵⁶ Robert Boyle, *Occasional reflections upon several subjects* (London: W. Wilson for Henry Herringman, 1665), C4v (24).

⁵⁷ Scott Black, 'Boyle's Essay,' in Pamela Smith and Benjamin Schmidt, eds., *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Objects and Texts, 1400-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 190.

⁵⁸ Boyle, *Some considerations*, I1v (58).

devotional dimension of natural philosophical research is figured in sensory terms. Natural historical ‘knowledge,’ Boyle declares,

will prove the Incense (or more spiritual and acceptable part, of that Sacrifice of Praise... wherein the Intelligent Admirer offers up the whole World in Eucharists to its Maker...)] the discerning ones self, and discovering to others the Perfections of God display’d in the Creatures, is a more acceptable act of Religion, then the burning of Sacrifices or Perfumes upon his Altars.⁵⁹

Boyle uses the word ‘Eucharists’ in its broad etymological sense of thanksgivings: the ‘Incense’ of experimental knowledge is, simultaneously, an ‘acceptable’ substitute for and a version of the olfactory pleasures offered by the Catholic ritual practice of ‘the burning of Sacrifices or Perfumes.’

These devotional dimensions of the activities of the early Royal Society, and the importance of taste as a mode of simultaneously spiritual and secular knowledge, come into focus when we consider the case of the first blood transfusion performed on a human being in England, which took place on 23 November 1667, at Arundel House in London. The patient was Arthur Coga, a ‘freakish and extravagant’ (according to Henry Oldenburg) and ‘debauched’ (according to Samuel Pepys) Cambridge Divinity alumni of about 32 years of age; the experiment was performed jointly by the physician and physiologist Richard Lower and the surgeon Edmund King.⁶⁰ Lower and King let approximately 6-7 ounces of Coga’s blood, replacing it with 9-10 ounces (‘by conjecture’) of a young sheep’s blood, transmitted into a vein in Coga’s right arm by way of silver piping and hollow quills.⁶¹

Coga was selected for the experiment partly because his poverty made him willing to participate in this risky new procedure, and partly because of his eccentricity: the experiment’s perpetrators were interested to discover whether the influx of the blood of an animal celebrated for its meek demeanour would have a calming influence on the easily-agitated Coga. A letter describing the transfusion, written by Henry Oldenburg, the secretary of the Royal Society, to Boyle, and dated two days after it took

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Q2v (116).

⁶⁰ Henry Oldenburg to Robert Boyle, 25 November 1667, in *Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, vol. 3, ed. A. Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 611. Samuel Pepys, diary entry, 21 November 1667, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Henry B. Wheatley (London: George Bell and Sons, 1893), accessed 27 June 2012, www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1667/11/21/.

⁶¹ Oldenburg to Boyle, 25 November 1667, in Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 611.

place, suggests that the answer was initially thought to be positive. Early on the morning of 25 November, Oldenburg and a companion, the natural philosopher, theologian, and Royal Society founding member John Wilkins, paid Coga a visit, finding him still in bed. Coga assured his callers that he had been ‘more composed’ since the transfusion, an assertion which was ‘affirmed’ by his host.⁶² Oldenburg’s letter, however, is interesting for more than its avowal that the transfusion had served to pacify Coga: it contains a number of intriguing details that are absent from the official account of the experiment given in the *Philosophical Transactions*, and which are germane here.⁶³ With no way of measuring how much blood would be transferred from the sheep’s body into Coga, King and Lower ‘let out, before the transfusion, into a porringer, so much of the sheep’s-blood, as would run out in about a minut (wch amounted to 12. Ounces) to direct us as to ye quantity to be transfused into the man.’ On seeing ‘that florid arteriall blood in ye porringer,’ Oldenburg reports, Coga ‘was so well pleased wth it, that he took some of it upon a knife, and tasted it, and finding it of good relish, he went the more courageously to its transmission into his veins.’⁶⁴

The moment is intriguing, but baffling: what prompts Coga to leap from an (implied) visual pleasure in the vivid colour of the sheep’s blood, to his tasting of it? Coga’s instinct, however, becomes more comprehensible when we consider an exchange shortly following the transfusion. When asked why the animal chosen had been a sheep, Coga replied ‘Sanguis ovis symbolicam quandam facultatem habet cum sanguine Christi, quia Christus est agnus Dei’: ‘sheep’s blood has some symbolic power, like the blood of Christ, for Christ is the lamb of God.’⁶⁵ On the face of it, his answer reflects the interests of Lower and King, who wanted to know if the lamb’s blood had the ‘power’ to transmit the animal’s meek temperament to Coga. But in highlighting the established symbolic connection between the lamb and Christ – whose meekness was,

⁶² Oldenburg to Boyle, 25 November 1667, in Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 611. Five days later, however, Pepys was sceptical. Dining at Cary House on 30 November with Society members including Wilkins, Pepys was, he records:

above all... pleased to see the person who had his blood taken out. He speaks well, and did this day give the Society a relation thereof in Latin, saying that he finds himself much better since, and as a new man, but he is cracked a little in his head, though he speaks very reasonably, and very well.

Pepys, diary entry, 30 November 1667, accessed 27 June 2012, www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1667/11/30/.

⁶³ For the official account of the experiment, see ‘An Account of the Experiment of *Transfusion*, practiced upon a *Man in London*,’ *Philosophical Transactions* 2/30 (1667): 557-59.

⁶⁴ Oldenburg to Boyle, 25 November 1667, in Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 611.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Thomas Birch, *The History of the Royal Society of London*, vol. 2 (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1967), 214-16. The translation is taken from Simon Schaffer, ‘Regeneration: The Body of Natural Philosophers in Restoration England,’ in Lawrence and Shapin, *Science Incarnate*, 101.

finally, exhibited as his acceptance of the crucifixion – Coga also retrospectively provides an explanatory context for his odd act of tasting.

When Royal Society members and enthusiasts use the language of taste in order to assert the value of the experimental and empirical methodologies they endorse, then, they consciously present the gustatory endeavours of the Society's members as sacramental, functioning both as a means to repair some of the disadvantages of the postlapsarian condition, and as a route to intimacy with the divine. The rhetorical utility of the language of taste for the promotion of experimental science, however, also derives in part from its prior epistemological associations and its phenomenal characteristics. In the introduction to this thesis, I noted that both the term 'taste,' and the experience of taste, involve a tension. On the one hand, as part of the activity of eating, the sense of taste plays a *preliminary* role, evaluating something's suitability for consumption. Correspondingly, as an epistemological term, to taste something is to try or examine it. The kinds of knowledge-production indicated by the language of taste are therefore cautious, and exploratory. On the other hand, considered in relation to the other senses, tasting is the *culmination* of our experience of our environment: taste's status as a proximity sense associates it with forms of knowledge that are direct, immersive, and seemingly conclusive. This duality can be mapped on to the two major, related features of the methodology advocated by the Royal Society: namely, an emphasis on probative experimentalism, and a corresponding valorisation of empirical experience.

III. 'true Rellish'

Following Francis Bacon's warnings regarding the dangers of premature systematization, members of the early Royal Society frequently presented their work as the earliest stages in what they anticipated would be a long project of knowledge production, anticipating and encouraging revision by future generations.⁶⁶ Just as a taste is an act of preliminary testing, experiment was supposed to be the beginning, not the end, of knowledge. Indeed, for Thomas Willis, writing in his 1683 *Two discourses concerning the soul of brutes*, tasting itself is a kind of experimental process:

⁶⁶ In a dedicatory letter to Viscount Brouckner prefacing his *An essay towards a real character*, for example, John Wilkins warns that 'I am not so vain as to think that I have here completely finished this great undertaking.... The completing of such a design, being rather the work of a *College* and an *Age*, then of any single Person.' Wilkins, *An essay towards a real character* (London: For Samuel Gellibrand and John Martin, 1668), A2r.

Eating is a certain Kind of Solution, whereby the savory Particles may be the better taken in, from the Food by the Sensory [i.e. the sense organs]: Because, whil'st solid eatable things are reduced into bits, by Chawing, the Tongue, and other parts of the Mouth, and Throat, pour forth as it were a certain Menstruum, which washing and as it were Elixivating the savory little Bodies, carries them into the Sensory, and insinuates them into the Pores of the Tongue.⁶⁷

Willis' emphasis on saliva as a necessary condition of tasting bears witness to the continuing influence of classical ideas about the senses, echoing Aristotle's assertion, in *De Anima*, that 'nothing produces the perception of flavour without moisture.'⁶⁸ The vocabulary which Willis uses to describe taste, however, is rooted firmly in experimental chemistry: saliva is described as a solvent ('Menstruum') which extracts the alkaline salts from flavour particles via a process of elixiviation (that is, a process of extracting a soluble from an insoluble substance by soaking in water), thus producing gustatory sensation.⁶⁹ Willis' use of the vocabulary of experiment to describe a physiological process reflects his iatrochemical convictions: for Willis, the body is a chemical entity, and its pathologies are most helpfully treated by chemical substances. Nonetheless, in asserting the equivalence of gustatory experience and chemical experiment, Willis also underscores the conceptual relation between tasting as preliminary trial, and the new methodologies.

In other contexts, however, Royal Society apologists exploited taste's status as a proximity sense in order to suggest that gustation offers a form of direct, authentic experiential intimacy with the material world. In contrast, the distal senses – particularly vision – are associated with the deductive method favoured by scholasticism, and with a stale, second-hand knowledge acquired textually from authorities. In *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580-1670*, Elizabeth Spiller argues that for many early modern natural philosophers reading was aligned with 'a second-

⁶⁷ Thomas Willis, *Two discourses concerning the soul of brutes* (London: Thomas Dring and John Leigh, 1683), I3v (62).

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 182.

⁶⁹ The word 'mestruum' was central to alchemical discourse, and was adopted by Royal Society chemists. 'Elixivate,' however, was less than a decade old when Willis wrote, and was associated with experimentalism; the *OED* gives the first citation as a 1674 number of the *Philosophical Transactions*. See 'menstruum, n.,' *OED Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/116522; and '† elixivate, v.,' *OED Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/60502, both accessed 02 June 2013.

hand, thin form of seeing, one that mimicked but did not truly replicate direct observation itself.⁷⁰ The converse, I propose, is also the case. For some members of the early Royal Society, seeing is conceived of as something like reading: a shallow, disengaged form of apprehension. Boyle's meditation 'Upon his Paring of a rare Summer Apple,' included in the *Occasional reflections*, for example, associates visual appearance with second-hand report and deceitful rhetoric:

How prettily has curious Nature painted this gawdy Fruit? Here is a green that Emeralds cannot, and *Flora's* self might boast: And *Pomona* seems to have affected, in the fresh and lively Vermilion that adorns this smooth Rind, an Emulation at Rubies themselves... In a word, such pure and tempting Green and Red dye this same polish'd Skin, that our Vulgar boldness must be no longer question'd, for rendring that Fruit an Apple, that inveigled our first Parents: But though these winning Dyes delight me strangely, they are Food for my Eye alone, and not my Stomach; I have no Palate for Colours, and to relish this Fruit well, and know whether it performs to the Taste what it promises to the Sight, and justifie that Platonick definition which styles Beauty *the Lustre and Flower of Goodness*; all this Gay out-side is cut and thrown away, and passes but for Parings. Thus in Opinions, though I look with Pleasure on that neat fashionable Dress, that smoother Pens so finely Cloath them with, and though I be delighted with the pretty and spruce Expressions, that Wit and Eloquence are wont to trick them up with; yet when I mean to examine their true Rellish, that, upon liking, I may make them mine, I still strip and devest them of all those flattering Ornaments (or cheating Disguises rather) which so often conceal or mis-represent their true and genuine Nature, and (before e'r I swallow them) after they have been admitted by the more delusible faculty we call Fancy, I make them pass the severer scrutiny of Reason.⁷¹

For Boyle, the everyday act of paring an apple is a prompt to reflect on the source and status of human knowledge. Invoking the lapsarian narrative, he suggests that it was the attractive appearance, rather than the imagined flavour, of the fatal apple that 'inveigled

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 21. I am suggesting that, conversely, seeing is conceived of as something like reading: a shallow, disengaged form of apprehension.

⁷¹ Boyle, *Occasional reflections*, N3r-v (181-82).

our first Parents'; the sensory source of Adam and Eve's sin is identified not as an act of tasting, but of looking. The visually appealing rind of the fruit, furthermore, corresponds to the 'pretty and spruce Expressions' which people use to embellish their opinions; the apple's vivid colours evoke the compelling but deceptive colours of rhetorical language.⁷² Whilst Boyle's self-confessed 'delight' in the 'Gay out-side' of the apple parallels that of the first parents, however, he also recognises the need to test the allurements of the visual and the rhetorical – the ornamental – against the evidence of the palate; in order to discover whether (as Plato would have it) beauty really does coincide with 'Goodness,' he must 'Taste' the apple. Whilst the pleasures of sight are associated with the 'cheating' deceptions of witty and eloquent, but second-hand, 'Opinions,' gustation offers access to a more authentic reality that is itself figured as a form of flavour, a 'true Rellish.'⁷³

Such dichotomizing resonates with Protestant meditative and homiletic discourse, which – as discussed in the previous chapter – similarly establishes an opposition between vision and taste, associating the former with bondage to ecclesiastical and scriptural authority, and the latter with an intimate, affective, experiential, and practical knowledge of God. Peter Harrison argues that 'the emphasis in Puritanism on the first-person encounter with God bears an important analogy to the replacement, in experimental philosophy, of reliance on authorities and written traditions with individual experience.'⁷⁴ Similarly, Kathleen Lynch's careful excavation of 'experience' as a category in the spiritual testimonies of non-conformist Protestants suggests that the emphasis on experience indexes the fact that 'the methodologies by which a truthful identity of the godly is constructed have the same general outlines as the methodologies of an emerging experimentalism in scientific communities.'⁷⁵

Attending to the language of taste allows us to appreciate the extent to which this shared move away from the authority of tradition towards first-hand experience as a source of knowledge was conceived of and experienced in sensory terms, as a shift from the visual to the gustatory. It also serves as a prompt to consider the historical specificity of 'experience' as a category.⁷⁶ As Adam Rzepka notes, in this period

⁷² Boyle's suspicion of rhetorical language presumably draws on Bacon's criticism, in the *Advancement*, of 'tropes and figures,' and his assertion that 'the first distemper of learning, [is] when men study words and not matter.' Bacon, *The two bookees*, E3r-v (18).

⁷³ Boyle, *Occasional reflections*, N3r-v (181-82).

⁷⁴ Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, 133.

⁷⁵ Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography*, 88.

⁷⁶ As Joan W. Scott has argued, 'experience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always

experience and experiment ‘function as partial synonyms.’⁷⁷ For Rzepka, this hints at how, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ‘appeal to experience’ was also ‘a claim to a proactive engagement... an experimental troubling of received wisdom... experience is not simply had or gained, but *made*.’⁷⁸ The association between taste and experience also points to the ways in which experience (both religious and natural historical) *makes* or transforms its subjects. For a number of experimental philosophers, taste does not only precede, but is itself a form of, incorporation: the tongue and palate are porous, a strikingly permeable boundary between self and world. ‘In tasting,’ writes Thomas Willis, ‘the Object’ of sense is not only ‘brought near, and laid upon’ the sensing organ: it is ‘admitted... deeply within the Pores and its passages.’ ‘The Tongue,’ he continues, ‘consists of a very porous Contexture; for this end, that the savory Particles of the thing, might be more plentifully, and more deeply admitted, into the passages of the Sensory.’⁷⁹ Similarly, in a letter to the Royal Society dated 18 October 1707, the Dutch microscopist Antoni van Leeuwenhoek advises that

I have been long of Opinion, that our Tongue is of such a Form, that... it does not only communicate to the Body whatever is agreeable to it self, but also admits one part of the Matter that lies upon it... our Tongues are so constituted, as to receive a few of those Juices into the Orifices of its Vessels, and that this causes the Sensation which we call Taste, and that these Juices are carried or press’d by the little Coats or Tunica’s of the small Veins that are in the Tongue, and so continued by the great Vein to the Heart.⁸⁰

According to van Leeuwenhoek, taste is caused by the tongue’s reception of the ‘Juices’ of matter; these juices are then transported to the heart. Acts of tasting allow the material world to penetrate the body, making the self vulnerable to fundamental change. Taste, then, attests to the contiguity between self and world which allows for their mutual transformation: it reveals the faultlines in Lynch’s assertion that ‘the investigation of the self is unlike the investigation of any other object, each of which

contested.’ Scott, ‘The Evidence of Experience,’ *Critical Inquiry* 17/4 (1991): 797. See also Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck, ‘Observation Observed,’ in Daston and Lunbeck, eds., *Histories of Scientific Observation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1-10.

⁷⁷ Adam Rzepka, “‘Rich eyes and poor hands’”: Theaters of Early Modern Experience,’ in Shankar Raman and Lowell Gallagher, eds., *Knowing Shakespeare: Senses, Embodiment, Cognition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 158.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁷⁹ Willis, *Two discourses*, L3v (62).

⁸⁰ Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, ‘A Letter to the Royal Society,’ *Philosophical Transactions* 25 (1706-1707): 2459.

may be fully distinguished from its observer.’⁸¹ For Willis and van Leeuwenhoek, objects of taste are not ‘fully distinguished’ from the tasting subject, but infiltrate his or her body right to its core.

For Rzepka, the term ‘experience’ in the early modern period ‘marks a struggle to ground knowledge in the non-discursive.’⁸² In corroborating this assertion, I would like to point out how the association between the sense of taste and experiential immediacy within the realm of natural history and philosophy derives in part from the way in which flavours evade articulation. Once again, we received a hint of this in the previous chapter, in which a number of Protestant writers insisted on the importance of experiential faith over scriptural precept by analogy with the sweetness of honey, which must be experienced to be known. The notion that there is something fundamentally indescribable about tastes was proverbial in the early modern period. The 1598 commonplace book *Palladis Tamia*, for example, includes Louis de Granada’s observation that ‘the tast of delitious meate cannot sufficiently bee expressed nor discribed with words to him, who heretofore hath not tasted of it.’⁸³ In the second half of the seventeenth century, this proverbial assertion of the impossibility of adequately describing tastes came under some pressure from the taxonomic aspirations of natural philosophers including Grew and Wilkins. Notably, Wilkins’ monumental *An essay towards a real character* (1668) represents the culmination of a more general seventeenth-century obsession with developing a universally intelligible language. *An essay* describes its author’s proposal for a new artificial language, or ‘*Real universal character*,’ in which the forms of words would signify ‘things and notions’ not randomly and equivocally, as in existing languages, but rather according to the place that those things and notions occupied in a logical ‘Scheme or Analysis’ determined by natural philosophy.⁸⁴ Whereas established languages are arbitrary in the pejorative sense that the relation between word and thing is meaningless, in the new language words would reflect Wilkins’ *arbitration* of the place of the thing within a pre-determined natural philosophical taxonomy.⁸⁵ Because this new language adheres to a rational system – one which supposedly schematizes the natural order of things – it should be more immediately

⁸¹ Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography*, 88.

⁸² Rzepka, ‘Rich eyes and poor hands,’ 156.

⁸³ Meres, *Palladis tamia*, H8v (55b).

⁸⁴ Wilkins, *An essay*, D3v (22). I use the term ‘artificial language,’ rather than the more traditional ‘universal language,’ following the reasons given by Rhodri Lewis in his *Language, Mind and Nature: Artificial Languages in England from Bacon to Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xii.

⁸⁵ I am indebted here to John Leonard’s discussion of the term ‘arbitrary’ in *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5-6.

comprehensible. In addition, Wilkins anticipates that it will be unambiguous. Like Boyle, Wilkins evinces a strong suspicion of the equivocal flexibility of rhetorical language: although he acknowledges that ‘*Metaphor and Phraseology... may contribute to the elegance and ornament of Speech,*’ he concludes that ‘like other affected ornaments, they... contribute to the disguising of it with false appearances.’⁸⁶ His own language will banish these ‘defects.’⁸⁷

Artificial language schemes were commonly presented by their proponents as a corrective counterpart to the proliferation of languages believed to result from the destruction of the tower of Babel, and Wilkins is no exception: ‘how languages came to be multiplied,’ he comments, ‘is... manifested in the Story of the Confusion of Babel.’⁸⁸ Wilkins dismisses the potential criticism that in inventing yet another new language, he adds to this regrettable confusion; to the contrary, he argues, ‘supposing such a thing as is here proposed, could be well established, it would be the surest remedy that could be against the Curse of the Confusion, by rendring all other Languages and Characters useless.’⁸⁹ As such, *An essay* takes its place amongst early Royal Society efforts to repair the deteriorations wrought by human history. Wilkins aspires to create a language in which ‘the *Names* of things could be so ordered, as to contain such a kind of *affinity* or *opposition* in their letters and sounds, as might be some way answerable to the nature of the things which they signified,’ a language reminiscent of the language spoken by Adam and Eve in Eden, which putatively signified the things according to their inherent qualities.⁹⁰

Wilkins’ philological-cum-utopian ambitions, however, were thwarted when he came to taste, which eludes the necessary systematization which underlies these ambitions. In attempting to taxonomize tastes (which he conflates with smells), Wilkins offers a rich and evocative list of English flavour descriptors: he lists sixty-three terms across seven master categories, including ‘luscious,’ ‘toothsom,’ ‘foetid,’ ‘rank,’ ‘keen,’ ‘unctious,’ ‘tart,’ ‘styptic,’ ‘saline,’ ‘brackish,’ ‘quick,’ ‘flashy,’ ‘vinewed,’ ‘addle,’ ‘wearish,’

⁸⁶ Wilkins, *An essay*, D1r-v (17-18). On Wilkins’ suspicion of metaphor, see Robert Markley, *Fallen Languages: Crises of Representation in Newtonian England, 1660-1740* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), especially 92-3, and Robert Stillman, *The New Philosophy and Universal Languages in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1995).

⁸⁷ Wilkins, *An essay*, D2r (19).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, B1v (2).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, C3R (13). See also: ‘So that is men should generally consent upon the same way or manner of expression, as they do agree in the same notion, we should then be freed from that Curse in the confusion of tongues, with all the unhappy consequences of it.’ *Ibid.*, D2v (20).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, D3r (21). On the language spoken by Adam and Eve, and on other early modern attempts to recover it, see Katz, ‘The Language of Adam,’ 132-145, 133; Almond, *Adam and Eve*, 126-142; and Eco, *The Search*, especially 7-24.

and ‘fusty.’⁹¹ Nonetheless, he also acknowledges that the numerousness of flavours means that individual tastes are ‘not provided for with distinct words,’ but must be described ‘by their likeness to such other things as are commonly known.’⁹² Many tastes can be described only by analogy with a third term in the common experience of speaker or writer and listener or reader.⁹³ As such, tastes reintroduce metaphor into language, and, with metaphor, the equivocalness that for Wilkins was characteristic of the deceptiveness of postlapsarian language. Resisting philological schematization, demanding metaphorical equivocation, the multifariousness of taste (or, as Wilkins glosses the term, ‘*Gust, Savour, Relish, Smack, Smatch, Tang*’) checks Wilkins’ taxonomical, and thus his Edenic, ambitions.

The manuscript translations of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek’s letters to the Royal Society, prepared for inclusion in the *Transactions*, offer a clear illustration of the difficulties of describing taste sensations. Van Leeuwenhoek is most often remembered for his discovery of what he called animalcules (now known as micro-organisms) including spermatozoa and bacteria.⁹⁴ Less frequently noted is that these remarkable observations grew out of van Leeuwenhoek’s sustained and intense interest in the sense of taste, exemplified above in his comments on the porous tongue.⁹⁵ He first saw bacteria, for example, on 24 April 1676, whilst examining a three-week-old infusion of crushed pepper in water in an effort to determine what gives the spice its powerful and distinctive taste.⁹⁶ Over the next thirty years, van Leeuwenhoek continued to engage in an effort to understand taste, using his powerful microscopes to examine both a range of gustable substances, and the tongue and palate, and communicating his discoveries in letters to the Royal Society (of which he became a fellow in 1680). Van Leeuwenhoek’s epistles were written in colloquial Dutch, and the exertions of the Royal Society’s translators to render them into English for publication in the *Philosophical Transactions* illustrate the difficulty of describing flavours. In the manuscript translations of the sections of the letters which deal with tastes and tasting, words are densely effaced,

⁹¹ Wilkins, *An essay*, Ff1r (217).

⁹² *Ibid.*, Tt2v (324).

⁹³ Jonathan Gil Harris makes a similar point about smell: ‘the words used to describe smell tend not to be nominal, but comparative – an object smells like something. Smell, therefore, has a tendency to slide referentially.’ Harris, ‘The Smell of *Macbeth*,’ 469. See also Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, ‘The Senses of Taste,’ *The American Historical Review* 116/2 (2011): 379.

⁹⁴ See Howard Gest, ‘The Discovery of Microorganisms by Robert Hooke and Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, Fellows of the Royal Society,’ *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 58/2 (2004): 192.

⁹⁵ Although Gest comments that ‘one of Leeuwenhoek’s greatest contributions to biology, the discovery of bacteria, resulted from a serendipitous event that began with his interest in the sense of taste.’ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 194-95.

replaced, struck through, and interpolated. A translation of one 1692 letter, for instance, reads:

I have again bent my speculations upon ~~the~~ pepper, and especially, ~~what is to~~ [illegible] the reason, that the particles of pepper lye so ~~prickling~~ painful in our Mouths, whereas being conveyed into the inward parts of our Body, ~~viz~~ as into our Stomach, and gutts, they cause not the least pricking working or motion...

many

~~should~~

...I have Severall times fancied, when I looked upon the... peper, which ~~wee~~ ^ call meat, that the particles, by reason that many of them are very sharp, cause in our Mouth upon our tongue theat pricking, which many doe call a is [illegible] cald its heat.⁹⁷

Hesitation about the most appropriate English word to translate the Dutch equivalent intersects with uncertainty about how to describe the taste of pepper, resulting in a document shot through with *sous rature*: is pepper merely ‘prickling,’ or actually ‘painful?’ Or is it, as ‘many doe call’ it, simply hot? Is it even a ‘meat,’ a foodstuff, at all? ‘Wee’ call it so, or at least, we ‘should,’ or rather, ‘many’ do so. And where does the sensation – prickly, painful, or hot – take place: in the mouth, or ‘upon our tongue?’

Wilkins’ grudging acknowledgement that flavours, resisting schematization, generate metaphor, and the messy foul papers of van Leeuwenhoek’s translators, attest in different ways to the difficulties of precisely capturing taste in language. Ultimately, the only way to know the flavour of something, is to taste it; taste cleaves to experience, resisting language and report. It is this characteristic that makes taste so appropriate to the Royal Society’s rejection of authority in favour of first-hand experience. But taste’s protean, elusive nature could also be problematic, as its disruptive place in Wilkins’ *An essay towards a real character* suggests. In the next section of this chapter, I will explore the problematic aspects of taste more fully, placing Willis’ and van Leeuwenhoek’s notion of taste as penetrative in the context of corpuscular theory, and of microscopic investigations into the tongue.

⁹⁷ Translation of a letter from Antoni van Leeuwenhoek to the Royal Society, Delft, 1692. London, The Royal Society Centre for the History of Science, classified letters, EL/L2/32.

IV. 'the Corpuscularian Doctrine of Tastes'

So far, I have suggested that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between early Royal Society uses of the sense of taste a mode of investigation and rhetorical uses of taste to describe the Society's work as a redemptive reversal of the original, sinful act of tasting. This celebratory story is, however, complicated by contemporary research into taste understood not as a property of things – 'taste' as a synonym of flavour – but rather as a physiological, subjective process. Uses of the sense of taste within the early Royal Society to discover and taxonomize the constitution and properties of substances are matched by the interest of members including Boyle, Grew, and van Leeuwenhoek, as well as physicians and anatomists such as the Italian Marcello Malpighi, and Thomas Willis, in the anatomy of the tongue and the ways in which people come to apprehend flavours. The second half of this chapter will thus explore how an emphasis on *how* flavours are experienced by tasting subjects, as opposed to *what* flavours can reveal about material objects, problematizes the association of the sense of taste with authentic, and potentially redemptive, knowledge.

For Grew and his fellows, the epistemological value of the sense of taste relies both on the capacity of gustation to accurately apprehend the qualities and properties of the material world, and on its commonality. This evident in Grew's 'A Discourse Concerning the Essential and Marine Salts of Plants,' originally read before the Royal Society in 1676. Whilst the 'Discourse' was revised for inclusion in *The anatomy*, at points it retains a tone of direct address, divulging its original status as an accompaniment to an experimental demonstration before an audience. Grew recounts an experiment intended to show that there are variations in the types of 'Lixivial' (that is, alkaline) salts belonging to different plants:

I took an equal quantity of the whitest and purest *Salts* of divers *Plants*, all made by an equal degree of *Calcination* [i.e. burning]; and dissolved them all severally in an equal quantity of water. And pouring likewise an equal quantity, as about 10 or 12 drops of each into a spoon, I tasted them severally. Whereby it was very evident, that they were not all of one *Taste*, but of very different ones, both as to strength and kind: and therefore different in Nature also... The *Solutions* are here present to be tasted.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Qq4v (264).

Because the flavour of the salt solutions varies in strength and kind, Grew argues, it follows that they are also ‘different in Nature,’ or constitution. Taste sensations apparently attest to the inherent qualities of plants. Grew presumes, furthermore, that his own taste experiences are replicable – a crucial condition, of course, of the success of a scientific experiment – and that they are sharable.⁹⁹ The presumed uniformity of taste allows gustation to play a role not only in the production, but also in the communal verification, of knowledge: ‘the Solutions are here present to be tasted,’ Grew proclaims confidently, apparently assured that the gustatory experience of his companions will duplicate his own.

This confidence in the capacity of taste to accurately apprehend the material world reflects a strand of thought according to which it is not the senses themselves, but the flawed interpretation of the information they provide, that leads to error. This approach is evident in the works of the clergyman and Society propagandist Joseph Glanvill. In his 1661 *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*, Glanvill declares that ‘to do our *senses* right, simply they are not deceived, but only administer an occasion to our forward *understandings* to deceive themselves.’¹⁰⁰ This suggestion that epistemological error arises not from physical sensation, but from the mind’s misinterpretation of sense data, echoes Bacon in the *Advancement*: ‘the Sences,’ writes Bacon, ‘are verie sufficient to certifie and report truth.’¹⁰¹ The scholastic logicians who accuse the senses of deception, he goes on, ‘ought to have charged the deceit upon the weakness of the intellectual powers, and upon the manner of collecting and concluding on the reports of the senses.’¹⁰²

Grew’s assumption that the flavours of plants correspond to their innate properties, and thus form reliable guides to their medicinal uses, is undermined by his affirmations elsewhere in *The anatomy of plants* that tastes are contingent entities, created jointly by tasting subject and tasted object and affected by a range of temporal and agricultural circumstances. ‘The Causes of Tastes,’ Grew writes,

⁹⁹ Sprat emphasises the Royal Society’s insistence on the ‘accurate repetition of their *Experiments*’ in *The history of the Royal-Society*, Dd4r (215) (see also N2r (99)). On the importance (and the difficulties) of replicability to experimental science, and on the literary form of the essay as a facilitator of ‘virtual witnessing,’ see Steven Shapin, ‘Pump and Circumstance: Robert Boyle’s Literary Technology,’ *Social Studies of Science* 14/4 (1984): 489-91.

¹⁰⁰ Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*, H6r-v (91-92).

¹⁰¹ Bacon, *The two bookees*, Nn3r (51).

¹⁰² *Ibid*, Nn3v (52).

are, in general, these Four or Five, *sc.* [*ilicet*; namely] 'The *Bed* out of which they grow; The *Aer* in which they stand; The *Parts* of which they consist; The several *Fermentations* under which their *Juyces* pass; And the *Organs* by which their *Tastable Parts* are perceiv'd.¹⁰³

Because environmental factors such as soil, air, and age play a part in the production of tastes, the flavour of a single kind of plant can vary significantly, both between distinct instances of a particular variety, and also according to the age of the plant. '*Tulips* and some other *Roots*,' for instance, 'being taken up, in open weather, sometime before they *sprout*; if tasted, are as sweet as *Liquirish* or *Sugar*; and at no other time.'¹⁰⁴ Yet more surprisingly, Grew lists the taste 'Organs' as one cause of the tastes of plants. It is important to bear in mind, here, Grew's use of the word 'Causes': Grew is not asserting that the taste organs *perceive* tastes, or that they *affect* the experience of taste, but that they are amongst the factors which constitute or *create* tastes.

In what sense do the gustatory organs create, rather than simply perceive, tastes? Grew's inclusion of the tasting organs within his list of the 'causes' of tastes becomes more comprehensible when it is understood in relation to what Robert Boyle had named, in 1676, as 'the Corpuscularian Doctrine of Tasts,' and which was also advocated by Willis and van Leeuwenhoek.¹⁰⁵ Corpuscularian theory – which bore a close relation to the mechanical philosophy – held that all matter is composed of tiny particles, or corpuscles. The form, arrangements, and motion of these corpuscles are supposed to form the basis of, and provide an explanation for, the sensible properties of the material world. Boyle's adherence to corpuscularianism is apparent in his *Experiments, notes, &c.*, in which he aims to demonstrate that 'Mechanical Principles' offer an adequate explanation for 'the Qualities of bodies,' including the sensible quality of taste.¹⁰⁶ Boyle hypothesises that the 'Origine... of *Sapours*' can be sufficiently accounted for by reference to the purely mechanical factors of 'the bigness, figure and motion of the saporifick corpuscles... considered separately... or else in a state of

¹⁰³ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Tt4v (286).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Tt5v (288).

¹⁰⁵ Boyle, *Experiments*, B3r (21). On Boyle's corpuscularism, see Christopher Meinel, 'Early Seventeenth-Century Atomism: Theory, Epistemology and the Insufficiency of Experiment,' in Peter Dear, ed., *The Scientific Enterprise in Early Modern Europe: Readings from Isis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 176-211, and Antonio Clericuzio, 'Gassendi, Charleton and Boyle on Matter and Motion,' in Christoph Lüthy, John E. Murdoch, and William R. Newman, eds., *Late Medieval and Early Modern Corpuscular Matter Theories* (Leiden: Brill, 2001): 468-82.

¹⁰⁶ Boyle, *Experiments*, A4v (6).

conjunction.¹⁰⁷ As with Grew's *The anatomy of plants*, however, the *Experiments, notes, &c.* embodies a tension between taste understood as an objective quality of things, and taste understood as a subjective experience. Boyle begins by addressing 'Tast considered as belonging to the Object.' Even as he asserts that his interest will be limited to objective taste, however, the distinction between objective and subjective taste breaks down: by 'tast... as belong to the object,' he continues, he means 'that quality... which enables a body by its operation, to produce in us that sensation, which we feel or perceive when we say we *tast*.'¹⁰⁸ Objective taste is only comprehensible as that which affects the tasting subject. Boyle further acknowledges the importance of the tasting subject when he elaborates on his central thesis:

this something, whether you will call it a quality, or whatever else it be that makes or denominates an object *saporous*, or rather (if I may be allowed a barbarous term) *saporifick*, may so depend upon the shape, size, motion, and other Mechanical affections of the small parts of the tasted body, and result from the association of two or more of them, not excluding their congruity or incongruity to the organs of Tasting.¹⁰⁹

Tastes arise when minute flavour particles, or corpuscles, come into contact with 'the organs of Tasting'; the specific nature of the flavour perceived depends on the 'shape, size, motion' of the corpuscles, but also on their 'congruity' or otherwise to the subject's palate, tongue, and so on. Boyle's somewhat torturous syntax here seems to encode the process of his thought. In particular, his self-correction, as he retrospectively replaces 'saporous' with 'saporifick,' anticipates his inclusion of the tasting organs in the factors which contribute to flavours: whereas the '-ous' suffix of the former term implies something 'abounding in, full of, characterized by' sapor (that is, something which possesses a taste), the '-fic[k]' suffix of the latter term denotes 'making, causing, producing' (that is, something which causes a taste, presumably in a subject).¹¹⁰ Boyle's 'barbarous' neologism, then, implicitly recognises a tasting subject upon whom the '*saporous*' object acts, causing or producing the sensation of flavour.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., A2r (3).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., A2v-A3r (4-5).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., A3r (5).

¹¹⁰ See '-ous, suffix,' and '-fic, suffix.' *OED Online*, both accessed 23/06/13. www.oed.com/view/Entry/133383 and www.oed.com/view/Entry/69793.

The corpuscularian doctrine of tastes was given greater anatomical specificity by the work of Marcello Malpighi, whose discovery – aided by his colleague Carlo Frascatti – of the tastebuds was disseminated in England via the *Philosophical Transactions* in 1666. Having viewed the tongue under a microscope, Henry Oldenburg writes, paraphrasing a letter from Malpighi, Malpighi ‘hath discovered in it many little *Eminences*, which he calls *Papillary*, and believes to be the principal Organ of *Taste*.’¹¹¹ Those ‘little *Eminences*,’ located at the back of the mouth, ‘serve,’ according to Fracassati, ‘for *Funnels*... which maketh the Author think it very probable that the finest part of the aliment passeth immediately from the *Tongue* into the *Nerves*.’¹¹²

The influence of both Boyle’s corpuscularian theory of tastes and the findings of Malpighi and Frascatti is apparent in Willis’ and van Leeuwenhoek’s remarks, quoted earlier, regarding the porousness of the tongue. It is also evident in Grew’s *Anatomy*. For Grew, tastes are produced by the ways in which the shape and size of flavour corpuscles interact with the gustatory organs, particularly the newly-discovered taste-buds. He writes that ‘the *Principles* [i.e. the constituent corpuscles] of *Plants*’:

affect the *Organs* of *Sense*, according to the variety of their *Figures*... So those which are sharp or pointed; and those which are *springy*; are fitted to produce any stronger *Taste*: and those which are round, are apt, of their own *Nature*, to produce a *weaker* or *softer* one.¹¹³

Grew’s description, here, presents taste as interestingly tactile. The intensity of gustatory sensation derives from the figure, or form, of the plant’s flavour particles. As in Aristotelian orthodoxy, in corpuscularian doctrine taste is a kind of subset or variety of touch.¹¹⁴ Grew’s ‘sense’ that the tongue is a tactile as much as a gustatory entity is reflected in a couple of inconspicuous but telling moments in the *The anatomy*, in which Grew reveals that he uses his tongue as a kind of exceptionally delicate, adept experimental instrument. He recommends, for instance, that the ‘Third or Inmost’ skins

¹¹¹ Henry Oldenburg, ‘An Account of Some Discoveries Concerning the Brain, and the Tongue, Made by Signior Malpighi, Professor of Physick in Sicily,’ *Philosophical Transactions* 2 (1666-67): 492.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 492.

¹¹³ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Tt4v (286).

¹¹⁴ This emphasis on the textural and the tactile is shared by other advocates of corpuscularianism, including Thomas Willis. Willis comments, ‘it is most likely, that the Salt savour is produced, when Particles of any Body, pointed with many Angles and Edges on all sides, do as it were cut into the Sensory, like as if little bits of broken Glass be strictly pressed in ones hand.’ *Two discourses*, I4v (64).

of Melissa seeds might be removed ‘upon soaking in warm Water or on the *Tongue*.’¹¹⁵ Similarly, he enjoins that in order to observe the ‘*Milk-Vessels*’ of plants such as borage and dandelions unobscured by ‘the *Milk*’ (that is, the milky sap) that they produce, the sap ‘is to be taken off, not with the Finger but the *Tongue*.’ Once this ‘milk’ has ‘been frequently licked off,’ the vessels will be ‘visible, even without a *Glass*.’¹¹⁶ Grew’s use of his tongue as a precise, tactile implement (which recalls Helkiah Crooke’s description, discussed in chapter 2, of lapidaries’ use of their tongues to determine the quality of precious stones) inverts the relation between taste and vision which pertains for Malpighi and van Leeuwenhoek. Where the microscopists interrogate taste by looking at the tongue through magnifying lenses, Grew uses his tongue in order to be able to see, ‘even without a *Glass*.’

Grew stresses the importance, not only of the object of taste (the principles of plants), but also of the tasting subject’s gustatory organs, in producing tastes:

A *Tast* is *Lingual, Guttural, &c.* according to the grosness or fineness or other difference of the *Membranes* into which the *tastable parts* [of a substance] are admitted. For *Tasts* are made not meerly by the outward *Contact*, but the *Ingress* of the *tastable parts*. Now the outer *Skin* of the *Tongue*... hath either no sense, or much less than that which lies under it; and is therefore, but a *Seive* or *Strainer* to the *tastable parts*. So that being of different fineness in the several parts of the *Tongue*; it hereby comes to pass, that according as the *tastable parts* of any *Plant* are more or less penetrant, subtle, or dissoluble, they are admitted into one part of the *Tongue*, and not another.¹¹⁷

Whilst he modifies Frascatti’s culinary analogy – calling the tongue a sieve, rather than the tastebuds funnels – Grew echoes his assertion that the flavour particles are penetrative, entering into the tongue itself. The new mechanical and corpuscularian accounts of gustation, then, posit taste as an interaction between object and subject, flavour particles and tasting organs (especially the papillae, or tastebuds). In this context, the subjectivity of taste does not derive from the misapprehension of flavours – due either to mental misinterpretation of them, or to a superfluity of humors in the tongue – but is, rather, a necessary condition of taste. Because the particular form of the subject’s

¹¹⁵ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Iir (201).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, P2r (69)

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Uu1r-v (289-90).

taste organs play a *causative* role in producing tastes, ‘taste’ as a property of the material world (that is, as a synonym of flavour), and taste as a verb, a process, an experience, are inextricable: subjectivity is inherent to taste, not incidental, accidental, or pathological.

Grew’s nomination of tastes as either ‘*Lingual,*’ or ‘*Guttural, &c,*’ is also significant, testifying to his interest in the organoleptic origins of flavours. The tongue is not the only physiological factor in the production of tastes; lingual (tongue-based) flavours coexist with guttural flavours (perceived in the throat). Grew’s inclusive ‘&c,’ furthermore, can be glossed by cross-reference: elsewhere in *The anatomy of plants*, he lists ‘the *Seats of Tasts,*’ as inclusive of ‘the *Lips, Tongue, Palate, Throat and Gullet.*’¹¹⁸ Tastes are defined, in part, by the body part which apprehends them. One consequence of understanding taste in this way is that the number of possible flavours burgeons wildly. Following classical and medieval authorities, early modern estimates as to the number of basic, or ‘simple,’ flavours usually fell between six and nine.¹¹⁹ In contrast, Grew writes that the ‘simple *Tasts...* are, at least Sixteen.’¹²⁰ Furthermore, these simple tastes can be combined together to make ‘compounded Tasts.’ These compounded tastes ‘are very numerous; being made by the various *Conjunction* of *Simple Tasts...* Sometimes of two... Sometimes three... Sometimes four... And in some *Bodies,* five or six *Species* may be joyned together.’¹²¹ Consequently, ‘the Sensible distinctions [between tastes]... may lie almost as wide, as of *Plants* themselves.’¹²²

According to Grew, then, the tastes of plants are variable, fluctuating according to environmental and temporal circumstance; intrinsically subjective, produced by an interaction between the corpuscles of the tasted object and the gustatory organs of the tasting subject; and dauntingly multitudinous, potentially as numerous as ‘*Plants* themselves.’ The fundamental instability of tastes, moreover, means that they are subject to human manipulation. In his *Experiments, notes, &c.*, Boyle submits that it is possible to prove the accuracy of the corpuscularian theory of tastes by showing that

¹¹⁸ The quotation continues to make a distinction between the parts of tongue itself:

Upon the *Tongue,* *Tasts* are perceived in Three places... On the *Tip* or *Cone* of the *Tongue;* as most commonly. On or near the *Basis* of the *Tongue;* where the *Taste* of the *Leaves* of *Wild Cucumer* chiefly fixeth it self. Or on the *Vertex* or middle of the *Tongue;* in which place it is observable, that the *Tast* of *Gentian, Colocynthis,* and divers other *Bodies,* is then considerably strong, when not at all perceived at the *Tip* of the *Tongue* or in any other *Part.*

Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Tt3v (284).

¹¹⁹ See Charles Burnett, ‘The Superiority of Taste,’ 232.

¹²⁰ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Ss4v (280).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Ss5r (281).

¹²² *Ibid.*, D2r (13).

‘tast may be diversified [i.e. rendered diverse, altered]’ by changing the texture of the flavour particles.¹²³ If a change in texture results in an alteration in the taste of a substance, Boyle suggests, then it is possible to deduce a causal relation between corpuscularian form and flavour. His method of demonstrating this is to mix together distinctly flavoured substances to produce radically different tastes, explaining the transformation as a result of the ‘various justlings and occursions’ of the newly mixed flavour particles. These ‘justlings’ work to ‘recompose’ or reform the particles into new sizes and shapes, thus producing new flavours.¹²⁴ Boyle includes numerous experiments to illustrate this principle, recording, for example, that ‘aqua fortis’ (that is, nitric acid diluted in water) will taste ‘bitter as Gall’ when mixed with refined silver, but ‘of a Saccharine sweetness’ when mixed with lead.

Boyle also refers, however, to domestic and social experience. In a section on how ‘to imitate by Art... the peculiar Tasts of natural Bodies’ included in the *Experiments, notes, &c.*, Boyle divulges an interest in the quotidian culinary and cosmetic arts.¹²⁵ The final example which he gives comes from ‘some ingenious Ladies,’ and it instructs readers how to perfume Malaga or Canary wine with the ‘odoriferous’ roots of ‘Orrice’ (iris).¹²⁶ Boyle reports how, having tried this himself, and then dyed the wine with ‘Cocheneele, or some such tingeing ingredient,’ he tricked ‘a couple of eminent Physicians, one of whom pretended to an extraordinary criticalness of palate’ into ‘wondering, how at such an unlikely time of the year... I could have such excellent Rasberry-Wine.’¹²⁷ As a lesson in ingenious huswifery, the anecdote contains a covert riposte to detractors of the Royal Society, who criticized their interests as having no practical value.¹²⁸ It is also, of course, intentionally funny, and provides a glimpse of the playful side of a figure whose aristocratic position and reputation for formidable learning and moral rectitude, can seem intimidating. Concurrently, it gives off a whiff of cruelty: the physician’s claims to ‘an extraordinary criticalness of palate’ may well be a pretentious affectation but gustatory acuity was also a basic constituent of professional competency for medical practitioners. Most importantly here, both Boyle’s experiments

¹²³ Boyle, *Experiments*, B2r (19).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, A4v (10).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, B5r (25).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, B6v (28).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, B7r (29). The section as a whole bears out Francis Bacon’s observation, in the *Advancement*, that ‘the deceiving of the senses, is one of the pleasures of the senses.’ Bacon, *The two bookees*, L14v (44).

¹²⁸ Elsewhere, Boyle makes the claim that natural philosophy will increase the gustatory pleasures and salutary benefits of food and drink: ‘by teaching Men to improve the wholesomeness and tasts of the Aliments, or to keep them long uncorrupted... the Naturalist may contribute to the preservation of Man’s health.’ Boyle, *Some considerations*, O1r (113).

into the changeable nature of tastes, and the directives included in the section on how ‘to imitate by Art... the peculiar Tastes of natural Bodies,’ contribute to a cumulative sense of flavour as radically unstable, manipulable, and variable. As such, they undermine the link between tastes and the innate qualities of the material world, that undergirded taste’s utility as a faculty of experimental and empirical knowledge-production for botanists and chemists, as well as for pompous physicians.

Boyle’s ‘orrice’ root anecdote is also significant because it provides an illustration of the extent to which chemistry and botany drew, in their early stages, on the domiciliary knowledge and techniques belonging to women.¹²⁹ Chemistry’s affiliation to the esotericism of alchemy is matched by its kinship to the more quotidian culinary and cosmetic arts; similarly, botany can trace its origins to the herbal lore accumulated by domestic, as well as professional, practitioners of physic.¹³⁰ This genealogy often surfaces obliquely, in metaphors which use the kinds of tacit knowledge which underscore domestic and culinary expertise as points of comparison for experimental processes.¹³¹ In *The history of the Royal-Society*, for example, Sprat describes how to make gunpowder: the salt-peter that is one of its main ingredients, he specifies, must be ‘dissolved in as much water as will just take it up, and then the water must be boiled away till the *Peter* comes to the thickness of hasty-pudding.’¹³² When early Royal Society members confronted this relation to traditionally female and domestic realms, they strove to frame it as a matter of macho domination. Conventionally, nature is gendered as female: thus, in *Some considerations touching the usefulness*, for example, Boyle

¹²⁹ For example, a young Thomas Willis – later known as the most successful physician in England – spent his undergraduate years as a servitor in the household of Dr Thomas Iles. Here, Iles’ wife – ‘a knowing woman in physique and surgery,’ according to John Aubrey – would ‘oftentimes have him [Willis] to assist her in making of medicines.’ Robert L. Martensen, ‘Willis, Thomas (1621–1675),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 27 May 2013, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29587. See also Steven Turner and Rebecca Laroche, ‘Robert Boyle, Hannah Woolley, and Syrup of Violets,’ *Notes and Queries* 58/3 (2011): 390-91.

¹³⁰ On women’s influence on early modern natural philosophy and on the development of experimental science, see the essays collected in Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton, eds., *Women, Science and Medicine 1500-1700* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997). In their introduction to the volume, Hunter and Hutton argue that ‘oeconomics... involved the practice of what we would now think of as physical and organic chemistry, as well as all aspects of preventative medicine and of pharmacy. The technology with which they [i.e. women] worked became a fundamental part of the emerging experimental methodology.’ Hunter and Hutton, ‘Women, Science and Medicine,’ in *Women, Science and Medicine*, 2. On the intimate relation between culinary and chemical techniques, and on Robert Boyle’s ambivalent and appropriative relation to the female authority in these realms, see especially Lynette Hunter, ‘Sisters of the Royal Society: The Circle of Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh,’ in *Women, Science and Medicine*, 178-97.

¹³¹ On tacit knowledge, see Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), especially 50-52.

¹³² Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society*, Mm4r (279).

asserts of 'Physiologie' that it 'is not only Delightful, as it teaches us to Know Nature, but also as it teaches us in many Cases to Master and Command her.'¹³³

Conversely, however, forms of knowledge traditionally gendered as female could resist, and even pose a threat to, experimental science in its embryonic stages. Margaret Cavendish is an important figure here. Cavendish's well-documented fascination with natural philosophy in general, and the new empirical and experimental methodologies advocated by the Royal Society in particular, is tempered by scepticism, especially regarding the practical utility of the Society's interests, and the accuracy of their instruments.¹³⁴ Her criticisms of the Society, moreover, are frequently expressed in terms which privilege the culinary and the domestic as a source of scientific knowledge. At points in her *Observations upon experimental philosophy*, she attempts to legitimize her censure of Society celebrities such as Hooke by framing it in almost maternal tones, as an extension of parental authority: 'as Boys that play with watry Bubbles, or fling Dust into each others Eyes... are worthy of reproof rather than praise; for wasting their time with useless sports,' she counsels sternly, 'so those that addict themselves to unprofitable Arts, spend more time then they reap benefit thereby.'¹³⁵ The marginal notes, which gloss 'Bubbles' as 'Glass-tubes,' and 'Dust' as 'Atomes,' make no secret of the targets of her punitive instincts.

Peter Dear discusses Cavendish's argument that microscopic evidence is unreliable, and distorts the world it pretends to expose. In *Micrographia*, Hooke had demonstrated how, under the microscope, the point of a needle appears rounded, and the apparently sharp edge of a razor blunt.¹³⁶ 'But if the edge of a knife, or point of a needle were naturally and really so as the microscope presents them,' Cavendish objects in the *Observations*, 'they would never be so useful as they are; for a flat or broad plain-edged knife would not cut, nor a blunt globe pierce so suddenly another body.'¹³⁷ As Dear notes, Cavendish is convinced 'that ordinary human perceptions of the world are the absolute and normative ones – especially when associated with usefulness.'¹³⁸

¹³³ Boyle, *Some considerations*, D2r (19).

¹³⁴ 'I have but little faith... in Telescopical, Microscopical, and the like inspections, and prefer rational and judicious Observations before deluding Glasses and Experiments,' Cavendish writes. Furthermore, 'I cannot perceive any great advantage' she claims, in 'the lately invented Art of Micrography.' Her assertion that 'inspection of the exterior parts of Vegetables, doth not give us any knowledg how to Sow, Set, Plant, and Graft; so that a Gardener or Husbandman will gain no advantage at all by this Art' seems particularly pertinent to Grew. Cavendish, *Observations*, b1r, c2v, and d1r.

¹³⁵ Cavendish, *Observations*, D2r (11).

¹³⁶ Hooke, *Micrographia*, B1r-C1r (1-5).

¹³⁷ Cavendish, *Observations*, D1r (9).

¹³⁸ Peter Dear, 'A Philosophical Duchess: Understanding Margaret Cavendish and the Royal Society,' in Cummins and Burchell, eds., *Science, Literature, and Rhetoric*, 136.

Cavendish, however, does not only pitch domestic experience against microscopical evidence as a source of knowledge about the material world: she also implicitly tests the tactile against the visual, valorizing the *palpable* cutting and piercing of blade and needle over their *appearance* of bluntness. For Cavendish, then, the contest between domestic and proto-scientific experience as sources of knowledge is also framed in sensory terms: here, as the antagonism of touch and sight. Elsewhere, however, Cavendish pitches the doubtful ocular authority of the microscope not only against the tactile experience of the razorblade- or needle-wielder, but also against the culinary and gustatory expertise of ‘good-huswives.’ Again, Cavendish takes umbrage with Hooke specifically. In *Micrographia*, Hooke had recorded ‘certain little baggs, bladders, or receptacles’ attached to the ‘stinging points’ of nettles; these bags, he asserted, were ‘full of water, or as I gness, the liquor of the Plant, which was poisonous.’¹³⁹ Cavendish is not impressed: against ‘the opinion of those, who believe that the swelling, burning, and smarting pain caused by the stinging of Nettles and Bees, doth proceed from a poisonous juice,’ Cavendish reminds the reader that ‘it is commonly known, that Nettles, when young, are often-times eaten in Sallets, and minced into Broths... whereas, if there were any poison in them, the interior parts of animal bodies, after eating them, would swell and burn.’¹⁴⁰ According to the redoubtable Cavendish, quotidian culinary expertise and gustatory experience provide a corrective counterpart to the epistemological presumption of ocularcentric science.

Cavendish’s gender, and her reputation as something of an eccentric, prevented her criticisms of the Royal Society’s methods from having any substantial repercussions; Thomas Shadwell’s satirical caricature of Hooke as the absurd, obsessive experimentalist Sir Nicholas Gimcrack in his 1676 play *The Virtuoso*, apparently had rather more impact. (Famously, Hooke returned from a performance of Shadwell’s play in state of extreme disgruntlement: ‘damned dogs,’ he wrote in his diary that evening, ‘people almost pointed. *Vindica Me Deus*.’¹⁴¹) Nonetheless, Cavendish’s criticisms had the potential to be rather more devastating than Shadwell’s sardonic, but ultimately personal, defamation, for in criticising the microscope as deceptive and distorting, she attacked the very instruments by which early Royal Society members argued they had repaired what was believed to be the natural inaccuracy of the postlapsarian senses. As

¹³⁹ Hooke, *Micrographia*, V6r (143).

¹⁴⁰ Cavendish, *Observations*, F2v (20).

¹⁴¹ For Hooke’s response to the play, see Rhodri Lewis, ‘Robert Hooke at 371,’ *Perspectives on Science* 14/4 (2006): 558.

Hooke writes in the preface to *Micrographia*, ‘by the addition of... *artificial Instruments* and *methods*, there may be, in some manner, a reparation made for the mischiefs, and imperfection, mankind has drawn upon it self.’ Specifically, ‘in respect of the Senses,’ Hooke advocates ‘a supplying of their infirmities with *Instruments*, and, as it were, the adding of *artificial Organs* to the *natural*; this in one of them has been of late years accomplisht with prodigious benefit to all sorts of useful knowledge, by the invention of Optical Glasses.’¹⁴² Hooke goes on to predict that just ‘as *Glasses* have highly promoted our *seeing*, so ’tis not improbable, but that there may be found many *Mechanical Inventions* to improve our other Senses, of *hearing, smelling, tasting, touching*.’¹⁴³ Most pertinently here, Hooke suggests:

that our *taste* may be very much improv’d, either by *preparing* our tast for the Body, as, after eating *bitter* things, *Wine*, or other *Vinous liquors*, are more sensibly tasted; or else by *preparing* Bodies for our tast; as the dissolving of Metals with acid Liquors, make them tastable, which were before altogether insipid.¹⁴⁴

Whilst Hooke’s proposals for the artificial enhancement of the sense of taste remain at the level of tentative conjecture, for Grew they provided a possible way to resolve the tension that this chapter has been tracing. As he himself was aware, Grew’s belief that the flavours of plants fluctuate according to circumstances including location, age, and the composition of the individual’s tongue, compromised his desire to discover the salutary uses of organic substances by identifying their tastes. If flavours are variable, how can they provide a consistently reliable guide to the properties of plants? Grew attempts to resolve the conflict between his mechanistic conception of tastes as contingent on the human taste organs, on the one hand, and his efforts to affix them decisively to medical functions, on the other, by prescribing methods of tasting that are supposed to improve the accuracy of the sense of taste. To achieve the end of ‘the more accurate *Observation*’ of (in this case, compounded) tastes, for example, Grew advises ‘that not too many be tasted at one time: least the *Tongue* being surcharged, become less critical’ and ‘that the *Mouth* be washed with warm water betwixt every tasting.’¹⁴⁵ So far, so commonsensical. A closer examination, however, reveals the fault-lines in Grew’s

¹⁴² Hooke, *Micrographia*, a1r.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, b3v.

¹⁴⁴ Hooke, *Micrographia*, b4r-v.

¹⁴⁵ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Tt1r (281).

reasoning. Grew advises that in order to perceive accurately ‘the degrees’ of different tastes:

it will be best, To take those *Bodies*, whose *Tasts* are, as near as may be, the same in *Specie*: and that those be first tasted, which are less strong; whereby the true *Degree* will be more precisely taken.¹⁴⁶

His logic is circular. In order to observe the degrees of tastes, Grew recommends starting with those which are ‘less durable’ and ‘which are less strong,’ presupposing a prior knowledge of precisely the gradations of duration and degree that this method of tasting is supposed to identify. Despite Grew’s best methodological efforts, *The anatomy of plants* remains riven by a fundamental conflict between utopian ambition, according to which identifying the flavours of plants will allow the development of medicines able to restore bodily health to something approaching prelapsarian vigour, and the subjective realities of taste, according to which the relations between flavours and the qualities of things (and thus, their medicinal value) are convoluted at best and non-existent at worst.

V. ‘*sweeter and more plausible Studies*’

In this chapter, I have argued that Grew’s work testifies to an unresolved discord between its author’s desire to categorically determine correlations between the flavours of plants and their medicinal virtues, and his understanding of tastes as circumstantial and contingent, produced jointly by tasting subject and tasted object. This dichotomy represents a wider tension in the early Royal Society. On the one hand, uses of taste to generate data about the material world were bolstered by taste’s prior epistemological associations with acts of testing and intimate experiential knowledge, as well as by the suggestion, influenced both by Parascelian medical theory and Protestant rhetoric, that acts of natural historical tasting could serve as a redemptive reversal of Adam and Eve’s tasting of the fruit of knowledge. On the other hand, investigations into how taste works as a physiological process – especially, into how the tongue receives tastes – led to a more complicated sense of taste experiences as shaped by a range of factors, including the specific form of an individual’s taste organs. In the mechanistic, tactile

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Tt1v (282).

theories of gustation adopted by Grew, and by contemporaries including Boyle, Willis, and van Leeuwenhoek, taste – and thus the data it produces – is deeply subjective.

It is subjective, moreover, in a way which challenges conventional ideas about what subjectivity is, and its implications for natural knowledge. In particular, early Royal Society ideas about taste highlight the applicability of the notion of embodied subjectivity, which scholars of the passions have explored productively, to epistemology. In a recent article on ‘The Sciences of Subjectivity,’ Steven Shapin notes that, whilst historians have increasingly recognised the role of subjectivity in the production of scientific knowledge, they continue to approach it as ‘a philosophical trouble,’ something which ‘pollutes objective knowledge.’¹⁴⁷ Against this approach, Shapin embarks on an analysis of taste as ‘one among many practices of subjectivity.’¹⁴⁸ Shapin suggests that ideas about aesthetic taste amongst eighteenth-century philosophers including Hume and Kant, according to whom taste is subjective, but also has the potential to become *intersubjective*, are ‘instructive’ for historians of science.¹⁴⁹ In particular, he proposes that in the cases of both aesthetic and scientific taste, the appearance of objectivity is produced out of intersubjectivity, or the consensus of ‘taste communities.’¹⁵⁰ This allows us to appreciate how scientific judgement may work analogously to – indeed, may even be a form of – connoisseurship.¹⁵¹

Scientific taste thus serves as another weapon in the important and instructive war that Shapin has long been waging against positivism, presentism, and objectivism in the history and sociology of science. I would add, however, that Shapin’s emphasis on the development of tastes as a process of learnt enculturation reflects a presumption that the subjectivity of taste is primarily social. For Shapin, both subjectivity and objectivity are social constructs: ‘hard political and cultural work,’ rather than epistemological facts.¹⁵² Shapin shares with sensory historiography more generally a belief that, as Mark Jenner puts it, ‘cultural frames, screens, grids, or lenses mediate perception.’¹⁵³ As Jenner argues, ‘this kind of approach misses entirely how sensing is not only shaped by cultural categories, but also is and was part of an individual’s active engagement with, and participation in, the world.’¹⁵⁴ For Grew and his contemporaries,

¹⁴⁷ Shapin, ‘Sciences of Subjectivity,’ 171.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁵³ Jenner, ‘Tasting Lichfield,’ 669.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 670. See also Jenner, ‘Follow Your Nose?’ 348-51.

it is also a function of an individual's physiology. The subjectivity of judgements of taste does not reside in the interpretation of sense data in accordance with socio-cultural expectations and ideals. Rather, taste is a form of embodied subjectivity, attributable in part to the particular configuration of an individual's specific sense organs. This kind of embodied subjectivity is, for key figures within early natural science, a necessary – if deeply problematic – condition of knowledge derived from sensation.

In the introduction to their edited collection *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, Pamela Smith and Benjamin Schmidt comment that in the seventeenth century ‘the distinction between sensuality and sensory observation could be a fine one.’¹⁵⁵ Indeed, both Sprat and Hooke place a heavy emphasis on the ‘sensible *pleasure*,’ as Sprat puts it, as well as the epistemological and practical value, of experimental philosophy; ‘what raptures’ Sprat enthuses, ‘can the most *voluptuous* men fancy to which these are not equal?’¹⁵⁶ Similarly, for Hooke, ‘*Experimental Philosophy*... [is] a *material* and *sensible Pleasure*.’¹⁵⁷ Often, the language of sweetness is used to express this pleasure; ‘great mens Children,’ argues Sprat, ‘should be charm’d by the allurements, of *sweeter* and more *plausible Studies*. And for this purpose *Experiments* are the fittest.’¹⁵⁸ Like humanist learning, experimental philosophy is *dulce*, as well as *utile*. For experimentalists concerned with taste, this is sometimes literally the case; not everything tasted by Grew, Boyle, van Leeuwenhoek and their fellows was an occasion for revulsion. Sugar, writes van Leeuwenhoek in a letter to the Royal Society, ‘proves even smooth and soft upon the Tongue, affecting it with pleasure.’¹⁵⁹ ‘The sweet savour,’ writes Thomas Willis, ‘seems to be made, for as much as the Particles of any Body are so figured, into soft prickles, that they tickle the Sensory, with a soft rubbing, and from thence stir up a delightful Sense of Pleasure; like as if feathers were applied to the Sides, or the Soles of the Feet.’¹⁶⁰ Echoing Helkiah Crooke’s description of taste, in his 1615

¹⁵⁵ Pamela Schmidt and Benjamin Smith, ‘Knowledge and its Making in Early Modern Europe,’ in Smith and Schmidt, eds., *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Objects and Texts, 1400-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 14.

¹⁵⁶ Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society*, Uu4v (344).

¹⁵⁷ Hooke, *Micrographia*, d3r.

¹⁵⁸ Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society*, Fff1r (409).

¹⁵⁹ Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, ‘Other Microscopical Observations... about the Texture of the Blood, the Sap of Some Plants, the Figure of Sugar and Salt, and the Probable Cause of the Difference of Their Tasts,’ in *Philosophical Transactions* 10 (1675): 384.

¹⁶⁰ Willis, *Two discourses*, K1v (66).

Mikrokosmographia, as the ‘Sense of pleasure’ (discussed in chapter 2), Willis names sweetness as the archetypal pleasurable sensation, and underscores the haptic dimensions of his description: his characteristically corpuscularian mingling of taste and tactility is playfully sensual. The sensual pleasures of sweetness, however, are founded on – and always have the potential to revert to – something quite different: acidity. In Grew’s words, sweetness is:

produced.... most commonly, by a smoothed *Acid*... Hence a *Sweet Taste*, is generally founded in a Sower; So Sower *Apples*, by mellowing, and harsh *Pears*, by baking become sweet; the *Spirit* and *Sulphur* being hereby at once separated from the other *Principles* and brought to a nearer union with the *Acid*.¹⁶¹

Sweetness, then, is founded on and enfolds its opposite: acidity, perceived by the palate as sourness. Conversely, as Thomas Willis writes, ‘there are many Instances, by which sweetness is abolished; for all sweet things too much boiled, grow bitter.’¹⁶² The sensual pleasure of sweetness, and the bitterness that lurks behind this pleasure, threatening to reassert itself, will be relevant in my next chapter. Shifting the focus from sensory observation to sensuality, I will explore seventeenth-century love poetry and drama through the lens of the ubiquitous pairing of sweet and bitter to describe the antithetical, but also intimately imbricated, experiences of sexual desire and betrayal.

¹⁶¹ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Tt5v (288).

¹⁶² Willis, *Two discourses*, K2r (67).

CHAPTER 5

‘Honey secrets’:

Erotic Sweetness and Epistemology

I. ‘honey secrets’

Early in Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* (1593), the eponymous Goddess begins her wooing of the resistant Adonis by asking him to alight from his horse. ‘If thou wilt deign this favour,’ she promises, ‘for thy meed / A thousand honey secrets shalt thou know.’¹ Venus’ depiction of the delights she proffers as ‘honey secrets’ unites the gustatory pleasures of sweetness both with erotic pleasure, and with the epistemological satisfaction of knowing ‘secrets.’² Later in the poem, Adonis adopts Venus’ vocabulary of taste to emphasise his unreadiness for fornication. ‘Before I know myself,’ he pleads, ‘seek not to know me,’ for ‘the mellow plum doth fall, the green sticks fast, / Or being early plucked is sour to taste’ (l.525-28). Adonis punningly entreats Venus to refrain from attempting to ‘know’ him sexually before he ‘knows’ himself in the fuller sense recommended by the common epigram and moral imperative *nosce teipsum*.³ The state of maturity that ought to precede sexual knowledge is figured as a transformation of taste: premature consummation will be sour.⁴

For the seductress Venus and her reluctant beloved Adonis, the discourses of desire are intimately bound up both with the sense of taste, and with questions of knowledge. In this, they reflect what this chapter identifies as a wider early modern fascination with the imbrications of eroticism, gustation, and epistemology.⁵ One early

¹ William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, in Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen, eds., *Shakespeare’s Poems*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Cengage, 2007), l.15-16. All subsequent line references (in-text) are to this edition.

² A pun on ‘meed’ as reward, and as the honeyed drink, ‘mead’ underscores the association of sexual and gustatory pleasure.

³ Coppélia Kahn notices Adonis’ pun on ‘know’ as sexual and self-knowledge, but interprets it as evidence of his inability to recognise that he cannot ‘know what his self is by isolating it from the experiences that help to form it.’ Kahn, *Man’s Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 40.

⁴ In his *Phenomenal Shakespeare*, Bruce Smith notes in passing that the epigraph from Ovid’s *Amores* that introduces all editions of the poem from 1593 to 1675 (in Marlowe’s translation, cited by Smith: ‘Let base conceited wits admire vile things, / Fair Phoebus lead me to the Muses’ springs’) presents the ‘carnal knowledge’ that the poem offers as ‘knowledge that can be *tasted*.’ Smith does not, however, elaborate on this observation. *Phenomenal Shakespeare* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 101.

⁵ Chris Meads notes a pervasive dramatic association between alimentary and erotic appetites in *Banquets Set Forth: Banqueting in English Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 29.

modern meaning of ‘taste’ (now obsolete), is instructive: as a verb, the word could be used to mean ‘to have carnal knowledge of.’⁶ In Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* (1611; 1623), for example, Posthumus challenges Iachimo to test Cymbeline’s fidelity: ‘If you can mak’t apparant / That you have tasted her in Bed; my hand, / And Ring is yours.’⁷ As we shall see, this notional and lexical association between taste and sex derives, in part, from the low status of both, their joint status as base appetitive desires. As the *OED*’s use of the King James Bible’s euphemism for intercourse – carnal *knowledge* – suggests, however, taste and sex are also allied insofar as they are both ways of knowing.⁸

Following Foucault’s seminal *The History of Sexuality*, much of the historiography of erotic desire and pleasure in recent decades has been premised on a fundamental distinction between sex, understood as a basic biological act, and sexuality, understood as a product of social and cultural forces and a constituent of personal identity.⁹ Whilst the former is, in David Halperin’s words, ‘a natural fact, grounded in the functioning of the human body,’ the latter is ‘a cultural effect... [and] a principle of individuation in human natures.’¹⁰ Because it is a mere ‘somatic fact,’ Halperin argues, ‘sex has no history’; it is ‘a matter for the evolutionary biologist, not for the historian.’¹¹ Sexuality, by contrast ‘*does* have a history,’ albeit a rather short one.¹² According to Halperin, the notion that erotic desires and behaviours form a distinct feature of one’s subjective identity (that is, one’s ‘sexuality’) simply did not exist before the nineteenth century.¹³ In line with this Foucauldian chronology, a number of new historicist and cultural materialist studies of early modern England have traced relations between sexual behaviours and attitudes, and the civil, ecclesiastical, economic, and pedagogical power structures that are presumed to determine those attitudes and behaviours.¹⁴ What unites

⁶ ‘Taste, v.’ *OED Online*, accessed 26 March 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/198052.

⁷ William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. J. M. Nosworthy, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Routledge, 1998), II.iv.56-58. Another example of ‘taste’ as a synonym for carnal experience can be found in Robert Greene’s translation of Orazio Rinaldi’s *The Royal Exchange*, in which he lists the ‘foure degrees in Love,’ namely ‘1. Talke. 2. Be conversant. 3. Taste. 4. Possesse.’ Rinaldi, *The Royal Exchange*, trans. Robert Greene (London: I. Charlewood for William Wright, 1590), A4r.

⁸ Katharine Eisaman Maus comments on the lop-sidedness of the euphemism: ‘men “know” their wives, but the expression is not reciprocal.’ Maus, ‘Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body,’ in James Turner, ed., *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 274.

⁹ Foucault argues that sexuality is a ‘set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours, and social relations by... a complex political technology.’ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 127.

¹⁰ David Halperin, ‘Is There a History of Sexuality?’ *History and Theory* 28/3 (1989): 257.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 257 n. 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 257.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 269. Halperin cites Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 43.

¹⁴ See, for example, James Turner, ed., *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe*; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Richard Rambuss, *Closest Devotions* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999). As Bruce Smith puts it in his article ‘Premodern

such studies is a presumption that sexuality is only historically interesting (or visible) as a product of ideology and an implement of institutional authority.¹⁵ Correspondingly, sex is almost entirely ignored.

Against this elision of the somatic – and particularly, of sensation – Bruce Smith advocates ‘erotic desire’ as the paradigmatic object of historical phenomenology. As ‘an extreme example’ of sense experience, Smith contends, sex resists objectification, highlighting ‘the basic premise of phenomenology... you cannot know anything apart from the way in which you come to know it.’¹⁶ Responding to Smith’s insistence that ‘texts not only represent bodily experience; they imply it in the ways they ask to be touched, seen, heard, even smelled and tasted,’ and that the task of historical phenomenology is to account for these ‘presence effects,’ this chapter proposes that sex *does* have a history.¹⁷ This history, moreover, unfolds not only as shifts in how sexual practices are constructed by and conceptualized within the cultural realm, but also as transformations in how sexual acts are experienced by embodied subjects. For early modern authors, to write about sex was to write about the senses: their pleasures, their dangers, and the forms of knowledge they offer.¹⁸ Straddling, blurring, and sometimes dissolving altogether the line between nature and culture that the sex/sexuality distinction depends on, the senses offer a new way to think about erotic desire and pleasure: one which is both attentive to the immediacy of lived experience, and historically aware. An account growing out of this approach might be helpfully conceived of not as a history of sexuality but rather as a history of sensuality.

It is my contention that an omnipresent association between sexual pleasure and the sense of taste is one distinctive feature of early modern sensuality, as it is refracted through texts across a range of genres. It is almost impossible to overstate the extent to which representations of desire and its satisfaction linger on the erotic pleasures, not only of sight and touch, but also of gustation. In particular, the language of sweetness is ubiquitous; so ubiquitous, in fact, that it can seem meaningless or bland – mere metrical filler. Towards the end of Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, however, we find a moment which reminds us that that ‘sweet’ not only serves as a generic word for that

Sexualities,’ it has... become axiomatic that sexuality, premodern or otherwise, is a function of ideology.’ Smith, ‘Premodern Sexualities,’ *PMLA* 115/3 (2000): 320.

¹⁵ Smith, ‘Premodern Sexualities,’ 320.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 325.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 325-26.

¹⁸ Indeed, following the Italian scholar and physician Julius Caesar Scaliger, some authors, including Francis Bacon and John Cleveland, thought of sexual pleasure itself as a sixth sense, involving aspects of the other five. See Daniel P. Jaeckle, ‘The Sixth Sense in Cleveland’s “The Hecatomb to his Mistress,”’ *Notes and Queries* 54/4 (2007): 412.

which is pleasant or attractive, but also designates a distinctive flavour associated with specific foodstuffs. In response to Berowne's plea for 'one sweet word with thee,' the masked Princess (who Berowne believes to be his adored Rosalind) replies: 'Hony, and Milke, and suger: there is three.'¹⁹ 'Sweet,' grown insipid through reiteration, is restored to gustatory immediacy by the Princess' witty literalism.

Perhaps the most conspicuous manifestation of the early modern association between taste and desire is the characterisation, most obviously in Petrarchan sonnet sequences and pastoral verse, of the beloved as a consumable, usually constituted of sweet fruit, honey and sugar. In Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (1591), for example, Astrophil is jealous that Stella's dog is licensed to 'tast of those sugred lips' whilst he is not.²⁰ In early modern England as today, this kind of language was strongly gendered: Joan Thirsk and Kim F. Hall have both described a broad cultural equation between women and sweet things.²¹ At once avid consumers and industrious producers of sweetness, women were thought to crave sugary tastes more keenly than men; simultaneously, they served as domestic manufacturers of marchpane, suckets, and other sweetmeats. The saccharine vocabulary of Sidney and his fellow sonneteers, then, might be read as the textual residue of sense experiences: ingredients used in the cosmetics that women used to paint their faces were often edible, and recipe books include instructions on how to prepare 'kissing comfits' which served not only to counter bad breath but also to flavour the mouth. John Murrell's 1617 *A daily exercise for ladies and gentlewomen*, for example, contains a recipe 'to make Muscadinaes, commonly called kissing-Comfits,' by beating 'halfe a pound of double refined Sugar' with musk, ambergris, and iris-root powder to form a paste, which would then be rolled out and cut into 'litle Lozenges.'²² The salacious associations of these kinds of sweets are evident in Phillip Massinger's *A Very Woman*, first published in 1655, in which Almira challenges her brother to 'search our pockets, and if you find there / Comfits of Amber-greece to

¹⁹ Shakespeare, *Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*, M3v (138). To a modern reader, the inclusion of milk alongside sugar and honey might seem odd. Henry Buttes offers one explanation, suggesting that it was habitual, for health reasons, to mingle the former with the latter: 'A litle afore you take it [i.e. milk], put into it some... sugar, or hony, least it curdle in the stomacke.' Buttes, *Diets dry dinner*, N2v. Another explanation is that the Princess takes Berowne's use of 'sweet' in the wider sense of 'free from offensive or disagreeable taste or smell' 'sweet, adj. and adv.' *OED Online*, accessed 15 February 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/195665.

²⁰ Philip Sidney, *Sir P.S. His Astrophil and Stella* (London: John Charlewood for Thomas Newman, 1591), E1r (25).

²¹ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, 80. See also Hall, 'Culinary Spaces,' 168-69.

²² John Murrell, *A daily exercise for ladies and gentlewomen* (London: T. Snodham for the Widow Helme, 1617), F8v-F9r. There is a similar recipe in Robert May's *The accomplisht cook* (London: R.W. for Nathaniel Brooke, 1660), T1r (257).

help our kisses, / Conclude us faulty.²³ Almira's indignant rejection of comfits indexes her pride in her chastity; the culinary and cultural prominence of these aids to osculation, however, encourages us to recognize the possibility that the lips of Stella and her 'real' counterparts did taste sugary.

Conversely, the experiences of sexual jealousy, rejection, and betrayal are overwhelmingly described as characterised by bitterness, particularly in the early poetic anthologies.²⁴ Thus, in Thomas Wyatt's 'The lover sheweth how he is forsaken' (the version of 'They flee from me...' included in *Tottel's Miscellany*), the narrator decries that 'all is turnde now... Into a bitter fashion of forsaking'; in a 'complaint upon Love' included in the same volume, Wyatt laments that 'much aloes, and gall, / In bitternesse, my blinde life hath ytasted.'²⁵ Again, the temptation to read this kind of language as metaphorical should be countered by an attention to the ways in which authors associate love's bitterness with the flavoured fluids of the humoral body, including gall, but especially tears: an anonymous poem included in *Tottel's Miscellany*, 'The lover accusing his love for her unfaithfulnesse,' laments 'the bitter teares, / That I in vaine have wasted' on the traitorous lady; 'my lips taste nought but teares,' writes the author of an unattributed poem on confounded love included in the 1602 anthology *A poetical rhapsody*.²⁶

The literary association between sensations of sweetness and bitterness, and the pleasures and pains of sexual love, then, has some grounding in early modern material and culinary practices. Simultaneously, it is deeply conventional, with precedents in the classical and scriptural traditions. Two sources from these traditions, in particular, proved influential: Ovidian poetry, and the canticles.²⁷ These works had been available

²³ Philip Massinger, *A Very Woman* (London: for Humphrey Moseley, 1655), O1r (3). Kissing comfits also make appearances in Richard Brathwaite, *Natures embassie* (London: for Richard Whitaker, 1611), sig E5v (106); Richard Brathwaite, *A comment upon the two tales of our ancient, renowned, and ever-living poet Sr Jeffray Chaucer* (London: W. Godbid for Peter Dring, 1665), D6v (44); John Harington, *An apologie* (London: R. Field, 1596), M3r; John Taylor, *A preter-pluperfect spicke and span new nocturnall* (1643), A2v; and John Webster, *The tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy* (London: Nicholas Okes for John Waterson, 1623), L4v.

²⁴ The opposition of bitter and sweet in relation to love has classical precedents. In his *Amores*, Ovid writes that 'Plato calls love "something bitter," and correctly so, because whoever loves dies. Orpheus calls it "bitter-sweet", because love is voluntary death. In so far as it is death, it is bitter, and in so far as it is voluntary, it is sweet.' (*De amore*, ii. 8, pp. I43-44). Cited in Martin Wheeler, "'The object whereto all his actions tend": George Chapman's *Ovids Banquet of Sense* and the Thrill of the Chase,' *The Modern Language Review* 101/2 (2006): 333.

²⁵ Thomas Wyatt, 'The lover sheweth how he is forsaken,' in *Songes and sonettes* [*Tottel's Miscellany*], G2r.

²⁶ Anon, 'The lover accusing his love for her unfaithfulnesse,' in *Songes and sonettes* [*Tottel's Miscellany*], T1r; Anon, 'Hee paints out his Torments,' in Francis Davison, *A poetical rhapsody* (London: V. Simmes for John Baily, 1602), F4r.

²⁷ On these 'classical connections,' see Uwe Baumann, 'Food, Famine, Appetites and Eroticism in Plays by William Shakespeare and his Contemporaries,' in Marion Gymnich and Norbert Lennartz, eds., *The Pleasures and Horrors of Eating: The Cultural History of Eating in Anglophone Literature* (Bonn: Bonn University

in Greek and Latin for some time, and in the seventeenth century Christopher Marlowe's 1602 translation of Ovid's *Amores*, published as *Ovid's elegies*, and Thomas Heywood's 1625 version of his *Ars Amatoria*, published as *Loves schoole*, also made the most explicitly sensual of Ovid's works available to English readers in the vernacular.²⁸ Both works highlight the sensuality of tasting. In the fourth Elegy included in *Ovid's elegies*, Ovid anticipates a banquet at which both his mistress, and her husband, will be present: 'When thou hast tasted,' he advises his lover, 'I will take the cup, / And where thou drink'st, on that part I will sup.'²⁹ Tasting is charged with erotic potential, serving as a publically acceptable substitute for the forbidden intimacies of kissing. *Loves schoole* similarly stresses the erotically incendiary effects of banqueting and, especially, of wine consumption: 'In wine is lust and rancknes of desire, / Joine wine and love, and you adde fire to fire.'³⁰ The Song of Songs, of course, is a very different kind of text: its sensuality is scriptural and – traditionally – allegorical, rather than pagan.³¹ Nonetheless, the pulsatingly sensual language of canticles offered an influential model for secular love poets, repeatedly associating the attractions of the beloved with those offered by quintessential objects of smell and taste including grapes, apples, pomegranates, honey, milk, wine, and 'all the chief spices.'³² Early modern translations preserve, and in some cases extend, this conflation of gustatory and sexual appetites.³³

In this chapter, my investigation of taste as a mode of sexual knowledge in early modern literature takes two main forms. The first strand confronts the moral status of sexual appetites, especially the ways in which the language of taste is used to reinforce the relation between sensuality and sinfulness. In some contexts, the sweetness of sex is opposed to rational cognition. In others, however, sensual pleasure is supposed to provoke cognition by stimulating the sense of taste. If there is (as Aristotelian

Press, 2010), 65.

²⁸ See Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), for a discussion of Ovid's permeation of Renaissance culture. For a nuanced account of Elizabethan Ovidianism, see Stephen Clucas, 'Banquets of the Senses: Elizabethan Ovidianism and its Discontents,' *EnterText* 3/1 (2003): 31-58, especially 33.

²⁹ Ovid, *Ovid's elegies*, trans. Christopher Marlowe (Middleborough, 1602), A4v.

³⁰ Ovid, *Loves school*, trans. Thomas Heywood (Amsterdam: Nicolas Jansz. Visscher, [c. 1625]), A5r-v (9-10).

³¹ In the prefatory epistles to Francis Quarles' 'periphras'd' version of the Song of Songs, *Sions sonets* (1625), Quarles denies (apparently disingenuously) the poems' erotic content, assuring the noble dedicatee that 'had these Lines beene loose, and lascivious, I had... pickt out a lesse honorable Patron.' Quarles, *Sions sonets* (London: W. Stansby for Thomas Dewe, 1625), A3r-A4r.

³² See especially 1:2, 1:13, 4:3, 4:11, 4:14.

³³ In Michael Drayton's 1610 translation of 7:9, for instance – given by the KJV as 'the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly' – 'the rooffe' of the beloved's 'sweet mouth, like purest wine doth tast.' Drayton, 'The most excellent Song which was *Salomons*,' in *A beavenly harmonie of spirituell songes* (London, 1610), C2v.

epistemology asserts) nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses, then sensory pleasure, far from detracting from rational thought, in fact provides the mind with material for contemplation. Subsequently, in works by authors including George Chapman and John Cleveland, the language of taste is used to reinforce the suggestion that eroticism possesses a morally redemptive epistemological value.

The question of how far it is possible to truly know another person – in particular, how far it is possible to take a lover’s declarations of passion as an authentic representation of his or her affective experience – haunts early modern love poetry. The second strand of my argument considers the ways in which authors cast the beloved as an archetypal, although frequently frustrating, object of knowledge: he or she simultaneously invites and forbids comprehension. The realm of erotic love thus comes to function as a limiting case for authors to ‘test out’ alternative routes to knowledge – and even, ultimately, different conceptions or definitions of what constitutes knowledge. With its varied epistemological associations, the language of taste is central to this process. In particular, in seventeenth-century works ‘taste’ is often used to suggest that sensuality can promote epistemic mastery of a non-ratiocinative kind; erotic pleasure is opposed to reason, but, through the language of taste, is also associated with other (perhaps more practically useful) forms of knowledge, including rhetorical knowledge.

II. ‘Palats both for sweet, and sowre’

It is undeniable that for many early modern authors, desire is innately opposed to cognition. Such writers use the language of taste in order to evoke gustation’s association with the Fall, suggesting that sensuality is analogous to the original sin, a reprehensible intemperance. Echoing Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, the neo-stoic writer Lodowick Bryskett, for instance, connects taste with wicked concupiscence.³⁴ ‘The virtue of Temperence,’ he writes in his 1606 *A discourse of civill life*, finds its ‘subject’ in:

the *concupiscible* appetite; and she is exercised specially about the senses of tasting and feeling, but chiefly about the wanton lusts of the flesh.... Intemperance

³⁴ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asserted that ‘Temperance and self-indulgence . . . are concerned with the kind of pleasures that the other animals share in, which therefore appear slavish and brutish; these are touch and taste.’ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 56. Quoted in Joseph Moshenska, ‘“Transported Touch”: The Sense of Feeling in Milton’s Eden,’ *English Literary History* 79/1 (2012): 5.

groweth principally (as we have said) out of the tast and the feeling, two senses that make us most like unto brute beasts, if we suffer our selves to be led by them, following our delights as they do: for they corrupt mans prudence, put his mind astray, & take away from him the light of reason.³⁵

Where a modern reader might expect sight to be paired with touch as the two senses most likely to stimulate desire, Bryskett identifies ‘tasting’ as touch’s sensual bedfellow. Bryskett’s entwined disparagement of taste and sensuality follows a strand of thought that can be traced back to the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus’ commentary on Genesis. Philo allegorized Adam as representative of the mind, and Eve as representative of the dangerous allure of the senses; subsequently, some early modern commentators interpreted the originary act of tasting not as an epistemological, but as a sensual sin, motivated less by intellectual curiosity than by bodily lust.³⁶ Thus, in his 1651 *Poems and translations*, Edward Sherburne notes: ‘the apple is the Symbole of Love, and dedicated to *Venus*... *Philo* allegorizeth the Apple of which *Eve* tasted and gave to *Adam*, much to this effect.’³⁷ Carnal pleasure is the forbidden fruit, and tasting it represents the victory of lust over cognition.

Similarly, in his 1604 *The passions of the minde*, Thomas Wright denigrates the lapsarian senses, opposing them to reason. For Wright, the sensual passions are ‘thornie briars sprung from the infected roote of original sinne,’ and the ‘passions and sense are like two naughtie servants, who oft-times beare more love one to an other, than they are obedient to their Maister [i.e. reason].’³⁸ Wright offers strong support for the critical presumption that contempt was the most appropriate (if not always achievable) early modern stance towards sensuality. Recently, however, Christopher Tilmouth has criticised scholars for their over-reliance on *The passions*, arguing that a tendency to accept its claims as representative has led to a ‘homogenizing’ conception of attitudes to the passions in the period.³⁹ In contrast, Tilmouth argues that ‘from the 1620s

³⁵ Lodowick Bryskett, *A discourse of civill life* (London: R. Field for William Aspley, 1606), Bb2r (189). This work is ‘heavily adapted’ from Giambattista Giralaldi Cinthio’s *Tre dialoghi della vita civile*, which is itself the second part of his *De gli hecatommithi* (1565). Richard A. McCabe, ‘Bryskett, Lodowick (c.1546–1609),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 26 July 2011, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3817. See also Christopher Tilmouth, *Passion’s Triumph Over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 25.

³⁶ See Vinge, *The Five Senses*, 22-30, especially 23.

³⁷ Edward Sherburne, *Poems and translations* (London: W. Hunt for Thomas Dring, 1651), E4r (69).

³⁸ Thomas Wright, *The passions of the minde* (London: Valentine Simmes for W. Burre, 1601), B1v (2).

³⁹ Tilmouth, *Passion’s Triumph Over Reason*, 7.

onwards... moralists would increasingly take for granted both the possibility and the moral value of cultivating the passions.’⁴⁰

Whilst I remain wary of a triumphalist reading of the early modern period as culminating in a victory for uninhibited sensuality over a destructive, residual medieval shame, a number of scholars, including most recently Faramerz Dabhoiwala, have argued that phenomena including the Protestant celebration of the sanctioned delights of marital sex and the libertinism of the Restoration court point towards an increased tolerance not only towards the passions, but of the passion of erotic love specifically, in the seventeenth century.⁴¹ It is my contention that the language of taste – and sweetness particularly – played a key role in this process of legitimization. Guillaume Du Vair’s 1598 *The moral philosophie of the Stoicks* provides a revealing counterpart to Bryskett’s *A discourse of civill life*. Whilst Du Vair – in line with his stoic commitments – warns against the dangers of unlicensed desire, he also celebrates its nuptial value. One of the disadvantages of indulging in ‘filthy pleasures’ before marriage, Du Vair warns, is that ‘it makes [sensual pleasures] lose the sweetnesse of marriage which they alone doe taste which have not used it before, a sweetnes which souldereth and knitteth together the friendship of marriage.’⁴² Here, the mutual experience of legitimate sexual pleasure produces a sweetness which works instrumentally to forge conjugal harmony, and so to consolidate moral virtue.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 29. Tilmouth highlights the Protestant elevation of affective piety, and emphasises the Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions as an alternative to stoic orthodoxy. Tilmouth, *Passion’s Triumph Over Reason*, 1-30. See also Richard Strier, ‘Against the Rule of Reason: Praise of Passion from Petrarch to Luther to Shakespeare to Herbert,’ in Paster, Rowe, Floyd-Wilson, eds., *Reading the Early Modern Passions*, 23-24, 32. Many philosophers and moralists do prescribe a happy medium between the extremes of rejection and over-indulgence of the senses and passions represented respectively by Stoicism and Epicureanism. William Jewell, in his 1612 *The golden cabinet of true treasure*, takes a characteristic approach: ‘the honest pleasures and moderate delights, which God doth offer to us,’ he writes, ‘are not either to be rejected or despised.’ Jewell, *The golden cabinet of true treasure* (London: H.L. for John Crosley, 1612), R2v (244).

⁴¹ See Faramerz Dabhoiwala, ‘Lust and Liberty,’ *Past and Present* 207/1 (2010): 89-179, especially 90. For evidence of not only Protestant, but Puritan celebration of marital sex, see Theodore de Wells, ‘Sex and Sexual Attitudes in Seventeenth-Century England: The Evidence from Puritan Diaries,’ *Renaissance and Reformation* 24/1 (1988): 45-69, especially 45-46. See also Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 79-83. On Martin Luther’s conception of marital sex as a route to God, see Gail Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 97. By 1660, a work like *The Practical Part of Love* could make light of the sinfulness of ‘venery’ in a way that would have been unthinkable one hundred years earlier. Anon, *The Practical part of love* (London, 1660), A4r-v.

⁴² Guillaume Du Vair. *The moral philosophie of the Stoicks*, trans. Thomas James (London: Felix Kingston for Thomas Man, 1598), E8v (64). Similarly, for William Gouge, writing in 1622, marital sex, or what (following 1 Cor. 7:3) he calls ‘due benevolence,’ provides a bulwark against the sensory temptations of adultery. William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties* (London: John Haviland for William Bladen, 1622), p7r-v (221-22).

Shakespeare's *Othello* (c.1603; 1622) dramatizes the tension between taste as bestial, sensual appetite, and taste as a mode of discrimination (and as such, a route to intersubjective knowledge). Early in the play, Cassio offers Desdemona an elegant (albeit conventional) compliment. Othello, he says,

hath atchiev'd a Maid
That paragons description and wilde Fame:
One that excels the quirkes of Blazoning pens...⁴³

Cassio implies that Desdemona poses a kind of epistemological challenge: if she cannot be depicted, she also cannot be known.⁴⁴ Indeed, Desdemona's resistance to apprehension is translated, by various male characters, as a dubious secrecy. Noticing this, Stanley Cavell interprets Othello's suspicion of his wife as an expression of epistemological, as well as moral, outrage: it is a response not only to the possibility that he might not possess his wife's chastity, but also to the impossibility of ever knowing, for certain, that he does so.⁴⁵ Other scholars have explored the ways in which Desdemona's body is presented as a mystery which might be understood and controlled if it can be accurately and comprehensively *seen*. Notably, Patricia Parker identifies in the play a 'network of associations' between the female genitalia and hidden knowledge, which prompts in the jealous Othello an 'ocular impulse... a fascination... with exposing what lay hid to the scrutiny of the gaze.'⁴⁶ Because this impulse, which Parker calls 'pornographic,' shares its emphasis on the visual with discourses of spying and state surveillance, Parker suggests, erotic desire and political ambition are linked.⁴⁷

Parker's association of sexual surveillance with ocularcentric regimes of state control is characteristic of new historicism's visual and political preoccupations. The language of *Othello*, however, is not only permeated with visual metaphor; it also interweaves desire, sexual jealousy, and gustation. Take act three, scene three, in which

⁴³ Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*, Ss6v (316).

⁴⁴ H. M. Richmond calls this 'the intangible mistress theme.' Richmond, 'The Intangible Mistress,' *Modern Philology* 56/4 (1959): 217-23.

⁴⁵ Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 137.

⁴⁶ Patricia Parker, 'Othello and Hamlet: Dilation, Spying, and the "Secret Place" of Woman,' *Representations* 44 (1993): 66.

⁴⁷ Parker, 'Othello and Hamlet,' 67. More recently, see also Jennifer Rae McDermott, 'Perceiving Shakespeare: A Study of Sight, Sound, and Stage,' *Early Modern Literary Studies* special issue 19 (2009): 5.1-38. <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-19/mcdeshak.html>.

Othello is transformed from a loving husband to a man wild with suspicion. He laments:

I had been happy, if the generall Campe,
Pioners and all, had tasted her sweet Body,
So I had nothing knowne.⁴⁸

Whilst Othello draws on taste's associations with intimate experiential knowledge (there is a kind of parallelism in his desire not to *know* that Desdemona has been tasted, or sexually *known*), in his use of the epithet 'sweet' he also retains its connection to gustatory sensation.

Othello's choice of verb at this critical moment is not an isolated example: throughout the play, he consistently links sexual and alimentary appetites. Perhaps most obviously, Othello's epithets for his wife linger on her supposed flavour: they include 'honey,' 'sweeting,' and – no less than five times – 'sweet.'⁴⁹ Initially, *Othello* appears to be invested in an association of gustatory appetite with eroticism according to which taste and desire are akin in being both degenerate and dangerous. Both Othello himself, and the malevolent Iago, frame the association between sweet tastes and sensual pleasures in strongly pejorative terms. Early in the play, Othello insists that his support of Desdemona's request to join him in Cyprus is motivated not by 'the pallate of my Appetite,' but rather by a wish 'to be free, and bounteous to her minde.'⁵⁰ Othello's association of sexual and gustatory 'appetite' implicitly assesses both as capricious and mindless. Iago's language betrays a similar attitude: contemplating Othello and Desdemona's initial state of marital bliss, and tracing a projected slippage from vision to gustation (or, more precisely, dis-gust), he anticipates that Desdemona's 'eye must be fed. And what delight shall she have to look on the divell?... her delicate tendernesse will find it selfe abus'd, begin to heave the gorge, disrellish and abhor the Moore.'⁵¹ And if Desdemona will naturally come to 'disrellish' Othello because of his putatively devilish appearance, Othello will be brought to feel distaste for Desdemona by Iago's own machinations: whilst Othello currently finds his wife 'luscious as Locusts' (cassia pods, believed to be, in George Sandys' words, 'an excellent fruit'⁵²), the suspicion of her

⁴⁸ Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*, Tt5r (325).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Tt1v (318), Tt3r (321), Tt4r (323), Tt5r (325), Vv1v (330), Vv2r (331), Vv4r (335).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Ss6r (315).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Tt1v (318).

⁵² Cited in 'locust, n.' *OED Online*, accessed 15 March 2012, www.oed.com/view/Entry/109676.

chastity which Iago inculcates will ensure that she ‘shalbe to him shortly as bitter as Coloquintida’ (the fruit also known as the bitter-apple).⁵³ For Othello and Iago, sexual tastes offer a fallen, irrational form of pleasure: they correspond, not to the reality of the thing itself (or rather, man or woman him or herself), but to arbitrary, transient, and manipulable predilections and revulsions.

Conversely, a number of characters in the play, including Cassio and Brabantio as well as Iago and Othello, associate vision with epistemological mastery. Most famously, Othello’s demand for ‘Ocular prooffe’ of his wife’s alleged betrayal exemplifies his wider conflation of vision and certain knowledge (this conflation is built, for instance, into his assertion that that Iago ‘sees, and knowes more... than he unfolds,’ where the conjunctive ‘and’ suggests a presumed equivalence between seeing and knowing).⁵⁴ For a number of critics, the disastrous consequences of this desire for ‘ocular proof’ indicate an implicit critique of the new empirical natural philosophy discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis.⁵⁵ Most recently, James Knapp has argued that ‘Shakespeare presents us with an object (the handkerchief) so unstable that it becomes emblematic of the flaws endemic to empiricist (materialist) epistemologies.’⁵⁶ The failure of the visual emblem of the handkerchief to materialize the reality of Desdemona’s spousal fidelity represents the failure of vision to apprehend the truth of the material world.

In the context of the failure of ocular proof, taste – derided by the villainous Iago and the misguided Othello as akin to lustful appetite – takes on a new value. In particular, taste comes to stand for a form of knowledge which is experiential without being, precisely, empirical. In her speech offering a partial vindication of female adultery, Emilia points to this possibility. Her argument, which hinges on women’s sensory equivalence to men, occurs in a passage which conjoins an attribution of female adultery to male cruelty with its subsequent attribution to women’s innate desire for novelty. ‘I do think,’ announces Emilia:

⁵³ Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*, Ss6r (315).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Tt5r (325), Tt4v (324).

⁵⁵ Thus John Gronbeck-Tedesco writes that Othello’s acceptance of Desdemona’s handkerchief as the requested visual evidence, ‘teaches the shortcomings of empiricism in its early throes... “ocular proof” is really a stunt performed for a man who thinks seeing is believing’ Gronbeck-Tedesco, ‘Morality, Ethics and the Failure of Love in Othello,’ in Philip C. Kolin, ed., *Othello: New Critical Essays* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), 267.

⁵⁶ James A. Knapp, ‘“Ocular Proof”: Archival Revelations and Aesthetic Response,’ *Poetics Today* 24/4: 716.

... it is their Husbands faults

If Wives do fall: (Say, that they slacke their duties,
 And powre our Treasures into forraigne laps;
 Or else breake out in peevisish Jealousies,
 Throwing restraint upon us: Or say they strike us,
 Or scant our former having in despight)
 Why we have galles: and though we have some Grace,
 Yet have we some Revenge. Let Husbands know,
 Their wives have sense like them: They see, and smell,
 And have their Palats both for sweet, and sowre,
 As Husbands have. What is it that they do,
 When they change us for others? Is it Sport?
 I thinke it is: and doth Affection breed it?
 I thinke it doth. Is't Frailty that thus erres?
 It is so too. And have not we Affections?
 Desires for Sport? and Frailty, as men have?⁵⁷

Poised between her initial ascription of women's infidelity to husbandly mistreatment, and her suggestion that, like men, women take lovers simply as result of their natural 'Desires for Sport,' and 'Frailty,' Emilia's declaration that wives 'have their Palats both for sweet, and sowre' serves ambiguously to describe female rationality (women 'have sense' enough to respond negatively to mistreatment) and female corruptibility (just as men and women have their senses in common, so too do they share a yearning for novelty and pleasure). For Iago, the difference between the sweetness of cassia pods and coloquintida bitterness is a matter of pure affect: of irresistible desire versus sexual revulsion. For his wife, however, to have a palate 'both for sweet, and sowre' – in other words, to have *taste* – can mean to possess trivial appetitive desires for sexual 'Sport,' but it can also indicate possession of reasonable, universally shared, fundamentally rational preferences and aversions, guided by judgement as well as by instinct.

Emilia's speech, then, clears the way for an alternative interpretation of Othello's preoccupation with Desdemona's sexual sweetness. According to his, and Iago's, association of taste with irrational, sinful sexual desire, Othello's honeyed endearments for Desdemona might be understood (despite his own protestations to the

⁵⁷ Shakespeare, *Othello* in *Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*, Vv3v (334).

contrary) to betray Othello's enthrallment to 'the pallate of my Appetite.' On the other hand, they also prefigure Emilia's ultimate vindication of Desdemona as 'sweet *Desdemona*... sweet Mistris... the sweetest innocent.'⁵⁸ The narrative trajectory of the play thus bears out Othello's reluctant, half-unconscious perception that Desdemona is 'sweet.' Despite its denigration, taste – and the sexual appetites it entwines with – proves a surer route to certainty than vision, offering a kind of intuitive experiential knowledge which the play opposes to an ocularcentric empiricism.⁵⁹ *Othello* indicates – if it does not wholeheartedly endorse – a conception of gustatory and erotic tastes as valuable sources of intersubjective and erotic knowledge, and of sweetness as a marker of virtue.

III. 'my honey bee'

In a recent article on *The Duchess of Malfi*, Wendy Wall observes that early modern depictions of sensual pleasure and early modern 'condemnations of fiction' by 'Puritan thinkers' share a set of terms: both are characterized by the language of sweetness.⁶⁰ Wall explains this co-incidence by suggesting that anti-theatricalists adopted such language because of prior associations of sweetness with erotic pleasure. 'Historically,' she comments, 'sweetness had been linked to an ethically troubling sensuality,' and 'its Renaissance incarnations gave specificity to that age-old meaning, identifying it as a good that smacked of gooe and illicit excess.'⁶¹ Plays were conceived of as 'syrupy,' because, like sex, 'they had the capacity to act on the body and to discourage the use of reason by drawing the mind from virtue.'⁶² Wall's discussion of the symbolic complexity of syrups in the period is rich and revealing. Nonetheless, her analysis of the moral valence of sweetness is somewhat one-sided. As I demonstrated in chapter 1, it was not only anti-theatricalists who employed syrupy analogies to describe the experience and effects of attending plays or reading poesy. Those on the other side of the controversy

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Vv4v-Vv5r (336-37).

⁵⁹ It is also the case that, conversely, bitterness can attest to the corrupt reality behind lovely appearance. In Thomas Cranley's *Amanda, or the Reformed Whore* (London: John Norton, 1635), which tells the tale of the titular prostitute's reformation – and which Katherine Craik calls 'one of the first examples of native English pornography' (*Reading Sensations*, 126) – an epistolary verse from the narrator berating the titular prostitute's licentious behaviour fulminates: 'Thou art... a poison'd Potion in a Cup of Gold... Bitter in taste, though glorious to behold.' Taste reveals the (in this case corrupt) sexual reality behind misleadingly attractive visual appearance. Cranley, *Amanda*, G2r (43).

⁶⁰ Wendy Wall, 'Just a Spoonful of Sugar: Syrup and Domesticity in Early Modern England,' *Modern Philology* 104/2 (2006): 168.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 168.

employed similar images to opposing ends, likening devotees of the poetic arts to industrious and virtuous bees sucking honey from rhetorical flowers, and attributing their opponents' distaste for poesy to their pathologically imbalanced humors.

The duality of sweetness – indicative at once of erotic pleasure and literary or theatrical response – is apparent in the printed commonplace book *Englands Parnassus* (1600), which includes a number of excerpts from poems in which sweetness indicates an enthralling but dissolute and ultimately harmful sensuality. An excerpt from one poem by Robert Greene, for example, blazons a mistress' breasts as 'sweets' from which 'Love suckt his sommer time,' whilst Thomas Lodge warns that love is 'A sugred harme, a poison full of pleasure.'⁶³ Simultaneously, however, *Englands Parnassus* collates numerous extracts associating sweetness with literary discrimination and inspiration: an epigram attributed to James VI and I praises the 'art' of 'poesie' as 'the hony we from *Pind* distill,'⁶⁴ whilst a poem by Charles Fitzgeoffrey describes Homer's works as 'sweete honey-suckle, whence all Poets sprights, / Sucke the sweete honey of divine delights.'⁶⁵ Sweetness signposts the literary virtues of the classics and their utility as a source of rhetorical imitation: to taste the honey of Pindar or Homer is to display both readerly discrimination and, potentially, creative emulation. For aficionados of poesie, then, sweetness stands not for mindless sensuality, but for considered literary discrimination. In contrast to Wall's suggestion that uses of the language of sweetness to describe audience's responses to theatre figure those responses as akin to sexual desire – thoughtless, reasonless, corrupt – I argue that in some contexts uses of the language of sweetness to describe sensual pleasure intimates that desire is a form of discrimination akin to literary judgement. Focusing on uses of the bee trope to describe the experience of desire and sensual pleasure, I will suggest that, rather than participating in the denigration of poesy, the language of sweetness does precisely the opposite, contributing to a (limited and localized) rehabilitation of sensual passion.

In chapter 1, I focused on the use of apian imagery to describe readerly discrimination and poetic skill. The symbolic significance of bees, however, also encompassed an association with erotic love: just as the former can be a source of both sweetness and stings, love and desire are characterised by a paradoxical mixture of pleasure and pain.⁶⁶ I will suggest that the bee trope is fundamental to the seventeenth-

⁶³ Robert Allott (compiled by), *Englands Parnassus: or the choyssest flowers of our moderne poets* (London: For N. Ling, C. Burby and T. Hayes, 1600), Cc7v (398), M7r (173).

⁶⁴ The poem is attributed to 'K. of S.' Albott, *Englands Parnassus*, Q4r (231).

⁶⁵ Allott, *Englands Parnassus*, li7r (493).

⁶⁶ On bees as emblematic both of eloquence and eroticism, see Hughes, 'Pindar and the Bees,' 227-28.

century re-evaluation of the status of sensual pleasure. The appropriation of this image, in which the bee's tastefulness originally described erudition, readerly judgement, and poetic creation, by writers wishing to describe the experience of desire and sexual pleasure encouraged a growing sense that sexual love, too, could constitute a realm of discrimination and learning. Like the humanist bee, the lover exercises judgement and skill in his pursuit of sweetness.

In early, sixteenth-century examples of bee imagery, as in the following poem by Thomas Wyatt, the focus is on taste as an attribute of the beloved mistress:

Nature that gave the Bee so feate a grace,
To finde hony of so wondrous fashion:
Hath taught the spider out of the same place
To fetche poison by strange alteration,
Though this be strange, it is a straunger case,
With one kisse by secret operacion,
Both these at once in your lipps to finde.⁶⁷

The opposition between the bee, who extracts honey from flowers, and the spider, who fetches poison from the same, is a conventional image for congratulatory versus critical modes of reading.⁶⁸ The difference between the substances extracted by the bee and the spider resides in their dissimilar bodily practices and intrinsic constitutions: whilst the bee searches industriously for honey, the spider concocts venom out of his own 'innate virulency,' as the anonymous author of the 1662 *The spiritual bee, or, A miscellany*, put it.⁶⁹ In contrast, Wyatt's speaker passively 'finde[s]' what already exists, mixed, in his beloved's lips. The 'strange' fusion of honey and poison that the lover discovers there describes the ambivalence of the Petrarchan mistress, rather than different modes of courting, kissing, or tasting: sweetness resides in her beauty, poison in her cruelty.

Later poets, however, use the bee trope to describe the lover's capacity for judgement, as well as, or instead of, the character of the beloved. Ben Jonson's 'To his

⁶⁷ Thomas Wyatt, 'How by a kisse he found both his life and death,' in *Songes and sonettes* [*Tottel's Miscellany*], I2r. This poem is attributed to Wyatt in Thomas Wyatt, *The Complete Poems*, ed. R.A. Hebolz (London: Penguin, 1997), 97.

⁶⁸ For example, in Francis Davison's *A poetical rapsody*, the frontispiece epigram reads: 'The Bee and Spider by a diverse power, / Sucke Hony and Poyson from the selfe same flower.'

⁶⁹ Anon., *The spiritual bee, or, A miscellany* (Oxford: A. and L. Lichfield for Edward and John Forrest, 1662), A5r.

Love fearing a Corrivall,' included in his 1629 collection *A description of love*, uses the opposition between spider and bee to describe a sexual rivalry:

The pois'nous Spider and the lab'ring Bee,
The one and selfesame flower daily suckes;
But yet in nature much they disagree:
For poison one, the other honie pluckes.

You are the flower (you know my meaning) he
The pois'nous Spider is, and I the Bee.⁷⁰

Here, the fact that the beloved 'flower' serves as a source both of honey and poison is attributed not to her dual character, but rather to the differences in 'nature' between the two men who court her: whilst the poet's arachnid opponent gathers only poison – a reference, presumably, to the bitterness of jealousy and envy – she is a source of sweet 'honie' for the diligent author, who uses her as inspiration for his poem. Just as the capacity to appreciate the sweet taste of the flowers of poesy and to 'digest' them into something new is frequently attributed to the health of the reader's constitution, whilst a 'distaste' for poesy indicates humoral corruption, so too is sensual desire linked to the ability to taste the authentic sweetness of the beloved.

Jonson's aside, '(you know my meaning),' on the one hand invites his addressee to complete the analogy herself, signposting the conventionality of the bee / spider trope. On the other, it might function as a kind of textual nudge or wink, signalling a more explicit dimension to the description of his sweetheart as a bloom, for contemporaneously flowers were often euphemistically associated with the genitals.⁷¹ The suggestion that this apparently delicate pastoral analogy is more sexually suggestive than it might initially appear is reinforced by Jonson's use of 'sucke' and 'plucke,' which phonetically (and in the case of 'sucke,' which is printed with a long 's,' typographically) insinuate an unwritten but covertly present 'fucke.'

The trope's potential for prurience more fully exploited in Thomas Carew's *carpe diem* poem 'A Rapture,' included in his 1640 *Poems*, in which the narrator urges the delectable Celia to 'taste' the 'joys' of sex by describing those joys in elaborate and

⁷⁰ Jonson, *A description of love* (London: Miles Flesher for Francis Coules, 1629), C6v.

⁷¹ See Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13.

explicit terms.⁷² The following passage evokes the comparatively leisurely erotic pleasures which the narrator imagines will follow intercourse. The fun doesn't stop after 'we, in... sweet extasie expire,' he promises:

Then, as the empty Bee, that lately bore,
Into the common treasure, all her store...
So will I rifle all the sweets, that dwell
In my delicious Paradise, and swell
My bagge with honey, drawne forth by the power
Of servent kisses, from each spicie flower.
Ple seize the Rose-buds in their perfum'd bed,
The Violet knots, like curious Mazes spread
O're all the Garden, taste the ripned Cherry,
The warme, firme Apple, tipt with corall berry...
Thence climbing o're the swelling *Appenine*,
Retire into thy grove of Eglantine;
Where I will all those ravisht sweets distill
Through Loves Alimbique, and with Chimmique skill
From the mixt masse, one souveraigne Balme derive,
Then bring that great *Elixar* to thy hive.⁷³

The narrator's comparison of himself to a bee serves primarily as a contrivance facilitating the luxurious enumeration of the pleasures – visual, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile – of the coital bed. A daring poem even by Carew's ribald standards, 'The Rapture' was notorious in his time: its inclusion in his *Poems* led the antiquarian and MP Edward Dering to condemn the volume as being 'in disgrace of Religion, &c. to the increase of all Vice, and withdrawing of the people from reading studdying, and hearing the word of God.'⁷⁴ In opposing the sensual pleasures depicted by Carew's verse to devout learning, Dering's response represents a conventional opposition between egregious eroticism and meritorious erudition. The poem itself, however, suggests an alternative, portraying the lover-bee as an industrious alchemist turning the sweet

⁷² Thomas Carew, *Poems* (London: J.D. for Thomas Walkley, 1640), G5r (89).

⁷³ Carew, *Poems*, G3r-v (85-86).

⁷⁴ See Scott Nixon, 'Carew, Thomas (1594/5-1640),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 06 March 2012, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4639.

pleasures of Celia's body into an aromatic 'Balme': semen and honey.⁷⁵ The functional and symbolic equivalence of these apparently unrelated substances is suggested by the final line, which glosses this balm as an 'Elixar': an alchemic preparation, drug, or essence with the capacity to indefinitely prolong life, closely related to the philosopher's stone.⁷⁶ Semen and honey are united in their shared status as bulwarks against mortality: the former enabling procreative self-reproduction, the latter functioning as a preservative agent. Sex emerges as a kind of 'Chimmique skill': a form of esoteric and elite practical knowledge, effecting the transformation of the sweets of sensual pleasure into the preservative balm of procreation.

The final example of the bee trope that I will consider here, found in Richard Barnfield's 1594 *The Affectionate Shepheard*, negotiates a fine line between the merely suggestive and the brazenly salacious. A pastoralized account of the courtship and marriage of Charles Blount (Ganymeade) and Penelope Rich (Guendolin), and of the unrequited passion that the poem's narrator Daphnis (very probably an avatar for the author) nurses for Ganymeade, the poem engages the uninitiated reader in a tantalizing game of 'guess who?', hinting at but never making explicit the historical alter-egos of its pastoral protagonists.⁷⁷ For a long time overlooked by scholars made uncomfortable by its homoeroticism, *The Affectionate Shepheard* is a searching, tonally subtle, and poetically adroit exploration of the experience of desire; Daphnis' narrative voice is by turns hostile and tender, abject and arch. It is also dense with the language of erotic tasting.

By his own admission, Daphnis is well past the first bloom of youth: 'Behold my gray head, full of silver haire, / My wrinckled skin, deepe furrowes in my face.'⁷⁸ Unable to entice Ganymeade with his physical charms, Daphnis tries to win him over with presents, especially of the edible variety: in the course of the poem, he offers Ganymeade a mouth-watering catalogue of delicacies ranging from 'straw-berries, or Bil-berries in their prime, / Bath'd in a melting Sugar-Candie streame' to 'Cheese... Cracknells, Curds and Clowted-creame.'⁷⁹ Daphnis' advances are ultimately unsuccessful, but historical anecdote suggests that gourmandizing could be effectual in the service of seduction: the 1660 collection of bawdy tales *The Practical Part of love* opens with a story

⁷⁵ The imagery of sex as alchemy, according to which the sweets of sexual pleasure are preserved through procreation, echoes Shakespeare's Sonnet 5. William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (London: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 121.

⁷⁶ 'Elixir, n.' *OED Online*, accessed 28 March 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/60499.

⁷⁷ Richard Barnfield, *The Affectionate Shepheard* (London: John Danter for T. Gubbin and E. Newman, 1594). In the dedicatory epistle to his 1595 *Cynthia*, Barnfield claims that the earlier poem is 'an imitation of *Virgill*, in the second Eglogue of *Alexis*.' Barnfield, *Cynthia* (London: for Humfrey Lownes, 1595), A3r.

⁷⁸ Barnfield, *The Affectionate Shepheard*, D4v.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, C1v.

about an old maidservant who, enamoured of her master's young apprentice, sets about enticing him with tidbits: 'she insinuated her self into him by juncketting with him,' the anonymous author writes suggestively.⁸⁰ This literary and anecdotal connection between feasting and lusting was supported by dietetic and medical theory, according to which gastronomic over-indulgence, especially in humorally 'hot' food and drink, was supposed to provoke arousal. 'Mistris *Venus* dwels at the signe of the Ivy-bush,' counsels Thomas Adams, referring to the custom of hanging ivy (a symbol of Bacchus) outside taverns, 'and where the belly is made a barrell, stuffed with delicious meates, and heating drinkes, the concupiscence will be luxurious of turpitudes.'⁸¹ As we saw in the last chapter, sweet foods in particular were supposed, in Thomas Muffett's words, to 'encrease natural heat': they could serve as aphrodisiacs, prompting desire.⁸²

Whilst Daphnis does not exclude savoury things (such as cheese and curds) from his list of delights, his hopes clearly lie in the seductive potential of sweetness: in ripe fruit further enhanced by sugar-candy. I want to suggest, however, that his strategy is more complex than it might appear; the utility of sweetness as a weapon of seduction is not exhausted by its aphrodisiac function. Daphnis' attempt to charm Ganymeade by offering him alimentary pleasures reflects Daphnis' expressed experience of desire as characterised by taste sensations.⁸³ Ganymeade, proclaims Daphnis, is 'a sweet-fac'd Boy'; his 'sugred love is full of sweete delight.'⁸⁴ In offering Ganymeade a series of delicious edibles, then, Daphnis offers him an image of, and experience of, his own sweet self. The point is driven home by Daphnis' virtuosic exploitation of the sensual – and sensory – potential of poetic language. 'Wilt thou,' Daphnis tempts Ganymeade in one typically mellifluous line, 'taste with a wooden splent the sweet lithe honey?'⁸⁵ The adjective 'lithe' adds to the conventional mention of honey's sweetness an intimation of its suppleness, implicitly invoking Ganymeade's lissom body. This subtle allusion is reinforced by the molossus of the last three words: the deferral of the expected downbeat, creating a sense of the line's tensile strength, reifies as prosody the 'lithe' elasticity of both honey, and young flesh. When the unstressed syllable finally arrives, it creates a feminine rhyme which implies the effeminate ease of sensuality. Read aloud,

⁸⁰ Anon, *The Practical part of love*, A3v.

⁸¹ Adams, *A divine herball*, sig L4r (79).

⁸² Thomas Muffett, *Healths improvement*, F3v (38).

⁸³ See Raymond-Jean Frontain, "'An Affectionate Shepheard sicke for love": Barnfield's Homoerotic Appropriation of The Song of Solomon,' in Ken Borris and George Klawitter, eds., *The Affectionate Shepheard: Celebrating Richard Barnfield* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2001), 106.

⁸⁴ Barnfield, *The Affectionate Shepheard*, A3r, B1r.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, C1v.

Daphnis' description of honey is felt on and in the tongue, as well as apprehended by the mind, materializing in language both the gustatory pleasures he proffers, and the erotic pleasures that he pursues. Daphnis thus evinces a subtle understanding of the principle that – as James Schiffer puts it, drawing on Jean Baudrillard – ‘self-seduction always precedes seduction of or by another.’⁸⁶ Or, as Adonis puts in in Shakespeare's slightly earlier poem of thwarted seduction, ‘Before I know myself, seek not to know me.’ Intensely aware of his own inadequacies as a suitor, Daphnis substitutes the sensual pleasures of delicious food – which are synonymous, in this case, with the sensual pleasures offered by Ganymeade himself. In offering Ganymeade sweet things, then, Daphnis offers him the opportunity to ‘know’ himself, in both senses of the word.

Daphnis' use of the bee trope engages with *The Affectionate Shepheard's* exploration of the relation between self-knowledge and sexual knowledge, similarly employing the language of taste to blur the boundary between the seducer and his beloved, subject and object of desire. In transports of desire, Daphnis addresses Ganymeade:

O would to God (so I might have my fee)
My lips were honey, and thy mouth a Bee.

Then shouldst thou sucke my sweete and my faire flower
That now is ripe, and full of honey-berries...
Then shouldst thou be my Waspe or else my Bee,
I would thy hive, and thou my honey bee.⁸⁷

The first line of the second stanza is enigmatic: read continuously, Daphnis wistfully imagines that Ganymeade might ‘sucke’ his ‘sweete... flower.’ The addition of a comma (‘Then shouldst thou sucke, my sweete and my faire flower’) would, however, make the line more plausible in context: Daphnis is well past the first bloom of youth, and it seems more likely that he is addressing Ganymeade as ‘my sweete.... Flower / That now is ripe,’ and wishing he would suck the ‘honey’ lips that Daphnis only possesses in the wistful speculative tense. Similarly, the orthographic pun on ‘bee’ in the final line can

⁸⁶ James Schiffer, “‘Honey Words’: *A Lovers Complaint* and the Fine Art of Seduction,” in Shirley Sharon-Zisser, ed., *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's A Lover's Complaint: Suffering Ecstasy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 137.

⁸⁷ Barnfield, *The Affectionate Shepheard*, B1r. Stanley Wells discusses this passage in *Shakespeare, Sex, and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 52.

be read either of two ways: either Daphnis describes his body as a (honey-laden) hive and asks Ganymeade to be his ‘honey bee,’ or he asks Ganymeade to ‘bee’ the ‘honey’ to his dry and papery ‘hive.’⁸⁸ The syntactical ambiguity results in uncertainty as to who is the bee, and who is flower, honey, or hive, dissolving the boundaries between subject and object of desire; it enables Daphnis to appropriate some of Ganymeade’s sweetness for himself, and present it back to Ganymeade as a tempting prize.

Flattening out the passage’s cultivation of a tension between explicit eroticism and euphemistic evasion, Rictor Norton asserts that ““sucke” obviously implies fellatio.... Ganymeade’s flower is his penis, “ripe” or erect, and full of spermatic honey berries.”⁸⁹ In support of this assertion, Norton cites Virgil’s claim, in the *Georgics*, that bees reproduce using their mouths.⁹⁰ Norton implies that Virgil’s entomological solecism relocates sexual pleasure, effecting its transition from the genitals to the mouth. As Jonathan Woolfson has shown, however, in the early modern period the endurance of the belief that bees reproduced using their mouths, ‘without the sinful pleasures of sexual intercourse,’ led not to an eroticisation of orality, but rather to an emblematic and agricultural emphasis on apian chastity.⁹¹ Seventeenth-century translations of Virgil disseminated this fragment of apian folklore: the fourth book of the *Georgicks*, in the 1628 version englished by Thomas May, describes the ‘chast wondrous means’ by which bees ‘propagate / Their kind’:⁹²

...[bees] feele nor *Venus* fire,
Nor are dissolv’d in lust, nor yet endure
The paines of childing travell: but from pure
Sweet flowers, & Herbs their progeny they bring
Home in their mouths.⁹³

Not only did bees exemplify sexual abstemiousness, they also demanded it in those who tended them: ‘since antiquity, beekeepers had been advised to abstain from sexual

⁸⁸ Barnfield’s most recent editor, Klawitter, punctuates the line: ‘I would thy hive, and thou my honey bee.’ Richard Barnfield, *Poems of Richard Barnfield*, ed. George Klawitter (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005), 47.

⁸⁹ Rictor Norton, ‘Pastoral Homoeroticism and Barnfield,’ in Borris and Klawitter, *Celebrating Richard Barnfield*, 124.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁹¹ Jonathan Woolfson, ‘Renaissance of Bees,’ *Renaissance Studies* 24/2 (2010): 295.

⁹² Virgil, *Virgil’s Georgicks Englished*, trans. Thomas May (London: Humphrey Lownes for Thomas Walkley, 1628), G8r (111).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, H5r (121).

intercourse days before approaching bees.’⁹⁴ Contemporary bee-keeping manuals confirm this: in *The feminine monarchie or a treatise concerning bees* (1609), Charles Butler recommends that ‘if thou wilt have the favour of thy Bees... thou must avoid such things as offend them: thou must not be (1) unchast or (2) uncleanly: for impurity and sluttishnes (themselves being most chast and neate,) they utterly abhore.’⁹⁵ From this perspective, using apian imagery to describe erotic experience might serve a kind of purifying function: because bees eschew any improper unchastity, they serve to legitimize the forms of erotic experience they describe.

Whilst the poems I have discussed use the bee trope to libidinous ends, as a pretext for enumerating the multi-sensual pleasures of sex, then, they also draw on the bee’s proverbial associations with sexual virtue in order to obviate potential accusations of indecency, framing desire instead as an expression of literary or alchemical skill, or as a means to develop self-knowledge. As Edward Dering’s distressed response to Carew’s ‘A Rapture’ makes clear, they were not always successful in their efforts. The connotative and rhetorical flexibility of apian imagery, however, does mean that hermeneutic responsibility is shifted firmly onto the reader: the potential for a less lascivious interpretation is always present. Associated simultaneously with cupid and with chastity, with discrimination and with desire, with virtue and with vice, the bee trope is deeply ambivalent; what is read into it, therefore, reflects as much upon reader as upon author.

Used as an emblem of desire, the bee trope not only *represents*, it also *engages*, readerly discrimination, or taste. Recent attempts to historicise the anachronistic category ‘pornography’ as a descriptor for early modern texts have led scholars to reconceive the genre as defined not by a presumed authorial intention to arouse, but rather as a matter of readerly reception. As Ian Moulton suggests, ‘it might make more sense to see pornography as a way of reading rather than a mode of representation’; similarly, Katherine Craik contends that ‘pornography emerges... as a matter not so much of textual content but readerly approach... [pornography] is best understood as a passionate transaction between books, writers and readers.’⁹⁶ This is lent credence by John Fletcher’s 1637 *The elder brother a comedie*, in which two brothers serve as suitors for the eligible Angellina. Whilst the younger sibling, Eustace, directs his appetite towards

⁹⁴ Woolfson, ‘Renaissance of Bees,’ 295.

⁹⁵ Charles Butler, *The feminine monarchie or a treatise concerning bees* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1609), A7v.

⁹⁶ Ian Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11; Craik, *Reading Sensations*, 116.

Angellina's 'sweet lips,' the elder Charles is a scholar, apparently hungry for nothing but learning: 'for's Diet,' his manservant Andrew advises, 'he eates and digests... Volumes.'⁹⁷ As we might expect for one so indifferent to the sensual delights of the table, Charles' erotic experience is also limited to that offered by books. In response to his uncle Brisac's challenge, 'can you finde among your bundle of bookes... What pleasures they enjoy, that doe embrace / A well shap'd wealthy Bride?', Charles replies:

Tis frequent Sir in story, there I read of
All kinde of vertuous and vitious women...
...and when
I light upon a *Portia* or *Cornelia*,
Crown'd with still flourishing leaves of truth and goodnesse,
With such a feeling I peruse their fortunes,
As if I then had liv'd, and freely tasted
Their ravishing sweetnesse; at the present loving
The whole sexe for their goodnesse and example.
But on the contrary when I looke on
A *Clytemnestra* or a *Tullia*...
Horroure invades my faculties...⁹⁸

Charles' depiction of his readerly experience as tasting 'sweetnesse' is simultaneously bibliophagic and sensual. Despite his emphasis on the virtue of the women he reads about, the sexual connotations of 'ravishing,' and lack of self-restraint implied in 'freely,' might prompt an audience to a knowing titter: his reading *matter* might be beyond reproach, but his *manner* of reading seems pornographic in its intensity. As Angellina complains later, Charles 'makes his booke his Mistresse.'⁹⁹ This distinctly eroticised scene of reading is construed, however, not as a source of shame but of edification, as Charles learns, through historical example, to distinguish between virtue and vice. Using 'sweetnesse' to index both sensual pleasure and readerly discrimination, Charles affirms that an apparently innocuous text can serve as a substitute for the amorous embraces of

⁹⁷ John Fletcher, *The elder brother a comedie* (London: Felix Kingston for I. Waterson and I. Benson, 1637), D2v, B3r.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, C1r-v.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, B3v.

a ‘well shap’d’ wife, and that this ‘pornographic’ mode of reading is entirely commensurate with literary judgement and edification.

IV. ‘inward taste’

In his *Asylum veneris* (1616), a reply to Joseph Swetnam’s *The arraignment of lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women* (1615), Daniel Tuvil defends female learning. ‘Parents’ who believe that the ‘pen must be forbidden’ to their daughters on the basis that it is ‘a Pandar to a Virgine Chastitie, and betrayeth it, by venting foorth... amarous Passions,’ Tuvil claims, are ‘fond’ (foolish, rather than doting).¹⁰⁰ The belief that study stimulates amorousness is misguided. In fact, the reverse is true: Tuvil suggests that amorousness incites a kind of mental resourcefulness akin to intelligence, for ‘affection is ingenious,’ and will find a way to its own satisfaction.¹⁰¹

Pace Tuvil’s confidence in the ingenuity of ‘affection,’ early modern men and women seem to have found themselves tongue-tied and awkward in the presence of a potential beau.¹⁰² And where natural inventiveness faltered, a number of texts bridging the fluid generic boundaries between anthology, conduct book, jest book, and dictionary, stepped in to offer advice. The anonymous 1658 *The Academy of pleasure*, for instance, functions as a manual in the art of seduction (or less generously, a kind of early modern *Flirting for Dummies*). Promising, on the title page, to teach ‘all sorts of Men, Maids, Widows, &c. to Speak and Write wittily, and to bear themselves gracefully for the attaining of their desired ends,’ the text mingles pedagogy and pleasure: whilst the main body of the work consists of a collection of anecdotes, poems, letters, and conversations, it also includes ‘*The Muses Expositor*,’ a descriptive catalogue of the major Greek and Roman figures, and a dictionary of ‘Hard Words.’ Dialogues, meanwhile, are battles of wits, replete with classical similes and ingenious wordplay.¹⁰³ *The Academy* and its ilk, then, promote the presumption that an impressive vocabulary is an effective route to venery, and that classical erudition will result in carnal satisfaction; they present seduction as a form of skill, coterminous with the acquisition of elite learning.

John Cleveland – Royalist, poet, satirist and clergyman – is an artful chronicler of the confederacy of erotic love and learning. His poem ‘Mark Anthony’ (included in

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Tuvil, *Asylum veneris* (London: Edward Griffin for Laurence L’isle, 1616), F7r-v (87-88).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, F7v-F8r.

¹⁰² See Mazzio, *Inarticulate Renaissance*, 142-43.

¹⁰³ Anon., *The Academy of pleasure* (London: for John Stafford and William Gilbertson, 1656).

the posthumously published 1677 *Clevelandi Vindiciae*), which compares Antony and Cleopatra's legendary liaison pejoratively to that enjoyed by the narrator, describes the first stages of his dalliance as a simultaneously amorous and intellectual awakening prompted by the taste of a kiss: 'her warmer lips, which, when I tasted, / My duller spirits made me active as fire.'¹⁰⁴ Subsequently, he frames the pleasures of his mistress' company in learned terms:

Mystical grammar of amorous glances;
Feeling of pulses, the physic of love;
Rhetorical courtings and musical dances;
Numbering of kisses arithmetic prove;
Eyes like astronomy;
Straight-limb'd geometry;
In her Art's ingeny
Our wits were sharp and keen.¹⁰⁵

Progressing from the grammar of 'amorous glances' and the rhetorical display of 'courtings' – two of the three subjects making up the *trivium* of verbal sciences – to the mathematical *quadrivium* of music, arithmetic, astronomy, and finally 'straight-limb'd geometry,' the lover receives a full liberal arts education. There is, however, an omission: the narrator neglects to mention the third subject of the *trivium*, namely logic, replacing it instead with the 'feeling of pulses,' a component of the study of medicine. The elision is silent, but significant, for the forms of knowledge offered by sensual desire and pleasure were frequently positioned in opposition to logic, as productive not of rational cognition, but of rhetorical expertise. As Robert Burton writes in *The anatomy of melancholy* (1621):

Above all the other Symptomes of Lovers, this is not lightly to be overpassed, that... once they be in love, they turne to their ability, Rimers, Ballet-makers, and Poets... The very Rusticks and Hog-rubbers, if once they tast of this Love-liquor, are inspired in an instant. They must write and indite all in Rime.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ John Cleveland, *Clevelandi Vindiciae* (London: Robert Harford, 1677), G2v (84).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, G3r (85).

¹⁰⁶ Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short for Henry Cripps, 1621), Qq8v (622).

Burton's intent is satirical, but the passage offers a pointed illustration of the conventional association between desire and rhetorical and poetical inspiration, as well as of the way that this transformation is effected via 'tast.' In this section, I further interrogate the causal relation between desire and discrimination, sensuality and ingenuity, that this chapter has been tracing. In particular, I propose that for early modern authors the putative mystery of female sexuality does not only inspire an appetite for knowledge, it also prompts consideration of what knowledge *is*, and how it might be best achieved. Focusing on instances of what Frank Kermode has called the 'Banquet of Sense.... theme,' I suggest that the conflict between Ovidian eroticism and chaste neo-Platonic love that this 'theme' stages is also a conflict between two different forms of knowledge. Specifically, it is a conflict between a rhetorical epistemology which draws on Aristotelian physiology in order to ground knowledge in sensation, and a Platonic epistemology that grounds knowledge in memory. Crucially, the battle between the two unfolds as a debate about the moral and epistemological status of the lower senses: especially, of taste.

Briefly, the banquet of the senses theme constitutes a poetic and theatrical trope according to which the erotic pleasures offered by each of the senses are delineated in turn, usually starting with vision and ending with touch or taste. In an influential chapter in his 1971 *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne*, Kermode identifies the theme as an inversion and debasement of the Platonic banquet schematized by Marsilio Ficino in his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*.¹⁰⁷ The Platonic banquet symbolised love which 'proceeded from the highest senses up to the intellect,' representing 'the ascent from sense to the higher powers of the soul, and ultimately the apprehension of the divine beauty.'¹⁰⁸ In contrast, 'the Banquet of Sense' – which is often associated with Ovid and Ovidian poetry – 'represents a descent from sight to the senses capable of only material gratification, what Ficino calls "bestial love".'¹⁰⁹ The banquet of sense theme, then, maps the opposition between neo-Platonic chastity and Ovidian eroticism onto the conventional sensory hierarchy, associating the former with vision (and, ideally, with surmounting the senses altogether), and the latter with the lower senses of touch and taste. In Jonson's *The New Inn*, for example, Beaufort avows his preference for Ovidian

¹⁰⁷ Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne: Renaissance Essays* (London: Routledge, 1971), 68-99, especially 77).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 79, 83.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

eroticism by invoking the gustatory pleasures of kissing: 'I relish not these philosophical feasts,' he pronounces in response to Lovel's encomium to Platonic love, 'Give me a banquet o' sense, like that of Ovid... for my taste, / Ambrosiac kisses to melt down the palate.' (III.ii.124-29)

Whilst the banquet of sense theme surfaces in the work of many authors throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it takes its name, and arguably receives its most sustained and complex treatment, in George Chapman's long narrative poem *Ovids banquet of sense* (1595), which describes Ovid's legendary seduction of Corinna, daughter of the Emperor Augustus. In Kermode's influential interpretation, the fact that Ovid's celebration of Corinna's sensuous beauty reverses the trajectory represented by the Platonic banquet, proceeding from the higher senses to the lower senses of taste and touch rather than vice versa, encourages a condemnatory reading: the poem's apparent valorization of sensual love is intended by Chapman to be 'ironical.'¹¹⁰ 'There is no question,' Kermode informs us sternly, 'that Ovid's views are reprehensible.'¹¹¹ Kermode's moralistic conviction that Chapman intends outright condemnation of Ovid's sensual indulgence has been contested.¹¹² His emphasis on neo-Platonic philosophy as an interpretive framework for the poem, however, has been consistently replicated. This disproportionate scholarly emphasis on neo-Platonism has led to a neglect of the poem's use of Aristotelian and peripatetic natural philosophy. When Kermode comments that 'Ovid's treatment of each sense... is, basically, Aristotelian, with the usual accretions,' his tone is one of undisguised ennui.¹¹³ Far from being a prosaic rehash of scholastic doctrine, however, Chapman presents Ovid's deployment of Aristotelian ideas about the senses as an integral and effective aspect of his seduction of Corinna.

Whilst in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle suggested that 'pleasures are a hinderence to thought, and the more so the more one delights in them, e.g. in sexual

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 99.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 86. Here, Kermode is referring specifically to the character of Ovid in Jonson's *Poetaster*.

¹¹² Recently, for instance, Martin Wheeler has argued that the poem 'espouses a neo-Platonic epistemology but rejects its impracticable puritanism and legitimizes physical love.' Wheeler, 'The Thrill of the Chase,' 326. There have, however, also been apologists for Kermode's position, including Darryl J. Gless and Raymond-Jean Frontain. Gless, 'Chapman's Ironic Ovid,' *English Literary Review* 9 (1979): 21-41; Frontain, 'The "Curious Frame" of Chapman's *Ovids Banquet of Sense*,' *Cahiers* 31 (1987): 37-43.

¹¹³ Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne*, 87. Louise Vinge gives a lucid and thorough account of the Aristotelian and medieval psychology that forms what she calls the 'background' to the poem's account of the senses, but does not fully explore its utility and significance. Louise Vinge, 'Chapman's *Ovids Banquet of Sense*: Its Sources and Theme,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38 (1975): 247.

pleasure, for nothing could think of anything while absorbed in this,'¹¹⁴ the peripatetic insistence on the sensory basis of cognition held out the prospect of a more optimistic evaluation of the relation between erotic pleasure and knowledge. In justifying the sensual pleasure he derives from Corinna's presence, Chapman's Ovid grasps this prospect with both hands:

The sence is given us to excite the minde,
And that can never be by sence exited
But first the sence must her contentment minde,
We therefore must procure the sence delighted,
That so the soule may use her facultie...¹¹⁵

Drawing on the dictate that there is nothing in the mind that was not first in the sense, Ovid claims that, in stimulating the senses, the experiences of desire and sexual pleasure also provide material for the mind. Scholastic dogma is given a sensual twist: the 'facultie' of cognition is inert until it is galvanized by sensory delight. Consequently, the naked Corinna is a 'Mine of knowledge.'¹¹⁶ Similarly, Ovid makes use of faculty sensory physiology when he attempts to persuade Corinna to satisfy his sense of taste with a snog. 'A kisse of thine,' he tells her:

... shall borrow organs of my touch
T'advance it to that inward taste of mine
Which makes all sence...¹¹⁷

The kiss, Ovid suggests, will ultimately be tasted not by his lips and tongue, but by his 'inward taste.' A marginal note by Chapman glosses this phrase: by 'inward taste,' it explains, Ovid 'intends the common sence.' Taste, then, is associated with the common sense. Chapman's marginal note elaborates: Ovid 'cals it [t]ast because it dooth, *sapere in effectiōne sensuum* [achieve knowledge in the action of the senses].'¹¹⁸ The association between gustatory taste and common sense derives from a pun on *sapere*, which means

¹¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 135-36.

¹¹⁵ George Chapman, *Ovids banquet of sence* (London: James Roberts for Richard Smith, 1595), D1r.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, C2v.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, D4v.

¹¹⁸ The translations inside the square brackets are from *Sixteenth Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. Gordon Braden (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 451, n. 88.6. It seems likely that 'last' here is a compositor's error for 'tast.'

both to taste, and to know or understand. Conflating the gustatory pleasures of a sweet kiss with the Aristotelian faculty of judgement, Ovid roots wisdom firmly in the practical operations of the senses, especially the 'low' sense of taste.¹¹⁹ Kissing, he effectively tells Corinna, is just common sense.

Corinna counters Ovid's advances by lecturing him on the superiority of chaste neo-Platonic love: 'you showe how weake in soule you are / That let rude sence, subdue your reasons skill,' she tells him, joining the disdain of the Petrarchan mistress with the hauteur of an emperor's daughter.¹²⁰ In denying the epistemological value of the senses outright, Corinna's words correlate with a wider cultural association between neo-Platonic *chastity* and a Platonic *epistemology* which, in contrast to Aristotle, views knowledge as rooted not in sensation but in memory. In his 1590 translation of Orazio Rinaldi's *The Royal Exchange*, for example, under the heading 'Sence,' Robert Greene warns against 'delight in women,' commenting that '*Plato* admitted no Auditour in his *Academie*, but such as while they were his schollers woulde abstaine from women: for he was wont to say, that the greatest enemie to the memorie, was venerie.'¹²¹ Greene's denigration of 'venerie' in favour of 'memorie' signals assent to Plato's assertion, in the *Phaedo*, that true knowledge derives from recalling formal, *a priori* concepts, or 'ideas,' supposedly implanted in our minds before birth.¹²² As Francis Bacon puts it in the *Advancement of learning*, in '*Platoes* opinion... all knowledge is but remembrance.'¹²³ 'Venerie' thus distracts from the central epistemological project of remembering, or recalling what is lost.

Crucially, the conflict between Ovidian seducers (and the Aristotelian epistemology they use to valorize erotic pleasure), and neo-Platonists such as Corinna is frequently articulated using the language of taste. In 'The Antiplatonick,' for example, Cleveland mocks the popularity of the doctrine of chaste Platonic love at the court of Charles I by associating it with unnatural appetites. 'Virtue's no more in Womankind,' Cleveland proclaims,

¹¹⁹ John Huntingdon similarly suggests that 'Chapman's careful ambiguity leads a reader to see both the moral dangers and the intellectual possibilities of Ovid's situation,' although maintains the usual emphasis on Chapman's neo-Platonism. John Huntingdon, 'Philosophical Seduction in Chapman, Davies, and Donne,' *English Literary History* 44/1 (1977): 42-43.

¹²⁰ Chapman, *Ovids banquet*, D4v.

¹²¹ Rinaldi, *The Royal Exchange*, H3v.

¹²² Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Internet Classics Archive, accessed 14 January 2012, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedo.html>.

¹²³ Bacon, *The two books*, A2v (1).

But the Green sickness of the Mind
 Philosophy (their new Delight)
 A kind of Charcoal Appetite...
 There is no Sophistry prevails,
 Where all-convincing Love assails...¹²⁴

Women's delight in 'Sophistry' is a form of green-sickness, an illness caused by sexual abstinence and characterised by a perverse desire to eat unpalatable entities such as 'charcoal,' chalk, and clay (substances thought to be humorally cool, and thus possessed of the capacity to temper a woman's sexual warmth, though at the expense of her digestive health).¹²⁵ Cleveland's postulation of a causal relation between sexual abstinence and gustatory corruption, moreover, is not borne solely of his fertile imagination. The 1595 *The Problemes of Aristotle*, a pseudo-Aristotelian medical and physiological miscellany first published in the same year as *Ovids banquet*, articulates a widespread belief that ejaculation – for both men and women – serves as an important form of humoral purgation.¹²⁶ 'Copulation,' *The Problemes* pronounces, 'doth ease and lighten the body, cheere the minde, comfort the head and the sence.'¹²⁷ Conversely, chastity could upset the delicate humoral balance and – importantly – discompose the senses, skewing one's sensory perceptions of the material world. As such, abstinence from sex could have detrimental epistemological, as well as physical, consequences. The enforced celibacy of 'Eunuches,' for example, is supposed by *The Problemes* to cause a build-up of choleric 'seed.' 'They have,' it claims:

much bitter choler... which aboundeth in the tongue. And therefore it happeneth when they doe eate honey, that the humor is stirred: and the taste it selfe when it hath felt the bitternes of choler, breedeth an imagination that the honey is bitter.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Cleveland, *Clevelandi Vindiciae*, B8r (15).

¹²⁵ On greensickness, see Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 621-24. See Gail Kern Paster, who treats the illness within 'the larger question of female humoral.' *Humoring the Body*, 88-118, especially 89.

¹²⁶ On the importance of ejaculation as a mode of humoral purgation, see Thomas Lacquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 35. See also Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 84.

¹²⁷ Anon., *The problemes of Aristotle*, E7v.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, M3r.

Cleveland's association of neo-Platonic chastity with gustatory error, then, finds a counterpart in popular physiology's suggestion that sex is necessary to maintain the humoral balance needed for accurate sensing; the anonymous compiler of the *Problemes of Aristotle* might well agree with Chapman's Ovid and with Cleveland that sensual delight is a necessary precondition of epistemological competence.

The causal relation between sexual abstinence, green-sickness, and gustatory corruption is also evident in Fletcher's *The elder brother*, in which Angellina's father, Lewis, worries that his daughter's idleness will cause her to 'fall into the greene sicknesse,' producing a perverse appetite for 'chalke, or coals, / Leather and oatmeal, and such other trash.'¹²⁹ In response, Angellina's attendant Sylvia speaks up in favour of the benefits of marital sex. It not idleness, but abstinence, that causes green-sickness: 'a game some Bedfellow,' Sylvia pronounces, is 'the sure Physician.'¹³⁰ What is more:

... fathers that deny
Their Daughters lawfull pleasure, when ripe for them,
In some kindes edge their appetites to taste of
The fruit that is forbidden.¹³¹

Angellina is positioned simultaneously as subject and object of lust: by using the word 'ripe' to indicate the maturity of Angellina's own sexual desires, Sylvia also describes her, implicitly, as a fruit, tempting to an appetitive wooer and ready for plucking. Convinced by Sylvia's advice, Lewis echoes her language of sensual appetite, urging his daughter to 'feast thy thoughts with th'pleasures of a Bride.' Sylvia is, however, not content: 'Thoughts are but airy food Sir, let her taste them.'¹³² What is striking is the consistency with which this discussion about the dangers of chastity and virtues of marital coitus is articulated using the language of taste: whilst the former will cause unnatural 'appetites to taste' that are both literal (for chalk and coal) and metaphorical (for the forbidden fruit of premarital sex), the latter is also an act of tasting, a substantial pleasure which is opposed to the anticipated delights of a merely imagined feasting.

Not only aspiring seducers including Chapman's Ovid and John Cleveland, but advocates of the benefits of conjugal coitus, such as Sylvia, then, are united in their

¹²⁹ Fletcher, *The elder brother*, B1v.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, B2r.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, B2r.

¹³² *Ibid.*, B3r.

deployment of the language of taste in in order to present sensual pleasure as productive of epistemological mastery, and / or sexual abstinence as productive of both ill-health and epistemological error. In the next section of this chapter, I will explore more fully the particular *form* of epistemological mastery provided by sensual pleasure: namely, rhetorical virtuosity.

V. 'Love's tongue'

In Cleveland's 'The Antiplatonick,' the anticipated victory of erotic 'Love' over specious neo-Platonic 'Sophistry' is also, implicitly, a victory for rhetoric: 'all-convincing' love triumphs because it appropriates rhetoric's persuasive capacities.¹³³ The notion that sensual desire and pleasure can incite rhetorical skill is evident in, for instance, Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598), in which Berowne challenges Navarre's conviction that disavowal of the sensory pleasures of feasting and female company will prove an aid to scholarship. Given that 'the end of study' is (as Navarre admits) 'to know which else wee should not know,' Berowne argues that prohibiting or limiting access to women and food perversely refigures them as apposite objects of knowledge.¹³⁴ 'Love' of women, furthermore, 'gives to every power a double power, / Above their functions and their offices.' Most pertinently, 'Love's tongue proves dainty *Bacchus* grosse in taste'; a lover is a kind of sensory superman, able to taste with an acuity that outdoes even Bacchus. Subsequently, 'when Love speakes, the voice of all the gods / Make heaven drowsie with the harmonie.'¹³⁵ For Berowne, then, in honing the senses, sexual desire also inculcates oratorical ability.

This association between sensual desire and rhetorical facility is a common one, and is frequently articulated via authors' exploitation of etymological links between the words 'sweet' and 'persuade,' both of which, as I noted in the introduction, derive ultimately from the Indo-European root word *swad*. As Jeffrey Masten has shown, early modern writers were intensely aware of this etymological affiliation.¹³⁶ In the Italian playwright Guidubaldo Bonarelli's *Filli di Sciro*, translated by Jonathan Sidnam as the 1655 *Phyllis of Scyros*, for example, Amintas urges the 'aged Nymph' Nerea to speak in

¹³³ It is, perhaps, relevant that Cleveland himself was famous for his facility in classical rhetoric. See A. D. Cousins, 'Cleveland, John (bap. 1613, d. 1658),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 26 August 2011, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5635.

¹³⁴ Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost* in *Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*, L1v (122).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, M2r (135).

¹³⁶ Masten, 'The Taste of Letters,' 374.

favour of Niso's suit to Celia. In response to Nerea's objection that his faded beauty makes him unfit as a wooer, Amintas flatters that 'on those lips / Where formerly Vermilan Roses grew,' '[Love] hath plac'd honey, and the pleasing sound / Of sweet perswasive words.'¹³⁷ As with Daphnis in Barnsfield's *The Affectionate Shepheard*, for Amintas sweetly persuasive language must replace physical beauty as a weapon of seduction.

For Cleveland, in 'The senses Festival,' the sweet pleasures offered by the beloved provide a lesson in the nature of persuasiveness, instructing the lover-poet in the rhetorical skills needed to sweet-talk her into his arms. The sweetness of persuasive rhetoric is borrowed from the sensual experience of its target:

Now to the melting Kiss that sips
The Jellied Philtre of her Lips;
So Sweet there is no Tongue can prays't,
Till transubstantiate with a Taste,
Inspir'd like *Mahomet* from above
By th' Billing of my Heavenly Dove.¹³⁸

Uniting fantastical physic with anatomical specificity, 'philtre' punningly denotes both a love potion, and the groove in the upper lip.¹³⁹ The taste of a kiss simultaneously represents the limits of language, and poetic inspiration: 'so sweet' that it evades all praise, it nonetheless results in poetic inspiration. Cleveland (who had Laudian sympathies) plays boldly with sacramental imagery; 'transubstantiate' inevitably recalls the Catholic doctrine discussed in chapter 3. Cleveland's elision of sacramental tasting and kissing, moreover, evokes the medieval practice of congregational kissing of a pax – an image of Christ, or of the *Agnus Dei*, on a wooden, ivory, or metal board – as a substitute for lay consumption of the elements, grounding the kiss firmly in Catholic ritual practices.¹⁴⁰ From this perspective, it is significant that 'Taste' serves not an *evidentiary* function (as it did in Protestant polemic arguing that the senses provided a reliable guide to the nature of the Eucharistic elements), but an *instrumental* function:

¹³⁷ C. Guidubaldo de Bonarelli, *Filli di Sciro, or, Phillis of Scyros*, trans. Jonathan Sidnam (London: J.M. for Andrew Crook, 1655), G4r (41).

¹³⁸ Cleveland, *Clevelandi Vindiciae*, B3v (6).

¹³⁹ 'Philtrum n.2.' *OED Online*, accessed 01 February 2012, www.oed.com/view/Entry/237308.

¹⁴⁰ See Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation*, 153-54, and Craig Koslofsky, 'The Kiss of Peace in the German Reformation,' in Karen Harvey, ed., *The Kiss in History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 18-35.

taste does not register, but rather brings about, the transubstantiation of the lover's tongue from mute adoration to inspired poeticising.

Similarly, Chapman's *Ovids banquet of sense* presents Ovid's rhetorical ingenuity, deployed in his seduction of Corinna, as a result of her stimulation of his senses. In particular, the sound of Corinna playing the lute and singing sends Ovid into a *furor poeticus*: 'Never was any sence so sette on fire,' he enthuses, 'as mine eares; / Her fingers to the strings doth speeche inspire.'¹⁴¹ And whilst Ovid initially emphasises the sense of hearing as a stimulant of rhetorical creativity, he subsequently frames the sound of Corinna's 'sweete voice' in synaesthetic terms:

Me thinks her tunes flye... like *Attick* Bees
To my eares hives, with hony tryed to ayre;
My braine is but the combe, the wax, the lees,
My soule the Drone, that lives by their affaire.
O so it sweets, refines, and ravisheth...¹⁴²

Corinna's stimulation of Ovid's senses, at once gustatory and aural, provides his 'braine' with the honey needed for rhetorical and poetical composition. Ovid, then, does not only *argue* that sexual sensation stimulates the mental faculties; in his ingenious and persuasive manipulation of language, he also *exemplifies* the result of that stimulation.

Where scholars have noticed Ovid's causal association between pleasurable sensation – especially taste – and rhetorical skill, they have represented it as mutually derogatory. Again, Kermode sets the tone: for him, the poetic narrative of *Ovids banquet*, and the rhetorical prowess of its protagonists, serve only to 'adorn' the 'philosophic material.'¹⁴³ More recently, Martin Wheeler has called the poem 'poeticized philosophy,' arguing that it constitutes a 'dramatization' of Ficino's *Commentary*.¹⁴⁴ In both cases, poetry and rhetoric are, tacitly, presented as epistemologically inferior to philosophy: a form of ornamental prettification. The association between rhetorical skill and sensory pleasure, then, implicates the senses in frivolous aesthetic pleasure; conversely, the dissipation of the senses confirms the disparagement of rhetoric. In contrast, I want to

¹⁴¹ Chapman, *Ovids banquet*, B3v.

¹⁴² Chapman, *Ovids banquet*, B3v.

¹⁴³ Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne*, 84

¹⁴⁴ Wheeler, 'The Thrill of the Chase,' 325. Compare Sears Jayne, who argues that Chapman 'was too eclectic ever to surrender himself wholeheartedly to the spirit of what Ficino was saying.' Jayne, 'Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance,' *Comparative Literature* 4/3 (1952): 217.

emphasize the ways in which, in early modern culture, both rhetorical expertise, and the lower senses that are entwined with it, are epistemologically significant, offering a powerfully persuasive alternative way of thinking not only about how knowledge might be communicated, but also about how it might be conceived and achieved.¹⁴⁵ In particular, the notion that sexual tasting (and especially, the sensation of sweetness) serves as a source of knowledge is intimately intertwined with the conviction both that rhetorical skill is epistemologically valuable, and correspondingly that knowledge itself is rhetorical in character.

In an essay exploring the history of rhetorical epistemology, Philippa Spoel points out that the process of rhetorical invention has often been thought of as one of ‘knowledge generation.’¹⁴⁶ Spoel states that, traditionally, the forms of knowledge generated by rhetoric have usually been conceived of as primarily logical and reasonable in nature. In contrast to this presumed historical association between rhetoric and logic, and building on the work of Donna Haraway, Spoel suggests that rhetorical invention, and the knowledge it generates, is ‘always situated and embodied,’ and thus inherently subjective.¹⁴⁷ In particular, she traces the local, corporeal character of this rhetorical epistemology to the perspectival nature of vision, which is here conflated with knowledge: ‘emphasizing the rhetor’s embodied positionality ensures that her vision or knowledge claims an authority appropriate to its location and partiality, not a universal or transcendent authority.’¹⁴⁸

Spoel’s assertion that invention has, historically, been considered a means of ‘knowledge generation,’ is helpful, and chimes with the work of scholars such as Yota Batsaki, Subha Mukherji, and Jan-Melissa Schramm.¹⁴⁹ Spoel’s suggestion that, until the recent work of feminist thinkers, the means of generation and the knowledge thereby produced have been conceived of as primarily logical in character is not, however, commensurate with the evidence of early modern texts. Whilst figures such as *sylogismus*

¹⁴⁵ As Jonathan P.A. Sell argues, rhetoric is not only the ‘lackey of ideology,’ it is also ‘the handmaid of cognition.’ *Rhetoric and Wonder in English Travel Writing, 1560-1613* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 3.

¹⁴⁶ Philippa Spoel, ‘Reinventing Rhetorical Epistemology: Donna Haraway’s and Nicole Brossard’s Embodied Visions,’ in Christine Mason Sutherland and Rebecca Suttcliffe, eds., *The Changing Tradition* (Calgary: Calgary University Press, 1999), 201.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹⁴⁹ Batsaki, Mukherji, and Schramm link rhetoric’s evidentiary function to traditional juridical oratory: rhetoric is ‘a crucial component of early modern literature’s participation in the larger epistemological field,’ in part because of the fact that rhetorical ‘*enargeia*’ and legal ‘*evidentia*’ existed in a relation of ‘coincidence.’ Yota Batsaki, Subha Mukherji, and Jan-Melissa Schramm, introduction to *Fictions of Knowledge: Fact, Evidence, Doubt*, ed. Batsaki, Mukherji, and Schramm (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5-6.

and *ratiocinatio* do indeed schematize the patterns and processes of logical thought, the mid-sixteenth century Ramist separation of logic and rhetoric led to a reconsideration (although not an attenuation) of the epistemological authority of the latter.¹⁵⁰ Frequently, early modern pedagogues, rhetoricians, and poets stress the importance not of logical thought but of embodied experience as an engine of rhetorical invention, and of the knowledge thereby produced. For George Puttenham, for example, writing in his 1589 *The Arte of English Poesie*, rhetorical skill derives from proto-empirical observation:

Poets were... from the beginning the best perswaders and their eloquence the first Rethoricke of the world... [Poets] were the first observers of all naturall causes & effects in the things generable and corruptible, and from thence mounted up to search after the celestiall courses and influences, & yet penetrated further to know the divine essences and substances separate... they were the first Astronomers and Philosophists and Metaphisicks...¹⁵¹

In their quest for matter (*res*), poets served as the ‘first observers’ of the natural, celestial, and divine realms: they did not merely describe the insights, but, according to Puttenham, founded the fields, of natural philosophy, astronomy, and metaphysics. Observation – a physical alertness to the material world – is at the root both of ‘eloquence,’ and of the natural and divine sciences.

The forms of embodied experience which underlie rhetorical invention, moreover, do not have to be limited to the visual. Spoel’s perspectival model represents rhetorical knowledge spatially: knowledge constitutes a series of ‘location[s],’ which an ocular subject occupies. The knowledge gained thereby might be ‘partial’ and situational, but it also retains a level of objectivity: any given epistemological position, or perspective, can only be occupied by one person at any one point, but the potential for sequential occupation by other ‘rhetors’ admits the possibility of replication and thus of verification. This model does not adequately describe the more radical conception of knowledge which emerges when early modern authors insist that rhetorical virtuosity is a product not of erotic looking, but of *tasting*. As a source of knowledge, taste sensations

¹⁵⁰ On Peter Ramus’ separation of logic and rhetoric, see Cynthia Sundberg Wall, *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 20. Michel Beaujour emphasises the importance of rhetoric to the development of the epistemologies underlying the new philosophy: in particular, Bacon’s *Essays* ‘elaborate a new epistemology... modeled on the dialectic of rhetorical invention.’ Beaujour, *Poetics of the Literary Self-Portrait* (New York University Press, 1992), 182.

¹⁵¹ George Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), C3v (6).

are inherently non-replicable and unshareable, for gustation culminates in the consumption of its object. A rhetorical epistemology based on taste must therefore insist on the fundamental subjectivity of knowledge, the impossibility of replicating another individual's embodied experience. Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that Emilia's insistence that women, like their husbands, 'have their Palats both for sweet, and sowre,' might be taken to describe a basic capacity to distinguish or judge between pleasure and pain. For a number of early modern authors, this conventional pairing of sweet and sour (or sometimes bitterness), is fundamental to the valorisation of a rhetorical conception of knowledge not only as embodied and situational, but also as comparative and subjective.

The idea that sweetness can only be appreciated by comparison with sourness or bitterness, and vice versa, was axiomatic throughout the period. The 1600 printed commonplace book *Bel-vedere* includes the aphorism 'He cannot judge aright of fortunes power, / Nor taste the sweet that never tride the sower.'¹⁵² Just as someone who has never experienced sour flavours cannot 'taste,' or know, sweetness, someone who has never experienced misfortune cannot 'judge aright' of 'fortune.' In her 1604 *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives*, Elizabeth Grymeston includes a slightly different axiom with an identical meaning: 'He cannot judge of pleasure, that never tasted paine.'¹⁵³ Whilst Grymeston eschews mention of sweet and sour, the faculty used to judge the difference between good and bad fortune is the same: taste. This use of gustatory language to articulate a 'sense' of the relational, comparative character of knowledge more generally is particularly noticeable when the form of tasting invoked is erotic: love poets frequently assert that wisdom grows out of the antithetical experiences of sweet desire and bitter jealousy.

In chapter 1, I commented on John Florio's use of the opposition of sweet and sour to describe processes of literary judgement: tasting Florio's own 'sour' or immature works will allow his dedicatee to more fully appreciate the sweetness of other men's compositions. The body of the *Firste fruites* itself offers a source for this pairing of sweet and bitter which applies it not to literary, but to erotic experience. In 'A fine saying of Ariosto, touching Jelousie,' love and jealousy are described in gustatory terms. Translated into English, the poem reads:

¹⁵² Anon., 'Fortune is the nurse of fooles,' in *Bel-vedere, or, The Garden of the muses*, compiled by John Bodenham (London: F.K. for Hugh Astley, 1600), L4v (152).

¹⁵³ Elizabeth Grymeston, *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives* (London: Melch. Bradwood for Felix Norton, 1604), H3v.

What sweeter state, what blisse more jocond
Can be, then for to have an amorous hart?...

Yet for al that, al bitternesse that is put
In midst of this most delectable sweetnesse:
Is an increasing, and making Love more faine:
And is a way to make Love shew more perfect.
Thirst causeth waters to taste both savery and good,
And what food is, by fasting it is knowen.¹⁵⁴

Knowledge, the poem implies, is innately relational: just as it is only possible to appreciate (both in the sense of perceive, and enjoy), water and food once one has fasted, so too it is only possible to appreciate the ‘delectable sweetnesse’ of love once one has tasted the ‘bitternesse’ of jealousy. The passage’s accepting attitude to the vicissitudes of eros is inextricable from its conception of the nature of knowledge; both are anchored in, and expressed by images of, gustatory experience.

For the Spanish physician Juan Huarte the fact that both taste and sexual appetites are characterised by their subjective, variable natures, makes them more, not less, comparable to discursive ‘understanding,’ or rhetorical knowledge. In *The examination of mens wits*, englished by Richard Carew and published in 1594, Huarte notes that just as some men ‘abhorre egges and milke: and others againe have a longing after them, and in the maner of using meates: some like rost, and some boild,’ so too ‘if we passe on to the facultie generative, we shall find as many appetites & varieties, for some men love a foule woman, and abhorre a faire... a fat wench is fulsome, and a leane hath their liking.’¹⁵⁵ Correspondingly:

All this varietie of strange tasts & appetites, is found in [rhetorical] compositions, framed by the understanding: for if we assemble 100 men of learning and propound a particular question, each of them delivereth a severall judgement, and discourseth thereof in different maner. One selfe argument to

¹⁵⁴ Florio, *Firste frutes*, L3v-L4r (43-44).

¹⁵⁵ Juan Huarte, *Examen de ingenios = The examination of mens wits*, trans. Richard Carew (London: Adam Islip for Richard Watkins, 1594), M2r (163).

one seemeth a sophisticall reason, to another probable; and some you shall meet with, to whose capacitie it concludeth as if it were a demonstration.¹⁵⁶

For Huarte, the subjective nature of gustatory and sexual tastes attests not their detachment from the operations of knowledge, but rather their congruity to rhetorical ‘understanding,’ which is understood as variable not as a result of error, but in its very character.

One figure in particular can be understood to exemplify the intrinsically relational model of knowledge implicitly promoted by those poets who suggest that the sweetness of sexual sensation – and conversely, the bitterness of jealousy and betrayal – is productive of rhetorical and epistemological accomplishment. *Antitheton* is a figure of thought which can be defined as ‘a proof or composition constructed of contraries.’¹⁵⁷ In *The Arte of English Poesie*, Puttenham cites as an example of this figure (which he calls ‘the Quarreller’) ‘two verses where one speaking of *Cupids* bowe, deciphered thereby the nature of sensual love’: ‘His bent is sweete, his loose is somewhat sowre, / In joy begunne, ends oft in wofull howre.’¹⁵⁸ The contrary gustatory sensations of sweet and sour provide the material for the antithetical image through which the poet decipheres, or reveals, something about ‘the nature of sensual love.’¹⁵⁹ Knowledge is produced through the juxtaposition, in both gustatory sensation and in rhetorical language, of opposites.

But not just of opposites. Although the relation between sweet and bitter is often conceived of as antithetical, it is not only conceived of as antithetical. In the previous chapter, I commented on how a number of experimental philosophers associated with the early Royal Society argue that – in Nehemiah Grew’s words – ‘a *Sweet Taste*, is generally founded in a Sower.’ Grew’s explanation of saccharinity as ‘produced.... by a smoothed *Acid*’ suggests that the sweet and sour are only formally, not qualitatively, different: given the right conditions of culinary or experimental manipulation one always has the potential to be transformed into the other.¹⁶⁰ Whilst the corpuscular and mechanical hypotheses that undergirded such theories were distinctly new-fangled, the notion that sweetness and bitterness are at the extremes of a

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, M2v (164).

¹⁵⁷ ‘Antitheton,’ in Gideon O. Burton, *The Forest of Rhetoric*, accessed 05 September 2011, <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Figures/A/antitheton.htm>.

¹⁵⁸ Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie*, Aa2r (175). Puttenham also notes that ‘*Isocrates* the Greek Oratour was a litle too full of this figure’ Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie*, Aa2v (176).

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Aa2r (175).

¹⁶⁰ Grew, *The anatomy of plants*, Tt5v (288).

single continuum reflects a much older cultural interest in nuanced relations between these intuitively oppositional gustatory sensations, and also between the affective states they represent.¹⁶¹ In *The history of the world* (1617), for example, Walter Raleigh asserts that ‘as all those things which are most mellifluous, are soonest changed into choller and bitterness: so are our vanities and pleasures converted into the bitterest sorrowes and repentances.’¹⁶² Raleigh articulates his *vanitas* message by emphasising the notional and experiential proximity of the ‘mellifluous,’ or sweet, and the ‘bitternesse’ of sorrow. Whilst Raleigh’s use of the sweetness-bitterness coupling is conventionally moralistic, other early modern authors employ it in the less pious contexts that are the focus of this chapter. Michael Schoenfeldt suggests that ‘in the Sonnets... Shakespeare develops the links between the corollary appetites for food and love not so much to provide strategies for rendering both salutary as to explore the relevance of the necessary periodicity of hunger to the ebb and flow of erotic desire.’ Schoenfeldt goes on to explore Shakespeare’s interest in ‘the nexus at which desire is satiated, and mitigates into its opposite, disgust,’ highlighting in particular his use of medical and culinary practice to express ‘a different strategy for sustaining desire in the face of satiation’: the introduction of bitterness as a provocation to hunger.¹⁶³

The trope described by Schoenfeldt continued to be popular for some time: a number of poets suggest that the bitter aspects of erotic love are not necessarily unwelcome, for they serve to prevent delicious sweetness from crossing the line into nauseous surfeit. The notion that the sweetness of erotic pleasure might slide, if indulged in too ardently, into repugnance is articulated by both Thomas Carew, and Abraham Cowley. In Carew’s poem of ‘Good counsell to a young Maid,’ the narrator advises his addressee to resist the siege of a lover, comparing the man who sues for her sexual favours to a pilgrim who worships the cool spring he encounters before he drinks, but who, once ‘quencht,’ ‘kicks her banks, and from the place / That thus fresht him, moves with sullen pace.’ Thus, warns the narrator, ‘shalt thou be despis’d, faire Maid, / When by the sated lover tasted.’¹⁶⁴ Similarly, in a poem ‘Against Fruition,’ included in his posthumously published *The mistresse* (1667), Abraham Cowley warns his mistress that:

¹⁶¹ Mary Carruthers notes that ‘the most interesting medieval aspect of “sweetness”.... is that it is not just one thing, but has a contrarian nature that includes within itself it opposites: bitter, salt, and sour.’ ‘Sweetness,’ 1000.

¹⁶² Walter Raleigh, *The history of the world* (London: William Stansby for Walter Burre, 1614), G7r (69).

¹⁶³ Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves*, 81-82.

¹⁶⁴ Carew, *Poems*, D5r (41).

Thy sweetnesse is so much within mee plac'd,
That shouldst thou Nectar give't would spoile the tast...
Love, like a greedy Hawke, if we give way,
Does over-gorge himselfe, with his own Prey;
Of very hopes a surfet heele sustain,
Unlesse by Feares he cast them up againe.¹⁶⁵

The pleasures of taste and the pleasures of sex are phenomenally akin: too much of both, and desire will metamorphose into disgust. Against this threat, bitterness provides a corrective counterpart. Just as bitter or sour things provoke the appetite, so too do the bitter agonies of a mistress' disdain or betrayal exacerbate desire, and comparatively enhance the sweetness of sensual bliss. Thus, in a poem included in *Tottel's Miscellany*, in which 'The faithfull lover declareth his paines,' the author describes a reawakening of his hopes of erotic fulfilment:

So doth good hope clene put away dispaire out of my minde.
And biddes me for to serve and suffer patiently...
For those that care do know and tasted have of trouble,
When passed is their wofull paine eche joy shall seme them
double.
And bitter sendes she now to make me tast the better,
The plesant swete when that it comes to make it seme the
sweter,
And so determine I to serve...¹⁶⁶

Here, the vacillations between despair and hope, bitterness and sweetness, which characterise erotic love work to enhance the lover's pleasure. In much the same way that a skilful cook mingles flavours, stimulating the appetite through variety, the mistress deals out bitterness only to enhance the promise of sweetness.

¹⁶⁵ Abraham Cowley, *The mistress* (London: for Humphrey Moseley, 1647), D2r (47).

¹⁶⁶ Anon., 'The faithfull lover declareth his paines,' in *Songes and sonettes* [*Tottel's Miscellany*], D3v.

VI. 'Fashions grow up for tast'

In John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester's 'A letter from Artemiza in the town, to Chloe in the country' (1680), the titular correspondent rails against those who, in choosing their sexual partners in adherence to popular consensus, rather than according to personal preference, 'forsake... Pleasure, to pursue... Vice':

Their private Wish obeys the publick Voice;
'Twixt good and bad, Whimsey decides, not Choice.
Fashions grow up for tast; at Forms they strike;
They know what they would have, not what they like... ¹⁶⁷

Artemiza occupies the moralist's position with aplomb, but – unconventionally – her outrage is a response, not to love's degradation by lust, but to lust's degradation by social convention. The force of her indignation is turned, not on sexual license *per se*, but on the reduction of sexual license to a faddish posture, culpably devoid of genuine pleasure. Taste, in this context, is degraded, associated not with discrimination between potential lovers, but with slavish adherence to the tyranny of 'fashions.' Once again, we return to a notion of taste as 'apish': imitative, something less than human.

'A letter from Artemiza' stands in stark contrast to the authors and works explored in this chapter. Conceiving of sexual desire and pleasure in history as a matter neither of somatically factual sex, nor of socially constructed sexuality, but rather of sensuality, I have suggested that a heavy emphasis on gustatory sensation is one distinctive feature of early modern eroticism. This emphasis is grounded in humoral physiology, and can be seen to reflect the embodied experience of lovers; finely attuned to the relations between flavour and physicality, early modern men and women were also highly aware of the aphrodisiac and erotic possibilities offered by tastes. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century uses of the language of gustation to describe amatory experience, moreover, engage with wider debates surrounding the epistemological and moral status of this sense. Sexual tastes are often framed – for instance, by Othello – as brutish and irrational. Nonetheless, a number of authors – and ultimately *Othello* – exploit taste's associations with judgement and with experiential certainty in order to

¹⁶⁷ John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *A letter from Artemiza in the town, to Chloe in the country* (1680), 2.

suggest that desire functions as a form of discrimination, and that sensual sweetness offers a reliable route to intersubjective knowledge. The bee trope is central here, aligning sensual arousal with literary skill. The multivalence of the bee trope, moreover, shifts hermeneutic responsibility for the sensual pleasure that readers derive therein onto those readers. Subsequently, the language of honey and sweetness, deeply conventional as it is, emerges as more connotatively and rhetorically complex than is usually supposed. In Barnfield's *The Affectionate Shepherd*, for example, the love-gifts of sugared fruit and honey that Daphnis offers Ganymeade not only represent Daphnis' hopes for the aphrodisiac effects of sweetness, they also function as an image of the beloved Ganymeade himself. In proffering them, Daphnis frames sex as a source of self-knowledge for Ganymeade, effacing his own part in the longed-for (but never achieved) consummation. Use of the language of taste contributes to a (limited and localized) rehabilitation of sensual passion in the course of the seventeenth century.

Attending to taste, furthermore, prompts us to recognise the ways in which authors respond to the perceived mystery of female desire not only by striving to know the beloved and his or her body, but also by invoking, and comparatively assessing, the validity and efficacy of different definitions of knowledge itself. Specifically, works employing the banquet of the senses theme – notably Chapman's *Ovids banquet of sense*, and Cavalier poetry – pitch the battle between Ovidian eroticism and chaste, neo-Platonic love as a contest between two types of knowledge: rhetorical knowledge, which is grounded in the senses, and philosophical knowledge, which is grounded in memory. This conflict unfolds via the language of taste: whereas neo-Platonic chastity is figured, by Ovidian seducers, as a pathological corruption of appetites associated with green-sickness, the sweetness of sensual pleasure is presented as coterminous with sweetly persuasive rhetoric. Crucially, erotic and rhetorical sweetness prove epistemologically valuable: paired with the bitterness of jealousy and betrayal, it offers a kind of object-lesson in the rhetorical, relational, and situational nature of *all* knowledge.

Published in the first year of the decade that would see the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, Rochester's 'A letter from Artemiza' belongs almost as much to the long eighteenth century as it does to the early modern period, and its anxious interest in social 'Fashions,' in the power of 'publick Voice' to determine private tastes, and in arbitrations of 'good and bad' directed not by judgment but by modish 'Whimsy,' it certainly anticipates many of the concerns of a later era. In a short afterword to this thesis, I will sketch out some of the implications of my work on early modern taste for

conventional ideas about the relation between taste, social propriety, and aesthetic discernment in the early eighteenth century.

AFTERWORD

‘The way to know’

In his June 1712 *The Spectator* article on taste, Joseph Addison writes:

Most Languages make use of this Metaphor, to express that Faculty of the Mind, which distinguishes all the most concealed Faults and nicest Perfections in Writing. We may be sure this Metaphor would not have been so general in all Tongues, had there not been a very great conformity between that Mental Taste, which is the Subject of this Paper, and that Sensitive Taste which gives us a Relish of every different Flavour that affects the Palate. Accordingly we find, there are as many Degrees of Refinement in the intellectual Faculty, as in the Sense...¹

In Addison’s description of the relation between ‘Mental Taste’ and ‘Sensitive Taste,’ the latter emerges as the standard of discrimination to which the former must aspire. Addison’s article (from classical Latin *articulus* joint, point of time, critical moment) forms a hinge between the early modern sense (in both ‘senses’) of taste, and later ideas about aesthetics and commerce.² Taste in this latter sense emerges as a central term in the articulation and negotiation of anxieties surrounding a consumer culture characterised by conspicuous emulation of one’s neighbours.³ Whilst the scope and significance of taste in the early modern period has been neglected, taste has been studied extensively as an expression of and bulwark against the tides of commercialism, particularly in an eighteenth-century context. Notably, in the introduction to their recent

¹ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* 409 (Thursday, June 19, 1712), reproduced in *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*, ed. Erin Mackie (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 383.

² ‘Article, n.’ *OED Online*, accessed 27 June 2013, www.oed.com/view/Entry/11179.

³ On the burgeoning of consumer culture in the second half of the century, see Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1993), especially 328. In the introduction to their *Consumption and the World of Goods*, John Brewer and Roy Porter connect consumer culture not to taste specifically but to eating more generally, noting that ‘the very word, “consume”... suggests both an enlargement through incorporation and a withering away. Consuming is thus both enrichment and impoverishment.’ Introduction to *Consumption and the World of Goods*, 4. In the same volume, Brewer pursues this insight in his essay, ‘Consumption: Disease of the Consumer Society?’ (58-81), whilst Sidney Mintz troubles the boundary between alimentary and commercial consumption in his essay ‘The Changing Roles of Food in the Study of Consumption’ (261-73).

Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830, John Styles and Amanda Vickery argue that:

the notion of taste provided a defence against the accusation that the commercial market in culture simply pandered to the baser lusts of whoever could afford to pay, with no regard to aesthetic value, personal morality, or the national good. Taste offered disinterested discernment as a corrective to the crude gratification of the appetites.⁴

Styles' and Vickery's conception of taste as 'disinterested discernment,' a mode of discrimination purified of 'crude appetites,' is representative of eighteenth-century studies. According to the standard narrative promoted by scholars of this period, taste first rose to prominence in the context of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century consumer culture and aesthetic theory, as men including Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, Richard Steele, and Joseph Addison made a metaphor out of what had previously only been a physical sensation. Thus detached from the vagaries of physical desire, taste could serve as a faculty of aesthetic and social judgement: in the words of Robert Jones, 'taste, once it is figured as a claim to a discernment which rises beyond immediate use or gratification, could grant its user, if successful, a prestige and licence in other areas of social life.'⁵ Or, for Denise Gigante, the eighteenth-century 'Man of Taste,' was engaged in a 'philosophical project... of sublimating tastes from the conceptual apparatus of appetite.'⁶

As should be abundantly clear at this point, such disembodied models of taste are insufficient as explanatory paradigms for taste in the previous era. In the period addressed by this thesis, taste is a term for discrimination, but the kinds of skill and experience that it involves remain deeply rooted in the physical and appetitive; a very long way indeed from 'disinterested discernment.' The jurisdiction of taste, moreover, extends far beyond the commercial and the aesthetic. For early modern men and women, taste had a pivotal role to play in the arbitration of concerns including the

⁴ Styles and Vickery, introduction to *Gender, Taste and Material Culture*, 14-15.

⁵ Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10. Notably, Shaftesbury championed what John Barrell has designated 'the republic of taste,' a community of men who identified themselves as such by claiming a superiority of aesthetic judgement which putatively proved their political virtue and thus licensed aristocratic hegemony. John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: The Body of the Public* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 1-68 and 73-81.

⁶ Gigante, *Taste*, 7.

nature and value of empirical and experimental knowledge; the validity of different kinds of religious experience (from sacramental ritual to reading scripture to the reception of grace) in the wake of the Reformation; and the moral status of erotic pleasure. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, taste functioned as a permeable membrane between corporeal sensation and mental judgement. Thus, literary ‘taste’ refers to readerly discrimination, but also indicates responsiveness to the sensible attributes of a text, which might be gustatory as well visual, aural, tactile, and olfactory. The senses, moreover, do not merely provide data to be schematized subsequently as knowledge; they are a form of knowledge in themselves. As Helkiah Crooke writes, ‘there must be some part of the mind present in sensation’: physical experience is inherently meaningful, not only a passive reception but an active seeking out of meaning. For Crooke – following Aristotle – taste is traditionally the least dignified of the senses; but it is also the most necessary. This reversal of taste’s fortunes is paralleled in reformist discourse, where taste emerges a route to knowledge of the divine. And whilst this elevation of taste is apparently based on a suppression of the physical in favour of the spiritual, in practice the distinction between the two proves difficult, and in some cases undesirable, to sustain. As a privileged locus for self-reflection and contemplation, physical taste plays a part in the inculcation of particularly Protestant, and yet essentially sensuous, form of interiority. The notion that gustation might prove spiritually redemptive also plays a part in the development of experimental science. For members of the early Royal Society, experimental acts of tasting were laden with spiritual significance, potentially constituting a reversal of the effects of original sin. Experimental gustation could also be pleasurable. The sensuality – as opposed the mere sensuousness – of taste is emphasized by a number of chroniclers of desire, seduction, and erotic pleasure in the early modern period. For a range of poets, taste in its most appetitive, potentially ‘brutish’ instantiation – sexual tasting – emerges as profoundly epistemologically significant, intimately intertwined with a relational, comparative form of knowledge that is allied to rhetoric. In conjoining very different ways of knowing, including (but not limited to) philological erudition, proto-empirical experimentation, devotional meditation, and intersubjective intuition, the language of taste attests to an unfamiliar epistemological landscape, one where the borders between what we have come to call the disciplines are fluid.

In Milton’s 1671 *Samson Agonistes*, the blind Samson confronts the taunts of the giant Harapha, who has ‘come to see of whom such noise / Hath walk’t about, and

each limb to survey, / If thy appearance answer loud report.' Harapha pitches aural report against visual evidence, but Samson's retort invokes a different sense: 'the way to know,' he asserts, 'were not to see but taste.'⁷ Samson uses 'taste' to in the sense of 'test,' and his words hang suspended – as does Samson himself at this point in the poem – between macho braggadocio and divinely-inspired conviction. Try me out, he is saying to Harapha; come and get a piece of me, if you think you're tough. In the context of Samson's physical blindness, however, his statement also resonates with the kind of Protestant rhetoric discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis: 'in divine things,' as Edward Reynolds avers, '*tasting* goes before *seeing*.' From this perspective, Samson's words take on the force of a first glimmer of spiritual illumination that will culminate in the destruction of the temple at Dagon. Poised between brutish appetite and discriminative judgement, taste in the early modern period is certainly not a subject of universal approbation. In this thesis, however, I hope to have at least begun the work of uncovering the epistemological possibilities – as well as the perils – of this deeply ambivalent sense.

⁷ Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, in *Paradise regain'd... to which is added Samson Agonistes*, N1v (66).

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